

### Example Essay #1 on POC and the Medical Community

This paper will bring up information about experiments, research projects, and statistics in history and modern-day that could/did impact people of color's trust in the medical community. It is important to know about more than recent day events in order to understand the deeper roots of today's oppression towards people of color (also known as poc). Some of the cases that this essay will cover are yellow fever and its similarity to today's coronavirus, the difficult tasks of initiatives like the Affordable Care Act, and beliefs caused by pseudoscience from the past that still influence people today. Given the history of racism that has been analyzed so far, people of color should have some trust and faith in the US healthcare system because while poc were and are being mistreated during disease outbreaks, and there have been false accusations and oppressive actions that negatively impacted their lives, there were also organizations established to give people of color better healthcare access.

To begin, based on all of the sources that were explored about the lives of people of color during the Yellow Fever and COVID-19, people of color should not have trust and faith in the US healthcare system because poc were and are being mistreated during disease outbreaks. One of these situations was the yellow fever outbreak. It started to affect people in Philadelphia in August 1793 with symptoms of yellow skin, fever, vomiting of blood, liver failure, and muscle pain. The roots of the illness were unknown, but some prevention measures were chewing garlic, smoking, and distancing themselves from others. This disease caused almost half of the population to flee the city. While trying to find a solution, Dr. Benjamin Rush came to the conclusion that black people were immune to the disease and therefore asked the black community to help the sick. During this time, Matthew Carey, a publisher in Philadelphia who created and sold writing for a living, wrote a pamphlet titled *A Short Account of the Malignant Fever which Prevailed in Philadelphia* in 1793. Though Carey was away from Philly during the yellow fever madness, he stated that "they (nurses) extorted two, three, four, and even five dollars a night for such attendance, as would have been well paid for, by a single dollar. Some of them were even detected in plundering the houses of the sick" (Carey). The author blatantly accused black people of exploiting the sick without any valid evidence, making them seem like they only helped others for their own materialistic gain. Carey claims to know what the nurses' assistance was worth, but he wasn't even in the city while the epidemic was towering over the people. He could not have known how anxious and fearful everyone was at the moment so saying that black people, while putting their lives at risk, were "plundering" houses is outrageous and unbelievable. Another more recent disease outbreak was Covid-19 which was first identified in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China in late 2019. It started as an epidemic, but rapidly turned into a pandemic. Though it was linked to a live animal market, it was spreading from person to person and a quarantine was issued early 2020. Some **disparities** between white and poc were shown on the National Institute for Healthcare Management's post. The institute is a nonprofit organization whose goal is to transform health care into something full of equity by researching problems and creating solutions. Their website shows that "a Boston hospital found that primarily Spanish-speaking COVID-19 patients had a 35% greater risk of death compared to other patients" (NIHCM). People with language barriers weren't able to get the same assistance as English speakers, be it for the lack of Spanish speaking doctors or racism. Hispanic and Latin Americans already have such a difficult time with the healthcare system and not being able to communicate with the people who are in charge of their lives in a time of distress could be very frightening. Even with more technology than the time of the yellow fever, doctors and their patients of color continue to have misunderstandings that end up causing long term negative effects and even death.

To add on, people of color should not have trust and faith in the US healthcare system because there have been false accusations and oppressive actions that negatively impacted their lives. Scientific racism was where most of these factors originated from. It was used by white scientists who used their authority to create claims based on their own opinions. These claims would be used to dehumanize people of color and to justify the mistreatment towards them. The PBS NewsHour, a public media news organization that contains the most

reliable latest news, analysis, field reports from around the world further explains this concept in their article about the syphilis experiment where doctors let black men suffer through the process of the disease (even though there were adequate treatments) so that they could study it. They disclose that “public revelations in 1972 of the study's existence led to a deep mistrust of the medical community among black males, many of whom afterward shunned hospitals and physician interactions” (PBS NewsHour). Experiments done on black people had such a great impact on how they view the medical community that they couldn't fathom entrusting their lives to them. With no professional help, many lives were lost. Modern-day scientific racism can be seen in the mindset of many doctors, especially white doctors. The belief that black people don't feel as much pain as white people still exists within the medical community today and it could lead to very dangerous situations. This is demonstrated by The New York Times website which contains many independent journalism articles and has an objective to understand the world. The author Linda Villarosa is a journalist, author, editor, novelist and educator who has written books/articles about poc and reveals that in a 2016 “survey of 222 white medical students...half of them endorsed at least one myth about biological differences between black people and white people...the medical students insisted that black people felt less pain and were less likely to recommend appropriate treatment” (Villarosa). Even after all of the evolution that our society has been through, people with racist beliefs are still given authority over those who they believe that less and can be treated like dolls. Believing that some feel less pain than others puts those in the lower positions in a situation that could potentially cause them to lose their lives.

To continue, articles written about Freedmen's Bureau and the Affordable Care Act prove that people of color should have trust and faith in the US healthcare system because there were also organizations established to give people of color better healthcare access. The Freedmen's Bureau was a bill **legislated** by Abraham Lincoln in 1865. It provided food rations and medical services to newly freed slaves during reconstruction. The History website, an organization whose goal is to create accurate and informative content about historic events from all over the world, wrote an article on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018 to inform the public about the work of the Bureau. It explains that, “During its years of operation, the Freedmen's Bureau fed millions of people, built hospitals and provided medical aid”(History). The Freedmen's Bureau gave black people something that they never had before: access to medical aid that was very much needed. Not only did it do this by furnishing them with hospitals, but by helping them prevent other illnesses that could potentially lead them to more suffering. Then there's the Affordable Care Act (ACA), also known as Obamacare. It was created by the first African American President, Barack Obama in 2010 and its main goal is to make health insurance more accessible. The Kaiser Family Foundation, KFF, posted a graph showing the rates of uninsured people throughout the years to show the effect of the ACA and categorized it by race and ethnicity. The author expresses that, “Between 2010 and 2016, there were large gains in coverage across all racial/ethnic groups under the ACA”(KFF). It is **unequivocal** that Obamacare truly made a change in the accessibility of healthcare and it helped many people get the medical care and financial help that they needed. Many people were able to get treatment to make their everyday lives easier and the mortality rate would have been way higher if it hadn't come to be.

In conclusion, given the history of racism that has been analyzed so far, people of color should have some trust and faith in the US healthcare system because while poc were and are being mistreated during disease outbreaks, and there have been false accusations and oppressive actions that negatively impacted their lives, there were also organizations established to give people of color better healthcare access. There have been instances where people of color got the assistance that they need, but reasons to be afraid and hesitant towards the medical community still exist. Many could say that most of the dangers and oppressive beliefs were in the past, but research has found pseudoscience still engraved in doctors' medical decisions and they usually aren't too helpful for people of color.