

Historical Legacies: Conquering COVID & Combating the “Infodemic”



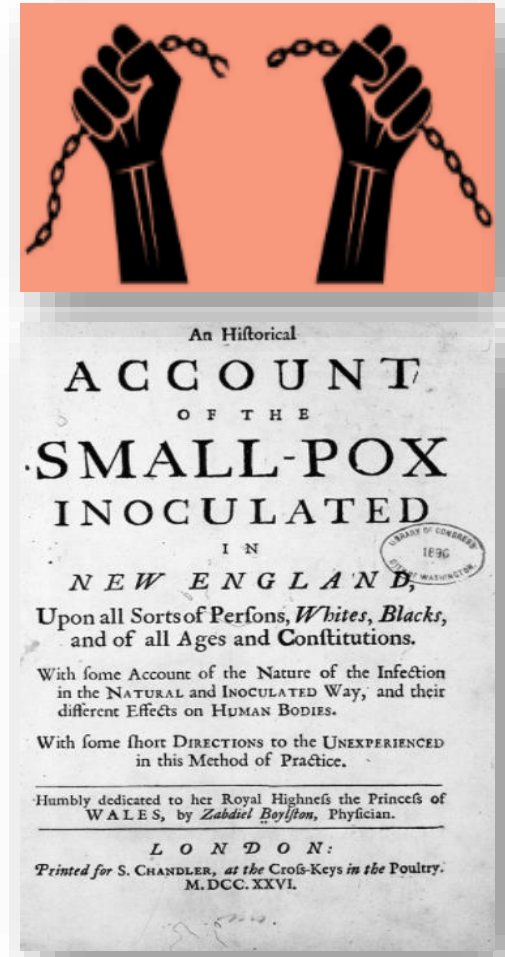
**Tracey Veal, DrPh, MBA
Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
July 2021**

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”

Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King

Historical Legacies: A Slave's Role in Vaccine Development

- ❁ Smallpox epidemic of 1721: Onesimus, an enslaved man in Boston, introduced the practice of “variolation” to his slaveowner, Minister Mather
- ❁ Variolation, based on a medical procedure Onesimus experienced as a child in Africa, was a potential way to keep people from getting sick with a virus
- ❁ Initially residents rejected variolation because
 - (1) “Foreign and African” concept
 - (2) Belief that smallpox death and destruction was simply Gods will



Sources

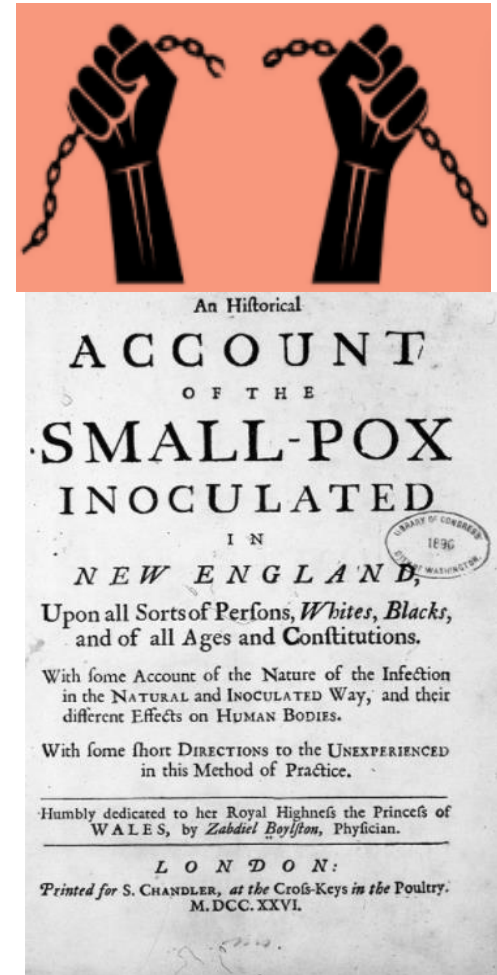
- ❁ [How an Enslaved African Man in Boston Helped Save Generations from Smallpox - HISTORY](#)
- ❁ [An African slave taught America to vaccinate from smallpox – Quartz Africa \(qz.com\)](#)

Historical Legacies: A Slave's Role in Vaccine Development

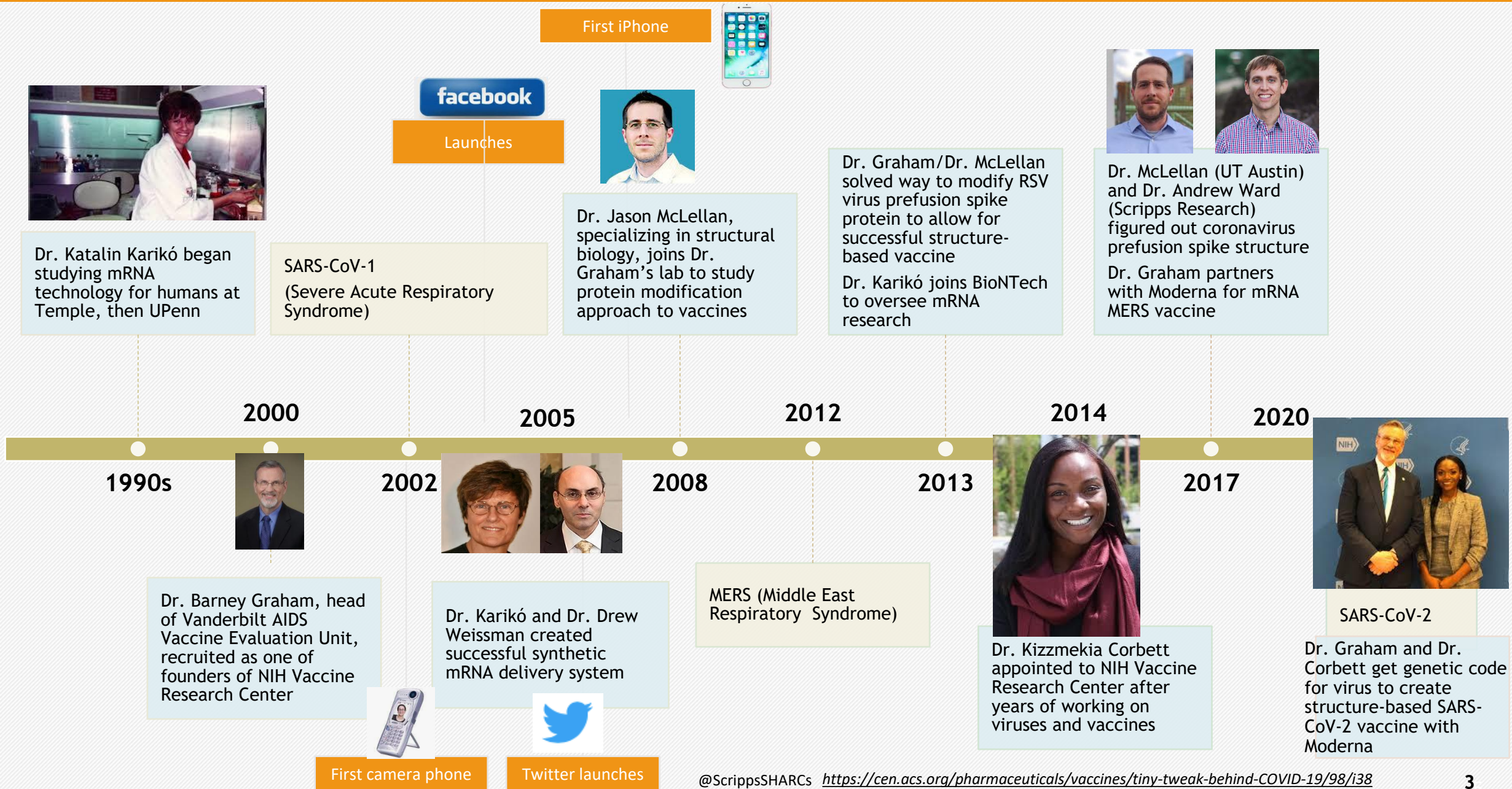
- Despite objections, Minister Mather & Dr. Zabdiel Boylston applied the technique & significantly reduced the death and spread of smallpox
- In 1796, Edward Jenner developed a smallpox vaccine based on the above that was so effective the vaccination became mandatory in Massachusetts
- Onesimus' knowledge passed on & saved hundreds of lives—and led to the eventual eradication of smallpox.

Sources

- [How an Enslaved African Man in Boston Helped Save Generations from Smallpox - HISTORY](#)
- [An African slave taught America to vaccinate from smallpox – Quartz Africa \(qz.com\)](#)



30 Year Timeline of COVID-19 vaccine technology & key scientists



Is the **COVID-19** vaccine safe since it was made quickly?

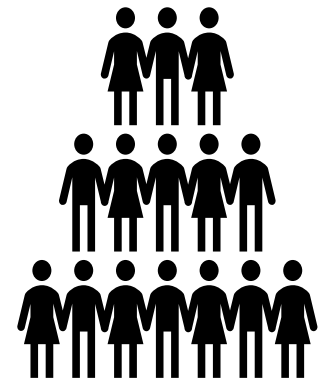


- ✿ Prior to the pandemic, similar virus vaccines were in development for years.
- ✿ The vaccine development process, in addition to advances in technology and manufacturing processes allowed faster COVID-19 vaccine production, but **all required steps were followed**. No steps or testing have been skipped.
- ✿ A comprehensive **U.S.** vaccine safety system that ensures the COVID-19 vaccine is safe is in place.
- ✿ In addition to multiple systems from text messaging to phone alerts, California has a task force for experts in the Western United States that reviews and continuously monitors safety concerns.

Is the COVID-19 Vaccine Safe?



- ✿ Thousands of African American men and women of many ages, and others who have health conditions, took the COVID-19 vaccine to make sure it was safe for everyone in clinical trials. Historically black colleges also supported & participated in the clinical trials.
- ✿ Disproportionately impacted populations including older adults, those with multiple/pre-existing conditions and minorities were engaged thru churches, community organizations, colleges and other community-based approaches.
- ✿ The National Medical Association (NMA) representing Black physician experts also established a COVID-19 taskforce which includes conducting clinical trial data reviews. The NMA also established a partnership with the National Urban League for safety & equitable distribution.



Race/Ethnicity in COVID-19 Clinical Trials

Clinical trials included a broad range of diverse participants



Moderna

	Racial/Ethnic group
20.5%	Hispanic/Latino
9.7%	Black
4.7%	Asian
2.1%	Multiracial
0.8%	American Indian
0.2%	Pacific Islander

Pfizer

%	Racial/Ethnic group
26.2%	Hispanic/Latino
9.8%	Black
4.4%	Asian
2.5%	Multiracial
0.6%	American Indian
0.2%	Pacific Islander

Johnson & Johnson (Janssen)

%	Racial/Ethnic group
45.0%	Hispanic/Latino
17.2%	Black
3.5%	Asian
5.4%	Multiracial
8.3%	American Indian
0.3%	Pacific Islander

Is it safe to get the vaccine if I want to have a baby?



- Yes it is safe. If you are trying to become pregnant now or want to get pregnant in the future, you may get a COVID-19 vaccine
- There is currently no evidence that COVID-19 vaccination causes any problems with pregnancy, including the development of the placenta.
- In addition, there is no evidence that fertility problems are a side effect of any vaccine, including COVID-19 vaccines.



Will a COVID-19 vaccine alter my DNA?



- No. COVID-19 vaccines do not change or interact with your DNA in any way.
- Current COVID-19 vaccines deliver instructions to our cells to start building protection against the virus
- However, the vaccine never enters the nucleus of the cell, which is where our DNA is kept.
- This means the genetic material in the vaccines cannot affect or interact with our DNA in any way.
- All COVID-19 vaccines work with the body's natural defenses to safely develop immunity to disease.
- Covid-19 vaccines, called mRNA or messenger vaccines- not DNA vaccines, do not use the live virus that causes COVID-19



Six Ways to Help Build COVID-19 Vaccine Confidence



- 1) Encourage leaders in your family, community, or organizations to be vaccine champions.
- 2) Have [discussions with your friends and family](#) about vaccination to understand their perspective and encourage their decision to vaccinate.
- 3) Share [key messages](#) that promote action through multiple trusted channels.
- 4) Help educate people about [COVID-19 vaccines](#), including how they were developed and their intense safety monitoring, and how you can talk to others about the vaccines.
- 5) Learn more about [finding credible vaccine information](#). When you come across COVID-19 information, cross-check with CDC.gov and learn how to respond to misinformation you encounter.
- 6) Make your decision to get vaccinated [visible](#) and celebrate it!



Additional Resources

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health for Vaccine Sites

<http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/vaccine/index.htm>

Masks (Flyers in various languages)

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/ncorona2019/masks/>

COVID-19 Test Sites (includes Black Churches & Providers) <https://covid19.lacounty.gov/testing/>



African American Resources

🦠 The Conversation (COVID Vaccines) for Black Americans by Black American healthcare professionals

<https://www.greaterthancovid.org/theconversation/toolkit/>

🦠 Black COVID Facts <https://blackcovidfactssd.org/experts/dr-rodney-hoo>

🦠 Black Coalition Against COVID www.BlackCoalitionagainstCOVID.org/

Videos

🦠 Happy Birthday, Granny <https://vimeo.com/574495934/f619a5b3b7>

🦠 Of Reasons and Rumors English: <https://vimeo.com/574033678/adba2874da>

🦠 Community Immunity Rap- Hop Hop Public Health <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wB9RSffVys4>

Continue to take steps to stop the spread

- ❖ Wear a face covering over your nose & mouth, particularly when unsure if everyone around you is fully vaccinated
- ❖ Consider avoiding close contact indoors & crowded spaces
- ❖ Wash your hands often
- ❖ Clean & disinfect frequently touched surfaces to reduce potential illness overall

