Francis Collins

During the pandemic, the head of the National Institutes of Health relies on both science and faith.

**The NIH is now working to get more tests running in high-risk neighborhoods, and he is involved in ‘ser- ious discussions with senior leader- ship’ at NIH to figure out how best to address the medical legacy of centuries of racism. ‘You can’t change these circumstances without feeling a call to action,’ he observes.**

Meanwhile, the U.S. death toll is approaching 300,000, with over 200,000 Covid-19 cases ranging across the country. Although other countries across Asia and Europe have found ways to allow businesses and schools to reopen without newfound restrictions, many U.S. states are shutting down again, at least in part, as more infections come from the return of once-eradicated childhood diseases, such as a rise in mumps cases last year. ‘This deep distress does not serve as well as a nation that wants to have a bright future,’ he says.

The 70-year-old.nih campus in Bethesda, Md., shut down earlier this year, in the beginning of the pandemic. Collins says that he and Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, considered vaccine candidates with the NIH’s Human Genome Project from its earliest stages. They became very good friends and collaborated on solving medical problems. The vaccine candidates are now in the process of testing.

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