

**LIVE Coronavirus** >

# Sandra Lindsay reflects on her vaccine, 1 year later: 'I felt like it was my civic duty.'

**By Precious Fondren**

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If ever again given the opportunity to be the first person in the United States to receive a coronavirus vaccine, even while knowing what comes with being the first to do anything, Sandra Lindsay said she would do it all over.

It's been a year since Ms. Lindsay, 53, the director of critical care nursing at Long Island Jewish Medical Center, became the first person in the country to be vaccinated against the coronavirus outside a clinical trial.

Since then she has received an award for her contributions to the country from President Biden and a flood of messages from people nationwide praising her for her courage. She has continued to advocate the importance of vaccinations to those who may be hesitant.

Ms. Lindsay said she had no idea that when she got the shot, she would be making history. She simply wanted to get vaccinated early to alleviate her own fears around the virus and to set an example for those in her community.

“It was like a huge weight was lifted off my shoulders,” she said. “And I felt like it was my civic duty, as well as my professional responsibility, to do my part. I look back now with a lot of pride, knowing that I did my part in helping to put an end to this pandemic.”

Ms. Lindsay said that while she did receive plenty of critical comments from social media users, who questioned why a Black woman had to go first, the influx of positive messages thanking her for her bravery outweighed them.

She also said she knew that the single act of receiving the vaccine won’t undo the years of racist and unethical practices people of color have experienced in the medical field, and the fear and mistrust many have developed as a result. But she still hopes to serve as a signal to those who are skeptical that it’s OK to begin trusting medicine and science.

“People were saying, ‘Of course they had to choose a Black woman to be the guinea pig,’ and they were wondering if I wasn’t aware of the Tuskegee study,” she said, referring to trials that began in 1932 and withheld treatment from Black men with syphilis to analyze the effects. “My brother just kindly informed people that I was well educated and I was in a doctoral program.”

More than 200 million people have been fully vaccinated in the United States, or roughly 60 percent of the population, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

But Ms. Lindsay said the numbers should be higher.

“I was hoping for a faster sprint across the finish line, and we have not seen that,” she said. “We have more work to do here in the U.S., although we’ve made tremendous progress. Sixty percent is progress.”

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**Pfizer's Covid pill.** A highly anticipated study of Pfizer's Covid pill confirmed that it helps stave off severe disease, even from the Omicron variant, the company announced. Pfizer said its pill reduced the risk of hospitalization and death by 89 percent if given within three days of the onset of symptoms.



Ms. Lindsay, who got her booster shot in October, said she understood the community's desire to get back to normal, but she said that would be impossible without more action.

"It's been a long road and some people have been hit so hard," she said. "And I know it's hard to exercise any more patience. We just want this to be done with and gone away."

In July, Ms. Lindsay, who was born in Jamaica, was recognized as an Outstanding American by Choice from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services during a ceremony at the White House.

Her legacy was further cemented as Mr. Biden announced that the scrubs and badge she wore on the day she received her first dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, along with her vaccination card, would be displayed at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History as part of an exhibit on the coronavirus pandemic.

"I couldn't believe I was at the White House, first of all," she said. "And that me, an immigrant from Jamaica, would be getting this prestigious award — it meant everything to me."

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