



**culturebeat**  
**PULSE**

# PURPOSE

In our world today, with myriad sources for information, the pervasiveness of social networks, and the fragmentation of media, keeping track of what matters can be difficult. More importantly, making sense of how the news and events coming from these sources may impact your brand and your marketing strategy is now more important than ever before.

*CultureBeat*® PULSE is our humble initiative to bring you a consolidated, curated ensemble of relevant topics on multiculturalism and multicultural consumers. Our goal is to keep you well-informed about what's going on in our society and marketplace and, most importantly, why it matters.

In each edition, our multicultural research practitioners will bring you a mini collection of newsworthy events, conversations, and trends that are culturally relevant—with an informed point of view on why people from different walks of life, cultures, and ethnicities should matter to your organization, with the intent to serve as thought and conversation starters for the marketing community.

*The realities we are living at the moment of this issue of CultureBeat Pulse will forever leave an imprint in our lives and memories. By definition, pandemics are universal and don't discriminate; however, it would be a disservice to ignore or turn a blind eye to the unique circumstances in which minorities and different cultures find themselves coping with and fighting against the outbreak. This issue of Pulse aims to bring to light some of the inconspicuous and more obscure challenges multicultural consumers face.*

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## LIVE CONSUMER PANEL DISCUSSIONS:

In an effort to stay attuned to the constantly evolving challenges consumers are facing right now, and how their behaviors are adapting during the pandemic, C+R Research developed a live consumer panel series, *Consumer Connections - The COVID-19 Chronicles*. These panels have been enlightening to our clients in understanding how to address real consumer needs and sentiments. We invite you to [view the recording](#) of the fourth consumer panel discussion in the series, which focused on multicultural consumers.

# MULTICULTURALS AND THE NOVEL CORONAVIRUS: WHAT MARKETERS SHOULD CONSIDER GOING FORWARD

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These days are anything but normal. We are living historic times, the type of realities that our grandchildren will ask questions about and textbooks will report on for generations to come. My 7-year-old son won't get to see his classmates and beloved teacher until who knows when. This morning he asked, why are all the news talking about the coronavirus only, all the time?' The severity of the situation is beyond his comprehension... and quite honestly, beyond my own as well.

We are fortunate to have shelter and food, work good jobs, have savings and the ability to stay home. I am a market researcher and while travel is my usual normal, there are plenty of online alternatives that allow me to continue doing consumer research. My wife is a kindergarten teacher, and although she's devastated not to be able to fulfill her mission the way she knows best, online resources and remote schooling help.

I count myself lucky. Blessed is the right word! Being a remote employee, I have a proper home office set up. I have just about everything I can possibly need to be fully operational. But the reality for most people is not like mine. As states throughout the land established shelter in place orders, hordes of people of all backgrounds, ethnicities and colors were simply

unable to stay at home and earn a living. That reality, however, is far more poignant for minorities.

COVID-19 is an equal opportunity virus and doesn't discriminate, yet minorities are more at risk for a variety of reasons.

## OCCUPATIONS AND ABILITY TO TELEWORK

As essential as it is for the slowing of the virus transmission and avoiding our health system being brought to its knees, staying at home is especially unviable for people of color.

You've seen it before: remember the Thanksgiving meme where a family prays thanking Jesus for their food and a Hispanic farmworker in a separate frame responding? How about all the jokes you've heard about Hispanics and landscaping? Or the stereotypes about Blacks filling low-impact or entry level positions like custodial jobs or fast-food restaurant workers? Arguably, there is some truth in humor as much as it might misrepresent everyone's realities. And let's face it, it is not until we approach the breaking point that we appreciate the true value of those working other truly essential jobs like growing and harvesting our food and keeping facilities clean and running, keeping our assembly lines running, and



our gas stations open so trucks can deliver goods to all corners. Without them, we would all be doomed!

Just think about the ominous possibility of a major disruption to our fresh produce and food supply chain: our growers heavily depend on immigrants and minorities for their crops. Both NBC and BuzzFeed have reported about the very real risk farmworkers face in two of our main food producing states, [California](#) and [Florida](#).

Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics unequivocally suggests that Hispanics and Blacks are at greater risk in the current pandemic situation. In its “Job Flexibilities and Work Schedules 2017-2018” survey report, the BLS notes:

16% of workers\* of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity have the ability to work at home while 20% of Black or African Americans are able to do so. Contrast those figures with the 30% of Non-Hispanic Whites and 37% of Asian origin workers, and the differences are telling of a reality that is likely to have an impact in each group's exposure to the virus but also in their long-term identity as workforce and consumer groups.

These numbers are not intended to serve as arguments for a fairness discussion, they are simply facts that cannot be ignored. All those ‘basic’ jobs are needed and indeed vital for our economy.

## PREEXISTING CONDITIONS AND ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

One of the abundantly reported traits of the novel coronavirus is how it affects patients differently based on their age and on the presence of preexisting conditions. While on the bright side

multicultural populations are generally younger, it has been widely documented that minorities often face an uphill battle driven by healthcare disparities.

According to data from the CDC, compared to Non-Hispanic Whites, Blacks, Hispanics and other minorities are more likely to have preexisting conditions like...

- **Diabetes** (72% more likely among Blacks and 63% more likely among Hispanics)
- **Obesity** (23% more likely among Blacks and 24% more likely among Hispanics)
- **Asthma** (75% more likely among Latinos, 20% more likely among Blacks)
- **Heart disease** (25% more likely among Blacks, 40% more likely among American Indians and Alaska Natives)

As most things in life, there's a lot of intertwining when it comes to health among minorities: the problem of prevalent conditions is met with a greater likelihood of being underinsured or completely uninsured. The Kaiser Family Foundation, a respected non-profit organization that focuses on national health issues, loudly brings to light that despite the coverage expansions and gains made possible by the ACA, [minorities are still at a disadvantage when it comes to health insurance](#):

The coverage gains under the ACA reduced percentage point differences in uninsured rates between some groups of color and Whites, but disparities persist. As of 2018, most groups of color remained more likely to be uninsured compared to Whites.





## MULTIGENERATIONAL HOUSEHOLDS, DWELLINGS AND TRANSPORTATION

Recent years have seen an [increasing trend towards multigenerational households](#) across the board and irrespective of ethnicity and cultural background. And it is only natural, since the health needs of Boomers lead many to need care from their children.

In 2016, John Burns Real Estate Consulting firm reported that as many as 44% of new home shoppers *'would like to accommodate their elderly parents'* in their new homes.

But while multigenerational households may be newer to the general population, they have been quite the norm among Hispanics, Asians and Blacks for a very long time, with family arrangements where it is not unusual to see grandparents, aunts and uncles, nephews and nieces, etc. living under the same roof--both for financial reasons and cultural reasons.

With more people under the same roof, the risk of exposure increases in equal proportion and ultimately poses a greater risk for these minority groups.

Fueled by the 2008 recession, [multigenerational households grew significantly among minorities](#) as reported by Pew Research Center:

**"From 2007 to 2009, the sharpest growth in the multi-generational household population was among Hispanics (17.6%) and Americans of two or more races (24.4%). The Black population in these households grew by 8.7% from 2007 to 2009, the non-Hispanic White population by 8.5% and the Asian population by 7.3%"**

Further complicating the issue, despite recent waves of homeownership gains among Hispanics and them fueling a significant increase in U.S. homeownership overall, [Hispanics](#) and [African American](#) homeownership ratios are well below those of other groups, the Urban Institute reports. Goes without saying that a large portion of those people who are not homeowners live in apartments and other multi-family residential dwellings: more people + smaller spaces... you can see our point.

Similarly, minorities are more likely to rely on public transportation than on their own vehicles, especially

in [urban settings](#), which at this stage are also the hotbeds for COVID-19.

## LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Imagine having to explain something to a physician (if you have access to one), when you speak a different language!

Healthcare networks, hospitals, community advocacy groups and the overall network of providers have made great strides to ensure patients are able to communicate with medical staff, in many cases by recruiting minority physicians who speak more than one language and, in others, by having in-house interpretation services. These solutions have alleviated (at least partially) the problem of language barriers... under normal circumstances. But the COVID-19 has proven that nothing is normal these days, and patients are now inundating hospitals and health centers often without the help from a relative to go with them and translate.

And the problem starts even before that: without appropriate, timely and accurate information on hand, non-English speaking minorities are at a greater disadvantage, an issue that has led some [politicians to raise a red flag and urge agencies for a change](#). Importantly, this is a problem that affects [more than just large metropolis](#) and is likely to impact people in the thousands, beyond Hispanics, given the Migration Policy Institute's estimate that "About 25 million Americans did not speak English proficiently in 2015."



## OUR POV

**Things are changing day by day, even hour to hour. Not too long ago, children were running around in their school playgrounds; airlines were flying without restrictions; and people were shopping in supermarkets without worrying too much about standing close to other shoppers. For the time being, that is all gone!**

**It would not be prudent for us to make a prediction about the outcome of this pandemic, but we can take a cue from past crises and what we know about multicultural consumers and their relationships with brands. So, here are CultureBeat's key take-aways for you and your brands to consider:**

1. Be kind and generous, to everyone regardless of ethnicity. If your company is able to donate goods or otherwise help ease the situation, remember the golden rule, and treat others as you want to be treated without looking at their background, ethnicity and skin color. We are all in this together, and together we can lift each other. We are in awe of the generosity and creativity of many companies. If you can't donate money or goods, think of ways you can facilitate a transition for those impacted, like this [ad agency](#) who brought together two clients to save jobs in their community.
2. Act cautiously, but don't stop cold turkey! "Never waste a good crisis" is something you have likely heard more in the past two months than you ever did, and while who said it first is debatable, it surely is an opportune maxim. It is natural for brands and companies to be cautious with their spending when the looming financial impact of the pandemic causes so much uncertainty and anxiety, but pumping the brakes to a complete stop is likely to create a greater disconnect between brands and multicultural consumers. Savvy brands and marketers should continue to learn about these key consumer targets and should continue to invest in understanding them and communicating with them, even if it requires a surgical precision approach. Consumers continue to want brands and consume products because they offer a sense of normality and comfort in times of uncertainty.
3. Be purposeful and empathetic. We encourage you to continue your branding and marketing efforts but argue that understanding multicultural consumers is now as important as ever. Recognizing the challenges they face in this pandemic and delivering a relevant and empathetic message must be part of your guardrails:
  - if your brand uses an approach that sidelines their needs or negates the realities of their situation, it is likely to come across as trivialized, and in the long run, might hurt your image.
4. Balance traditional and digital. In an era of social distancing, traditional and digital media have become sources of comfort for families across the land, from movies to videogames and schooling. Fortunately, for brands that target multiculturals, ethnic groups like Blacks and Hispanics have historically been at the forefront of media consumption and technology use.
5. Make your brand an advocate, and put skin in the game. We celebrate the companies and brands that have donated product and money to their communities and healthcare workers in this time of crisis. And consumers remember that actions speak louder than words. Multiculturals are loyal to brands that lift up their communities: work to become an advocate for minorities and lend a hand in these times of need, be it with financial contributions to hospitals in areas where minorities are prevalent or with food for children and families in need because they normally get their food at school.
6. Continue talking to and understanding multiculturals. We are all realigning these days, we're navigating uncertain times and figuring things out one step at a time; and we have seen brands postpone research because of the many travel restrictions. Fortunately, there are many ways in which you can conduct successful and impactful research without having to travel, both in qualitative and quantitative. Once things normalize again, your brand will be in a better position to act if you don't have to revamp your insights efforts from zero.

# JEWISH TRADITIONS AND HOW DISTANCE BRINGS CULTURE INTO THE SPOTLIGHT

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“Why is this night different from all other nights?”

It’s a question I grew up asking every year as part of Four Questions in the Passover Seder. Though I’m no longer the youngest person at my family’s Seder (and thus, by tradition, the one to ask the four questions), I feel that this question bears special significance this year. While usually the night is different from other nights because of the specific rituals and traditions, this night felt different in other ways. Every spring, Jewish families gather together to retell the story of the Jews being freed from slavery in Egypt and share symbolic foods (bitter herbs to remember tears, matzah—unleavened bread—because there was no time for the slaves to let their bread rise, and more). But how can you gather together and share a meal in the middle of a global pandemic?

This year, like millions of Jews, I found my family meeting for Passover over Zoom. As we dealt with Wi-Fi lags, a 40-minute time limit, and the awkwardness of trying to sing “dayenu” while knowing that if you sing loudest, Zoom will show you full screen, I thought about how many ways this Passover was different not just from all other nights, but from all other Passover celebrations.

- For many, myself included, this was the first year in recent memory where the whole family gathered

together. Usually, geographical constraints prevent at least one person from attending—but when no one needs to travel, coordinating a large gathering becomes easier. Perhaps in the future, we’ll be more open to having family members attend virtually. After all, a pandemic isn’t the only reason someone might not be able to be in the same physical space with their family.

- For those fortunate enough to receive invitations to multiple Seders, this year, it was easier than ever before to be in two places at once. While usually one would need to choose between sides of the family, this year, going to two Seders could be as simple as pressing a button.
- Further, likely because of the jarring experience of trying to enact an in-person ritual over video conference, it felt like many people were more inclined to reach out and check in on their extended family. When everyone’s aware of just how disconnected they are, more people try to bridge the gap.
- Traditionally, Passover Seders involve ritual handwashing. I think there’s a very good chance that I’m right when I say the majority of Seders this year also included a timely joke about handwashing. (Or one about Elijah, the prophet

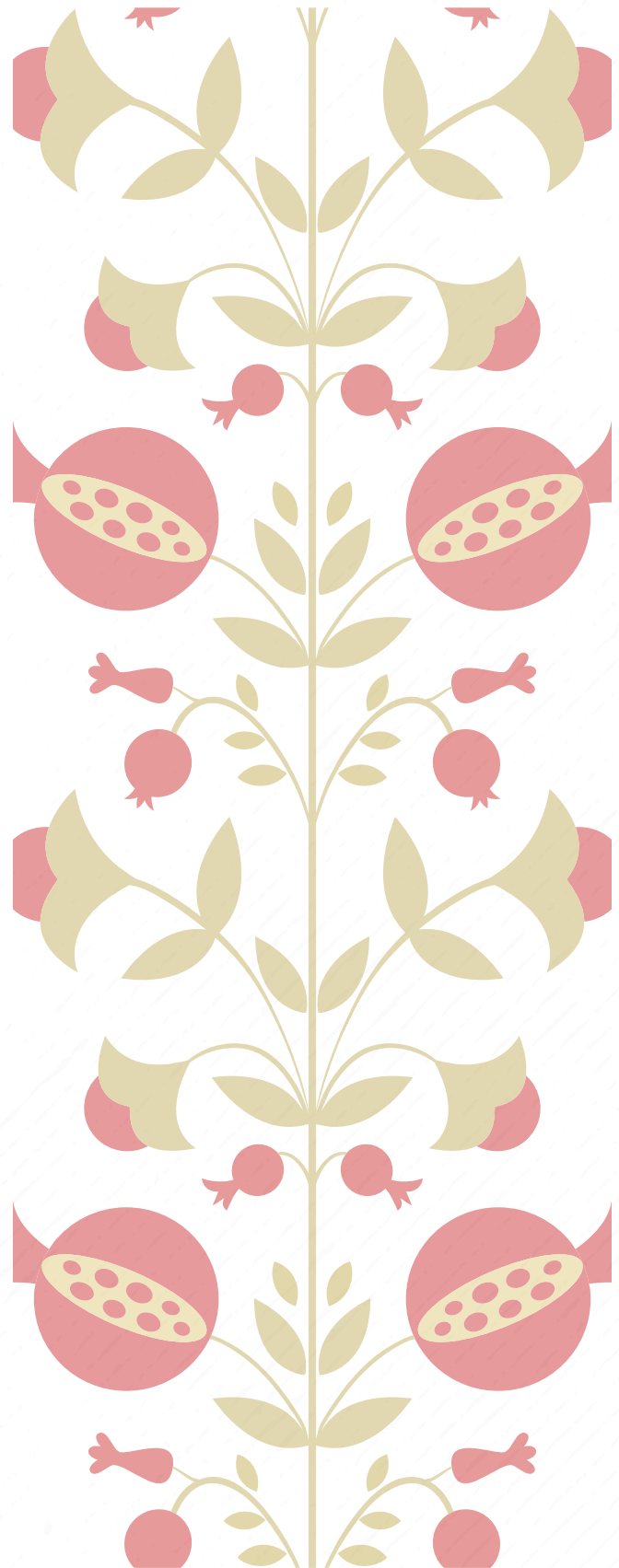


who is said to visit each home on Passover, not practicing social distancing. Or one about COVID-19 as the 11th of the ten plagues. Or one about this night being different from all other nights. My family's Seder contained all four—and I don't think we're that original.)

- Passover is a holiday with several traditional foods—but this year, many had to make substitutions. In a world where going to the grocery store poses a risk and going from store to store to find specialty items could endanger the health of the entire community, it's no wonder people—especially those who celebrate for reasons that are more cultural than religious—got creative and used what they had on hand. In some ways, though, this is in keeping with the idea of the holiday. After all, what is matzo but the unleavened bread the Jews leaving Egypt ate because they didn't have time to wait for it to rise?

Despite all of these differences, I was struck by how *similar* the stories I heard from friends and family, and on social media, sounded to each other. While this Passover was different from other Passovers, new traditions and patterns emerged with astonishing speed. Case in point: when I went to share a picture of the chocolate toffee matzo I made to my Instagram story, Instagram suggested I add a sticker saying “Zoom Seder Vibes” to the image. In the span of a couple of weeks, “Zoom Seder” went from sounding like two words strung together at random to something ubiquitous and meaningful.

We live a reality that is global and interconnected, now more than ever, and ideas spread quickly... especially when people have no shortage of time to spend in their homes, browsing the internet. The specific experiences discussed above may relate to Passover, but the themes of making do with what's on hand, staying in touch with family, checking in on others, and adopting new traditions in the blink of an eye are happening all over the world. Both mass culture and subcultures are going to change permanently after the pandemic passes—and now is the time to pay attention to how ideas spread as people find new ways to be resilient.



# ANTI-ASIAN SENTIMENT STEMMING FROM COVID-19

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It's no secret that many of the people on the frontlines of our healthcare system are of Asian descent. Specifically, many of these doctors, nurses and other healthcare practitioners are US-born East Asian and of Chinese heritage.

It should go without saying, but these citizens are just as American and just as patriotic as anyone else; and many are the unyielding warriors fighting against this invisible enemy that is COVID-19. But as history has shown time and time again, ignorance can lead to fear, and some of these frontline heroes are being wrongfully vilified for the existence of this disease.

## THE NEED TO POINT FINGERS

Stories of [verbal discouragement and physical attacks in the US](#) are multiplying as this disease has spread. These hateful attacks, particularly toward East Asians, have taken a more dangerous turn as the

number of COVID-19 cases has risen at an alarming pace.

[Stop AAPI Hate](#) is collecting reports of “microaggressions, racial profiling, hate incidents and violence” for the Asian and Pacific Islander American Community during this time. Over 1,000 self-reported incidents were cited within the [first two weeks of their launch](#)—a slice of the hostilities that are being reported in mainstream media. These are a few examples of what's happening:

- An Asian American ER doctor in NY went to [get equipment like masks and face shields at Home Depot for his team](#) - he was harassed and insulted.
- An Asian American architect in New York was on the subway before the citywide stay-at-home order when a [man lurched at her and shouted](#), “You people brought the virus. Go back to China.”



- A middle-aged man started shouting at a young Chinese immigrant about China; as a bus passed, he screamed for it to “run them over!” He continued to follow her, and [he spat at her](#) as she waited to cross the street.
- An Asian man was [stabbed 13 times](#) while wearing a surgical mask in Brooklyn.

During a recent live consumer panel with multiculturals held by C+R Research, an African American emergency room nurse from New York recounted of patients’ objections and disdain towards Asian and Asian Americans in the hospital where she works:

**“It started with the president [stating] this is a Chinese virus. That was so out of pocket. They didn’t cause it. It was disrespectful.” Live consumer panel participant.**

**“I think racism will be a lot worse. People put this thought in their head, the media makes it worse, hating someone. I see it every day, so I feel it’ll get worse.” Live consumer panel participant.**

Scientists and other global health officials are still trying to determine how COVID-19 started, where it came from and how it spread to humans. One of the origin stories is set in Wuhan, China’s Huanan market, which has been linked to several of China’s first coronavirus patients. That said, while these efforts to understand the ravaging disease are underway, not all people of a certain ethnicity are “bad” because of something that was instigated in another country.

In fact, recent studies have shed evidence that travelers who came from European countries likely contributed to the surge in US cases.

## WHAT OUR HISTORY SHOWS

As a society as a whole, but also as marketers and business communities, it is important to acknowledge that these crimes exist, and ignoring our own history could lead to heinous and deep chasms.

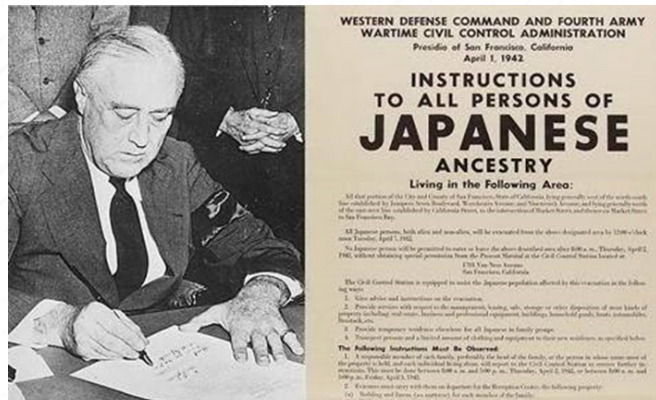
Anti-Asian sentiment in America took an extreme turn for the worst in its national internment of people of Japanese descent during post-WII, after the attack on Pearl Harbor. At that time, rampant public hostility led Japanese Americans to leave

their homes and jobs to live in internment camps. They were not permitted to take with them any more than they could carry, resulting in loss of property, theft and vandalism, and frozen bank accounts with funds that were never returned after the war. The final internment camp closed in 1945; and in 1976, President Gerald Ford issued a formal statement proclaiming the internment of these citizens as “wrong” as well as “a national mistake which shall never again be repeated.”

It’s easy to point your finger at someone who looks different. However, this xenophobia against East Asians is unacceptable and only generates greater ignorance and fear. Now is not the time to look away, and individuals as well as corporations and brands alike can play a key role in setting the record straight, denouncing such acts and speaking against them.

***In the 1880s, a federal law dotted “the Chinese Exclusion Act” was signed by then president Chester Arthur, effectively banning the immigration of Chinese laborers and making them ineligible for naturalization.***

***The law is proof that racism can be rampant in a situation where fear precedes reason and facts; it is a reminder of the unfair treatment that other racial groups, including African Americans, American Muslims and South Asian Americans, have endured across US history.***



# CLINGING TO THE FAMILIAR: HOW A VIRUS MAY MAKE YOU LOVE ETHNIC CUISINE A LITTLE BIT MORE

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Whether panic drove consumers to buying an abundance of paper goods such as toilet paper, or stocking up their pantries with shelf stable products and essentials, we are all part and parcel of shifts in consumer behavior because of COVID-19.

This time in history is (and will be for decades to come) fertile ground for the study and experimentation of behaviors and attitudes. Panic-triggered behavior and increased demand have led to shortages at grocery stores around the globe, including in your area. In response, consumers are getting creative—"Necessity is the mother of invention," says the old adage. As droves of panic-stricken shoppers cleaned out shelves and bread became a prized treasure to find, consumers turned to something they perhaps hadn't done in the past: making their own bread from scratch.

These shifts aren't singular to one consumer segment but, rather, are happening among multicultural and minority consumer groups as well. For instance, Mexican communities (and taco lovers across America) are dealing with lower supplies of [tortillas](#) (a staple in Mexican cuisine) in [Chicago, Michigan, and Virginia](#) and are turning to making their own tortillas from scratch, causing shortages in corn flour. To make matters worse, some smaller ethnic grocery stores, like Asian or Indian stores, have announced closures for the time being, leaving consumers scrambling to stock up on spices and [ingredients from home](#). Though larger chains might carry some of these products, they are typically sectioned to just one aisle and offer only a modest assortment, leaving

these consumers with very limited options to choose from.

How long these temporary shifts in consumer behavior will last remains unknown, but it is likely going to leave an imprint in consumers' behaviors in the long run. In the meantime, this may be an opportunity for larger chains to include more multicultural products to keep up with demand, something multicultural marketing practitioners have long advocated for.



# A SPOTLIGHT ON MULTICULTURAL TOYS DURING QUARANTINE

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Easter 2020 has come and gone, but it won't be forgotten. Many children enjoyed their at-home egg hunts and Easter-themed crafts, but American families celebrated a different type of holiday, with socially distanced Zoom calls to extended family members or ordering a meal out instead of dining with their grandparents. Some families watched Disney and Pixar's *Onward* or DreamWorks' *Trolls World Tour* at home; films that they might've ordinarily watched at their local theater.

Parents returned to the work week facing the continuing lack of external schooling or daycare supervision for their children. Stay-at-home restrictions are extended in most states, and the school year is ending abruptly.

What has persisted for parents is a need for tangible toys or games that compel their kids to spend quality time away from screens. This situation has particularly highlighted the need for indoor-use toys, toys for independent play, games for the entire family, playsets that facilitate pretend/imaginative play, and ways to burn-off physical energy.

Furthermore, to help kids embrace a more multicultural world, we believe that exposure to a variety of cross-cultural and culturally sensitive toys is part of a healthy multicultural upbringing. We'll look at some products that could potentially introduce kids to new cultures, expand their vocabularies, foster self-awareness, and invite conversations about other cultural backgrounds.

These types of toys don't always make it to store shelves at brick-and-mortar stores, but many of them are available online, which happens to be the safest way to buy toys right now.

First up, there are lots of fun, culturally inspired, play food options for consideration. Each of these products is not only an excellent option for imaginative and cooperative play, but they also expose kids to new foods and flavors at a young age. Play food sets like this can also help to normalize the food that is prepared and eaten in many families' homes:

- Learning Resources New Sprouts' [Stir Fry set](#) and its coordinating [Multicultural Food Set](#) collection, which includes pita bread, samosa and a bowl of rice among its 15 pieces.
- Melissa and Doug [Fill & Fold Taco & Tortilla Set](#)
- Melissa & Doug [Sushi Slicing Set](#) or the larger, more elaborate [Wrap & Slice Sushi Counter Toy](#)





For ages 3+, ShopDisney carries [16" dolls of Tiana](#), from the film *The Princess and the Frog*, portrayed as a toddler wearing a precious satin dress and holding a plush frog. With its setting in New Orleans, the film is remarkably celebrating its 10th anniversary this year. There is also a striking [12.5" "Two Reflections" Mulan doll](#) that wears a "matchmaker dress" or body armor, as well as a [Warrior Bow and Arrow \(foam\) play set](#) for older children (ages 8+); these Mulan playsets honor one of China's greatest warriors:



Moving onto a different category, another gender-neutral option is a collection of [construction tools and accessories](#) by Kidzlane, that can be easily shared among a few kids for cooperative/pretend play:



For an entirely gender-neutral option, Pottery Barn Kids has a modern collection of [wooden kitchen appliances](#) that are interactive and includes fun accessories for anyone who is playing house:



This [Big Builders Pro Workshop](#) by Step 2 is an interactive construction play space option that could be enjoyed by multiple kids at the same time; it even includes a semi-assembled birdhouse that changes colors when you "paint" it:



We would be remiss if we didn't include two gender-neutral perennial favorites: Lego and Play Doh.

[Lego Duplo Town World Animals playset](#) (121 pieces) features a nice set of habitats and mini ecosystems for toy animals and a host of multicultural travelers to broaden kids' imaginations and their world of storytelling:



This [Play Doh Play 'n Store Arts & Crafts Activity Table](#) is another great gift idea that fosters creativity and effectively corrals the mess of the Play Doh into one play area (and not your kitchen table/counters):



Some of us can remember how frustrating it can be to find the right colors to represent skin colors beyond the basic apricot or brown colors. Crayola

offers a perfect option with its multicultural markers and crayons:



While we would love to see even more of these colors find their way into more mainstream packs of crayons, this could be part of a great gift idea for young kids, especially with some new coloring books of their favorite characters!

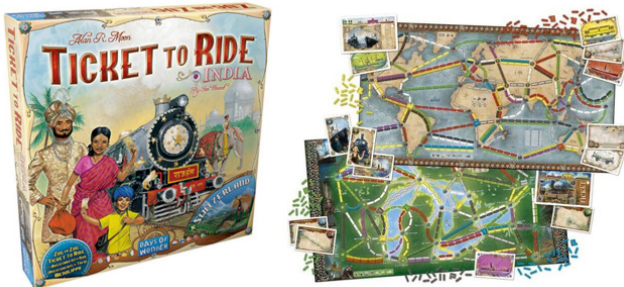
Kids of all ages might also appreciate this fun [Scratch Art Box of Rainbow Mini Notes](#) by Melissa & Doug to etch doodles and create colorful notes to express themselves. The included wooden stylus reveals the colors underneath with a simple scratch:



For kids ages 10+, Ticket to Ride by Days of Wonder is a fun cross-country train adventure board game in which players match colorful train cards to claim railway routes across various countries; while the base game can be found in Target stores, there are



special double-sided map expansions such as [Heart of Africa](#), [India](#), [Japan](#) and [Asia](#) available online and in local, specialty game stores. A variant of this game, [Ticket to Ride: Rails and Sails](#), takes travelers on a worldwide adventure across railroad tracks and oceans. (Bonus: its flip side has a map of the Great Lakes in North America, including Lake Michigan, right outside C+R's front door.)



These are just a few of our thoughts as parents continue to shop for multicultural toys during quarantine. Multicultural toys can be educational as well as fun ways to expand existing toy collections and fit in well with their more mainstream counterparts. We'd love to hear any other ideas on how to put a more multicultural spin on kids' playtimes with popular or up-and-coming offerings.





# CHALLENGES AFRICAN AMERICANS FACE AMID THE PANDEMIC

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As CDC guidelines were put in place informing possible ways to combat coronavirus, the highest risk group, African Americans, were challenged with incorporating these recommendations into their daily lives. Efforts to practice sheltering in place were met with resistance by those holding essential jobs, while social distancing posed a threat to the rich customs and traditions that are inherent to the social health of the African American culture. With these mandates going into effect, African Americans found themselves in a progressive struggle with their new normal but, in some cases, rallied to the challenge.

## SHELTERING IN PLACE AND THE ESSENTIAL WORKER

With local governments around the nation instituting shelter-in-place orders, much of the workforce has transitioned to working from home; however, many essential workers do not have that option. They are our grocery store workers, delivery drivers, trash collectors, maintenance workers, postal workers and more—positions that are largely held by African Americans. According to the [USPS](#), more than 20% of US postal workers, nationwide, are Black. Reuters reported that [75% to 80%](#) of letter carriers in the Chicago area alone are Black. With [minimal savings](#), the concern for their safety during the coronavirus outbreak has taken a backseat to their need to keep

working as the ability to take care of their families is paramount. African Americans feel fortunate to have jobs in the wake of the current economy, and they worry about not being able to bring home a paycheck.



Many essential workers travel to work using public transportation. This, coupled with African Americans' predisposition to diseases like diabetes and hypertension, put them at even greater risk of both contracting and fighting off the virus. So, in an effort to minimize contagion, some wear gloves and masks as the CDC has recommended. However, this is a challenge as some Black men opt to forego wearing a mask due to a perception of criminology associated with African American men which they

feel could be exacerbated by wearing a mask. This may appear to be an extreme thought-process, but consider, for example, what happened with [Trayvon Martin](#). Racial profiling is a practice that African Americans regularly consider as they make decisions about how to present themselves in society, not just in how they behave, but also with how they dress. Sadly, African Americans are not alone in this belief that certain groups are treated poorly due to their ethnicity. During C+R's recent live consumer panel with multicultural consumers, the panel unanimously said that they expect racism to remain the same or to get worse in the future. Society's inability to eliminate racial profiling will inevitably play a large part in why groups like African Americans make decisions that may be contrary to agency recommendations.

## HAIRCARE AND COVID-19

As we touch on considerations African Americans ponder as they prepare to leave their homes and to present themselves to the rest of the world, we turn to a discussion about hair as many African Americans are uniquely identified by their natural hair type; and haircare during COVID-19 has presented an interesting time for both men and women of color. African Americans have struggled among themselves, and even in the workplace, to be accepted for their sponged hairstyles, dreadlocks and other natural hairstyles. Is this now the time to get past narrow views about dreadlocks, for instance, and see the person beneath the hair? Though the movement to embrace their natural hair started years ago, some Black women hadn't taken the leap for any number of reasons. The transition from relaxers or weaves to natural hair is not always a smooth transition, but many women find themselves now forced into wearing their natural hair as relaxers and weaves have maintenance schedules that have to be adhered to in order to protect the hair from damage. With salons now closed and lack of skill in administering self-haircare to maintain these salon looks, natural hair it is! Sheltering in place has provided a nice span of time for Black women, in particular, to experiment with wearing their natural hair. How accessible ethnic products are during this time is the challenge as beauty supply stores that provide specialty products

are closed down. While African Americans miss the beauty and barber shops, this is a great time to take the journey down heritage lane!



## COMMUNITY + SOCIAL = A GOOD LIFE

“Yes, Mama threw down on that Easter dinner”; or “The choir was off the chain at Resurrection Sunday service!” These are just a few sentiments that you might hear shared in beauty salons or barber shops—places which have long held endeared social status for African Americans. But, these types of conversation were absent in these spaces this year. Known for their gregariousness and disposition for sociability, the concept of social distancing is in genuine conflict with African American norms. African Americans thrive on bringing excitement to their culture through socialization. So, how, then, does a social community keep social practices alive from a distance of 6 feet?

Social activities for African Americans boast myriad options, from card games, to dancing, to soul food dinners, to BBQ gatherings, to worshipping together, and much, much more. To keep this going, African Americans have turned to streaming services like Facebook Live and Zoom where they host virtual house parties, brunches, even extended family game nights. There is no end to putting that digital savvy in place to keep being social alive.





Regardless of cultural differences, we find ourselves in a common fight to bring some sense of normalcy back to our lives. There are many lessons that will come out of this pandemic, and we hope that a universal respect for our shared struggle and our differences are among those lessons learned.

Even religion has taken to the digital stage. For African Americans, faith and church is a pillar of their community and encourages solidarity and worship. This connectedness instills a sense of hope and represents a lifeline and a center of activity that impacts their lives on many levels. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the desire for that hope and the longing for a sense of community is more present than ever. Some African Americans continue to dress up for their weekly church services with men donning suits and bowties while women dress in their colorful, fancy suits or dresses adorned by elaborate, decorative hats before heading over to their computer screens to view their streamed service. African Americans believe that they should dress up for God, who this faith-based community believes will protect and carry them through this pandemic.



# THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY & COVID-19: THE NOT-SO-OBVIOUS WAYS THE VULNERABLE CAN BE AT GREATER RISK

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Like other marginalized populations, the LGBTQ community is particularly vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and other LGBTQ organizations note that LGBTQ people have higher risk of exposure to the disease, are more likely to have conditions that exacerbate the virus, and have more barriers to getting medical care.

LGBTQ people are more likely to work in industries such as restaurants & food service, hospitals, and retail where they are at greater risk to be in contact with the virus. Furthermore, a disproportionate number of homeless young people are LGBTQ youth - likely due to being kicked out by their parents for their sexuality or gender identity. Those who are

homeless - and thus also have less access to soap, hand sanitizer, and other hygiene products that help combat the spread of the coronavirus - are at greater risk.

A lack of access to adequate medical care & paid medical leave further amplify the impact of COVID-19. Many distrust the health care system - due to discrimination and how the AIDS crisis was handled - so they avoid seeking medical care even when necessary. And since LGBTQ people are more likely to smoke and may have more compromised immune systems from higher rates of cancer & HIV, they are particularly susceptible if they get infected. Lack of federal employment protections mean many will avoid disclosing their sexuality, which further





limits their access to health insurance and paid medical leave to take time off to care for themselves or their family members.

While physical distancing has a negative impact on mental health for many, the LGBTQ community is especially vulnerable here. LGBTQ youth especially have higher rates of mental health issues including depression and anxiety. Mental health services and positive social interactions are more difficult to access now as schools, youth programs, and community centers shut down or reduce hours/services – potentially leaving LGBTQ youth trapped at home with unaccepting family members. Furthermore, hospital systems have postponed non-emergency surgeries/procedures, which includes gender-affirming procedures that have been shown to improve mental health & long-term well-being.

Blood donations are another way the LGBTQ community has been affected by COVID-19. The urgent need for blood has caused the FDA to implement new rules for blood donations. Previously, men who have had sex with other men were required to wait twelve months before giving blood – the FDA's new rules have shortened this wait time to three months to increase donations during this shortage. Restrictions for gay men were first imposed as a lifetime ban during the AIDS epidemic as an attempt to prevent the spread of HIV via blood transfusions. Given how quickly modern blood screenings can detect HIV, leading gay rights advocates say any wait time is unnecessary and stigmatizes gay and bisexual men, but they appreciate the rule change as a step in the right direction.

LGBTQ people have always had to look outside of their homes to find community. The bar scene, going back to even before Stonewall, has always represented an important way for LGBTQ people to connect. The arrival of the Internet brought even more avenues for connection & advocacy. With community centers, bars, and other physical queer spaces temporarily closed due to stay-at-home orders, LGBTQ people are turning to the Internet even more to find community. The HRC, LGBTQ community centers, and college campus groups

have started hosting virtual gatherings as substitutes for in-person gatherings in order to provide a safe space for LGBTQ people to connect. Nights out at your local gay bar are being replaced by virtual queer clubs – such as Club Quarantine and Queer House Party – many of which started with a couple of friends and have quickly exploded to include LGBTQ youth across North America and Europe. Drag is also finding ways to go virtual with their Drag Queen Story Hour and their month-long Digital Drag Fest 2020. LGBTQ artists and podcasters are turning to the Internet to replace canceled events with livestreamed concerts & other performances, karaoke nights, LGBTQ film watch parties, and trivia nights.

With Pride month quickly approaching in June, we're excited to see what the LGBTQ community comes up with since we know even if cities cancel the parades, COVID-19 can't stop LGBTQ people from connecting with each other and celebrating their community.





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