



Dr. Fauci: COVID-19 Revealed “The Undeniable Effects of Racism”

Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Dr. Anthony Fauci, who leads the U.S. COVID-19 response, said Sunday that “the undeniable effects of racism” have led to unacceptable health disparities that especially hurt African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans during the pandemic.

“COVID-19 has shone a bright light on our own society’s failings,” Fauci [said](#) during a graduation ceremony for Emory College of Arts and Sciences.



Anthony Fauci before Congress /AP Images

Speaking by webcast from Washington, D.C., Fauci told the graduates in Atlanta that many members of minority groups work in essential jobs where they might be exposed to the coronavirus. He also said they are more likely to become infected if exposed because of medical conditions such as hypertension, chronic lung disease, diabetes, or obesity.

“Now, very few of these co-morbidities have racial determinants,” Fauci said. “Almost all relate to the social determinants of health dating back to disadvantageous conditions that some people of color find themselves in from birth regarding the availability of an adequate diet, access to healthcare and the undeniable effects of racism in our society.”

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Fauci said correcting societal wrongs will take decades, urging graduates to be part of the solution. He also called the graduates to fight societal divisiveness and work together to forge a new, “even better,” normal.

Meanwhile, once society returns to “some form of normality,” he said, people should not forget that infectious disease has disproportionately hospitalized and killed people of color.

Fauci was awarded the Emory University president’s medal. Previous recipients include former president [Jimmy Carter](#), the [Dalai Lama](#), and the late congressman [John Lewis](#) (D-Ga.).

During his acceptance speech, Fauci praised science and denounced the destructiveness of division:

“Science will provide the solution to this pandemic, as we have seen with the rapid and successful development of multiple safe and highly effective vaccines,” while noting “societal divisiveness is counterproductive in a pandemic. We must not be at odds with each other since the virus is the enemy, not each other.”

“I cannot think of a more inspiring person than Dr. Fauci to address the Class of 2021, whose Emory experience has been so dramatically shaped by the pandemic, and whose resilience and determination have inspired us again and again,” Emory President Gregory L. Fennes said in a [statement](#). “During the past year, Dr. Fauci’s name has become synonymous with truth, clarity and medical expertise. As chief



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on May 17, 2021

physician to our country in the midst of a pandemic, he has become one of the most trusted voices in medicine for millions of Americans, and we are excited to honor him as part of Emory's 176th Commencement."

A little over a month ago, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) declared racism "a threat to communities of color."

Reflecting on the impact of COVID-19, CDC Director Rochelle Walensky [said](#) it was "felt most severely, in communities of color" and that the pandemic "illuminated inequities that have existed for generations" to reveal racism as an "epidemic" impacting public health.

The CDC, whose [goal](#) is the protection of public health and safety through the control and prevention of disease, injury, and disability in the U.S. and worldwide, has now launched a "Racism and Health" [portal](#) to advance the cause of "health equity."

The notion that racism was a public health emergency and opposing it was more important than even the COVID-19 lockdowns was first publicly asserted in June 2020, in a letter signed by some 1,200 public health professionals endorsing the Black Lives Matter "racial justice protests" across the U.S. after the death of George Floyd in Minnesota. This now appears to be the official position of the Biden administration.

If Fauci and Walensky were honest, they'd also observe that [the places](#) hit hardest by the coronavirus outbreak — which have relatively large shares of ethnic and racial minorities and residents living in densely populated urban and suburban areas — are almost all represented by congressional Democrats. The poorest neighborhoods within cities that have been run by Democrats [for decades](#) are bearing the brunt of the virus because of policies that have worsened social and economic conditions for local residents, which [researchers link](#) to higher death rates from COVID. If Fauci wants to label anyone "racist," he should look at the party affiliation of the local mayors and representatives.

The setting for Fauci's speech was more than appropriate. On April 27, "in response to a Black Lives Matter movement," Emory College of Arts and Sciences [released](#) additional information about the new Race and Ethnicity (ETHN) General Education Requirement, which will "require first-year students starting in fall 2021 to complete one course under the ETHN designation in the Course Atlas."



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