



CIPRIANI COLLEGE OF LABOUR AND CO-OPERATIVE STUDIES

Who VAX Yuh!!

Some individuals of the anti-vax movement claim that the vaccines were developed too quickly with little trials whilst the pro vax crowd bellows that those against vaccination have no issue in consuming food that have been engineered for human consumption in a shorter time frame. The pro vax movement cries that vaccination gives you a better chance of survival against the virus whilst their anti vax friends claim that you can still contract the virus if you are vaccinated or not. Whilst could be true and if we are using that basis then after all both Brian Lara and I can play cricket but we would tend to agree that the Prince of Port of Spain has a better chance of survival against a Brett Lee bouncer. In context, the science indicates that you do have better protection against the virus with the vaccine. Locally, the figures state that 88 % of those who seek medical attention at our local facilities are unvaccinated. Then if these are known facts what seems to be the problem? Why is there a local and global uptake of 55%? Vax or no Vax?

As at January 4th 2022 the COVID-19 figures state an excess of 290 million cases and 5.4 million deaths among the global population. A whopping 8.7 billion doses of vaccines administered thus representing a fully vaccinated world population of approximately 55 %. Initially there was a hoarding of vaccines by richer countries but that seems to have dwindled with the increase in the accessibility and number of different vaccines now available. Yes, we do have choices, even locally. Information is available from reputable sources regionally and internationally. World leaders are pleading for good sense to prevail and Omicron is running amok as Usain Bolt did in the 2008- 2016 Olympic games. Records are shattering daily with figures in the UK and the USA reaching insurmountable figures resulting in a migraine for public health officials. Are we in doubt of the information provided to us? Are we questioning the validity of what is being presented to us? Are we shouting at our medical heroes or are we still trying to determine if we should believe information based on the colour of the corner that we believe it emanates from in Trinidad and Tobago? Maybe we should stop and look at ourselves and make the right decision if we believe in red, slow down and understand the consequences of our actions if we believe yellow or quickly speed up, acquire the accurate information and make the right decision if we

believe in green. Those are ultimately the colour decisions that we should be making and nothing else.

The science suggests that vaccination is the best control to the virus in addition to the now mandatory washing of hands, wearing of masks and maintaining social distancing. Many have attributed the poor uptake of vaccines to the lack of leadership in our homes, organizations, community and country. Leaders are responsible for our security, safety and health. Our constitution of Trinidad and Tobago gives us the freedom of speech and movement and leaders have a duty to protect us so that we can engage in this freedom of speech and movement. However, they also have a responsibility to ensure that we are guided into pathways that do not obscure our interpretation of our freedom. Further, Section 6 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of Trinidad and Tobago mandates the employer to provide a safe place of work for its employees. One such way is the completion of a suitable and sufficient risk assessment. Should the employer then institute the recommendation of vaccination if this is deemed as a control measure against the virus? Isn't the employer fulfilling the duties as stated in the Act?

The role of the worker representative is also equally important to guide employees. Their main objective is ensuring that employees are treated equitably by employers and representing them in disputes that may arise. Whilst, representation is key, protecting the safety and health of the employees is paramount. The conversation across the bargaining table should more revolve around ideas for a better working environment under the 'new normal' and creating futuristic opportunities for employees. The focus should be consistent and the need for a new found space in the cusp for the social protection of workers is urgent. Maybe we may begin this new revolution when the definition of a COVID-19 death is received.

Individually, we are responsible for our health and must take personal responsibility for ourselves. The information is readily available for all of us to digest and answer all the questions that we may have. At the end of the day make the correct decision and encourage Brian Lara to face the Brett Lee bouncer and not me. After all, he has the tools necessary to face the enemy.

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