

Canaries in the Coal Mine: COVID-19 Misinformation and Black Communities | Shorenstein Center

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The Black community online is awash in medical misinformation about the coronavirus pandemic.

Even as Black people are disproportionately dying from the virus due to systemic racism, harmful inaccuracies about how to keep from contracting COVID-19, how to treat it, and where it comes from are metastasizing in Black online spaces, putting people at even greater risk.

Since the beginning of the crisis, we have tracked how COVID-19 was being discussed in Black online communities. Using multi-site digital ethnography to track how conspiracies and disinformation cross message boards and tech platforms, we have identified four predominant narratives spreading in Black communities in the United States:

1. Black people could not die from COVID-19
2. The virus was man-made for the purposes of population control
3. The virus could be contained through use of herbal remedies
4. 5G radiation was the root cause of COVID-19

Some of this misinformation appears to be targeted directly at the community by outsiders, while some has grown up organically within specific Black communities.

[...]

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