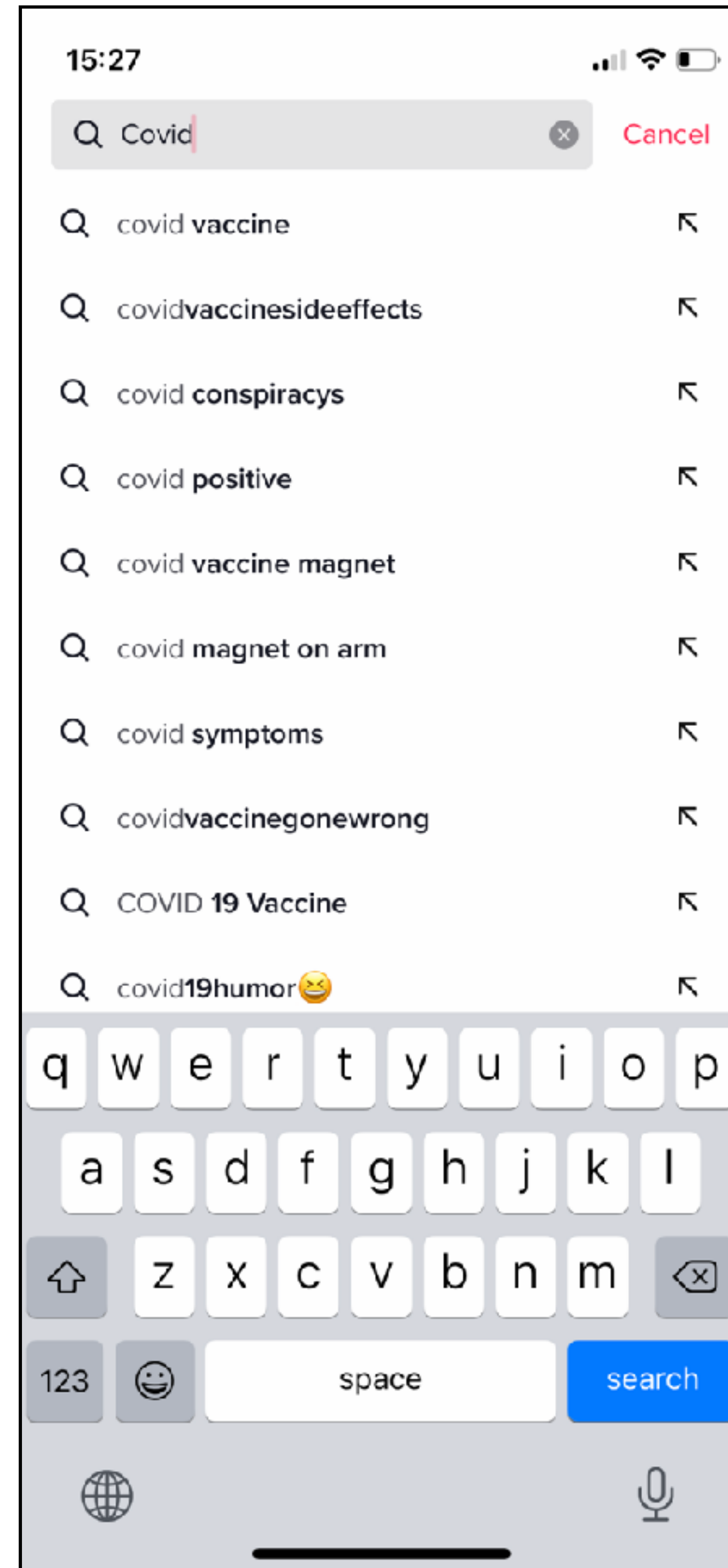
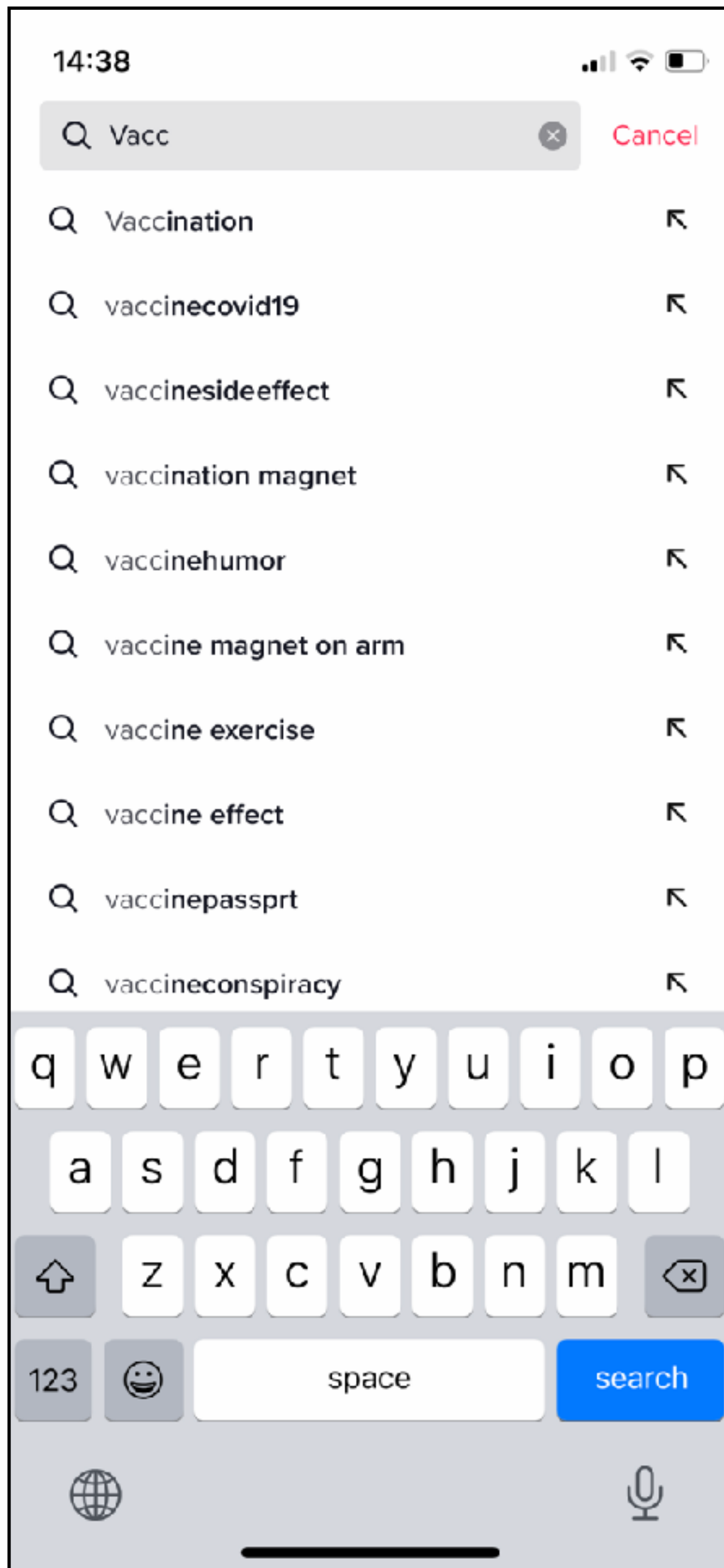


COVID-19 and Vaccine Misinformation on TikTok

Report for Governments and the WHO

June 18, 2021

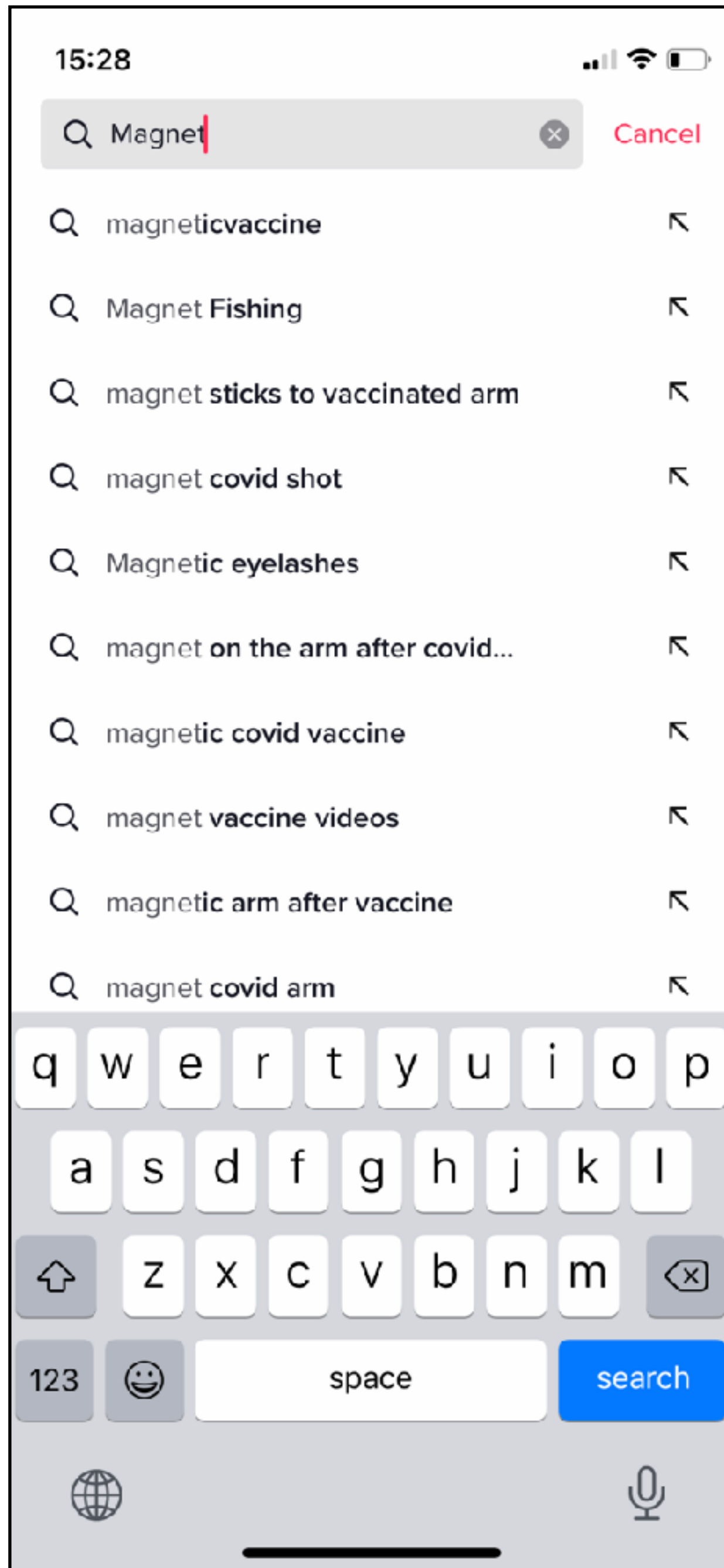


Typing 'vacc' into the search bar brings up:

- **vaccine side effect**
- **Vaccination magnet**
- **Vaccine magnet on arm**
- **Vaccine conspiracy**

Typing 'covid' into the search bar brings up:

- **covid vaccine side effects**
- **Covid conspiracies**
- **Covid vaccine magnet**
- **Covid magnet on arm**
- **Covid vaccine gone wrong**



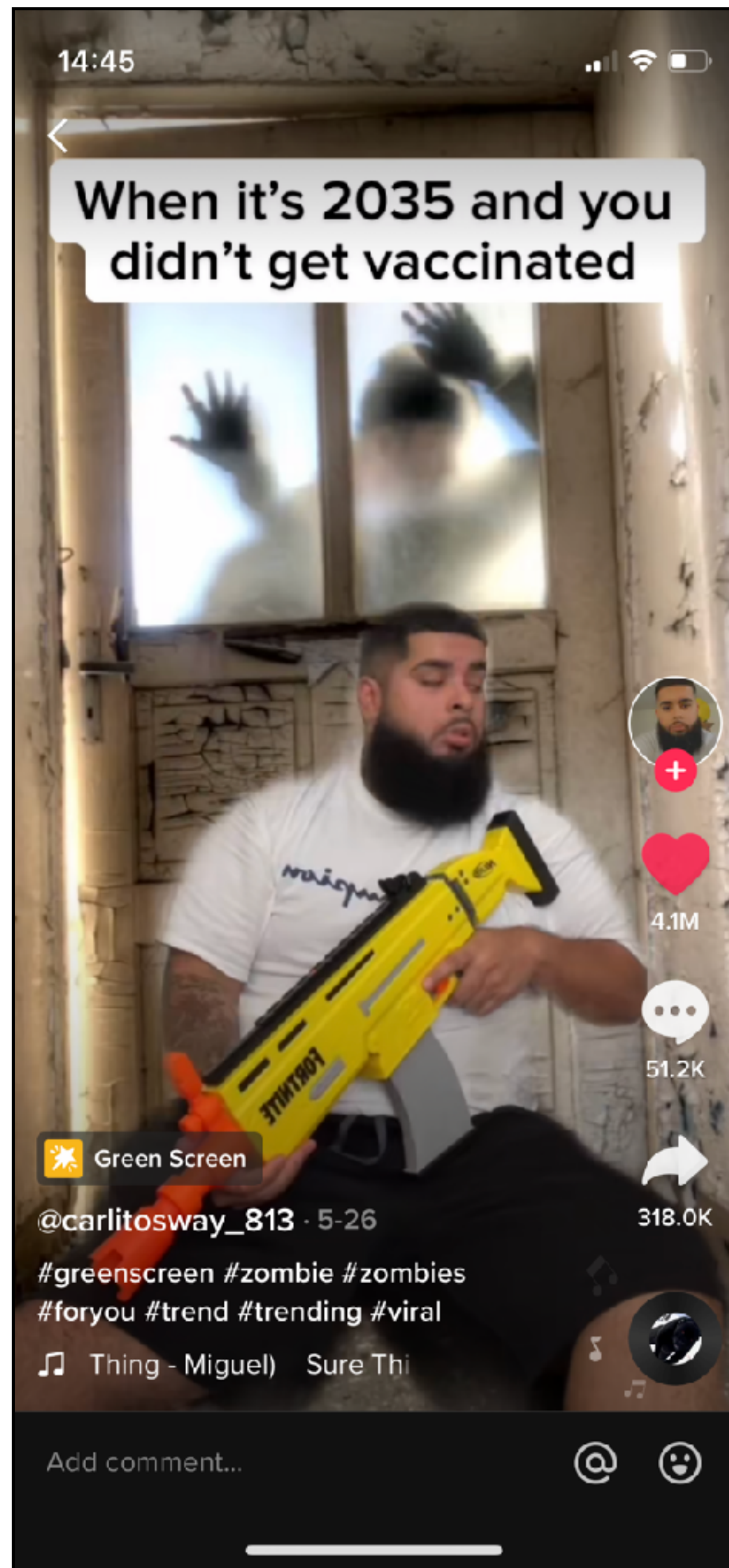
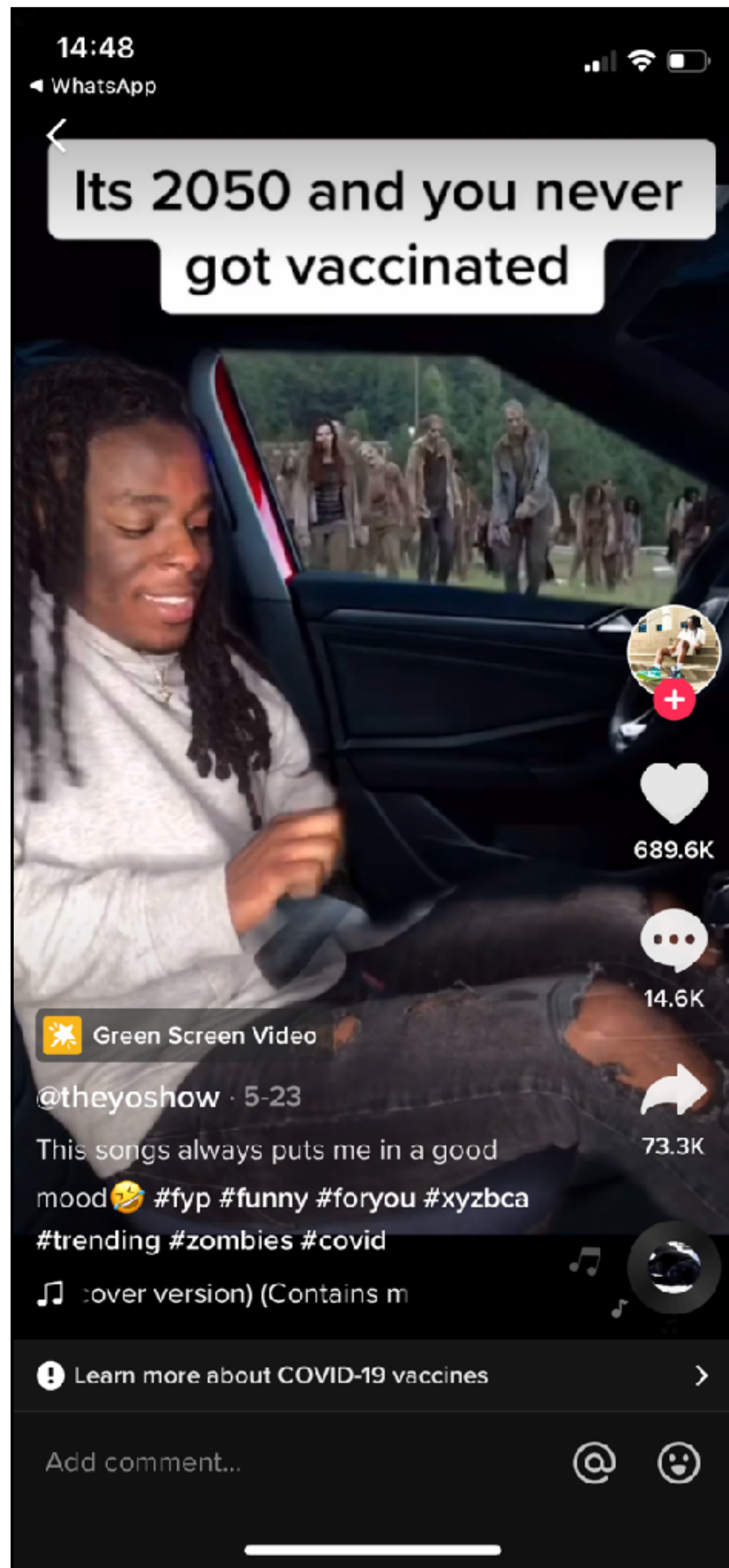
MYTH: Videos posted on social media show magnets sticking to people’s arms after they received COVID-19 vaccines, proving the vaccines contain magnetic ingredients.

THE FACTS:

Dr. Stephen Schrantz, an infectious diseases specialist at the University of Chicago, called the videos “a hoax” in a May 2021 [article](#) by Agence France-Presse. “There is absolutely no way that a vaccine can lead to the reaction shown in these videos posted to Instagram and/or YouTube,” he said. “It is better explained by 2 sided tape on the metal disk being applied to the skin rather than a magnetic reaction.”

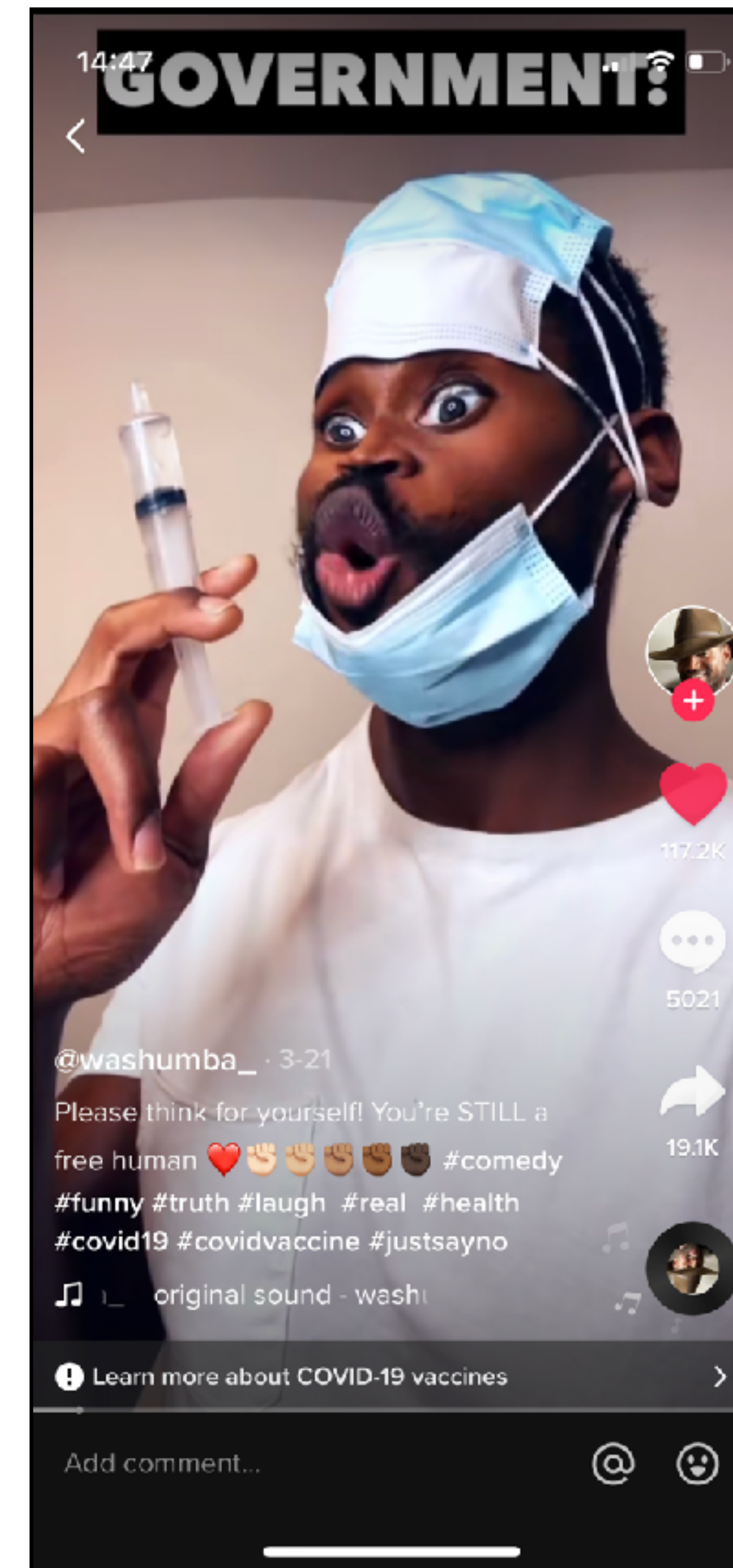
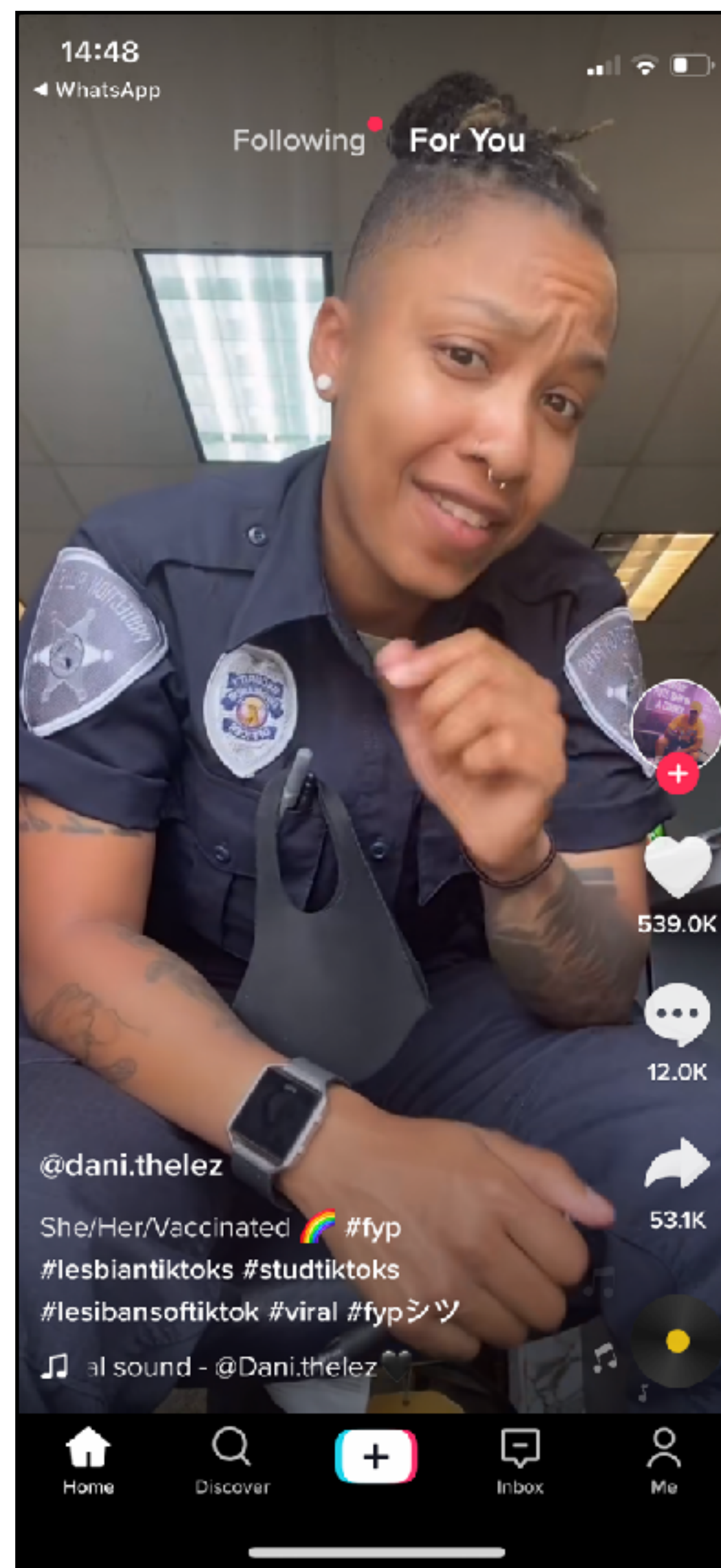
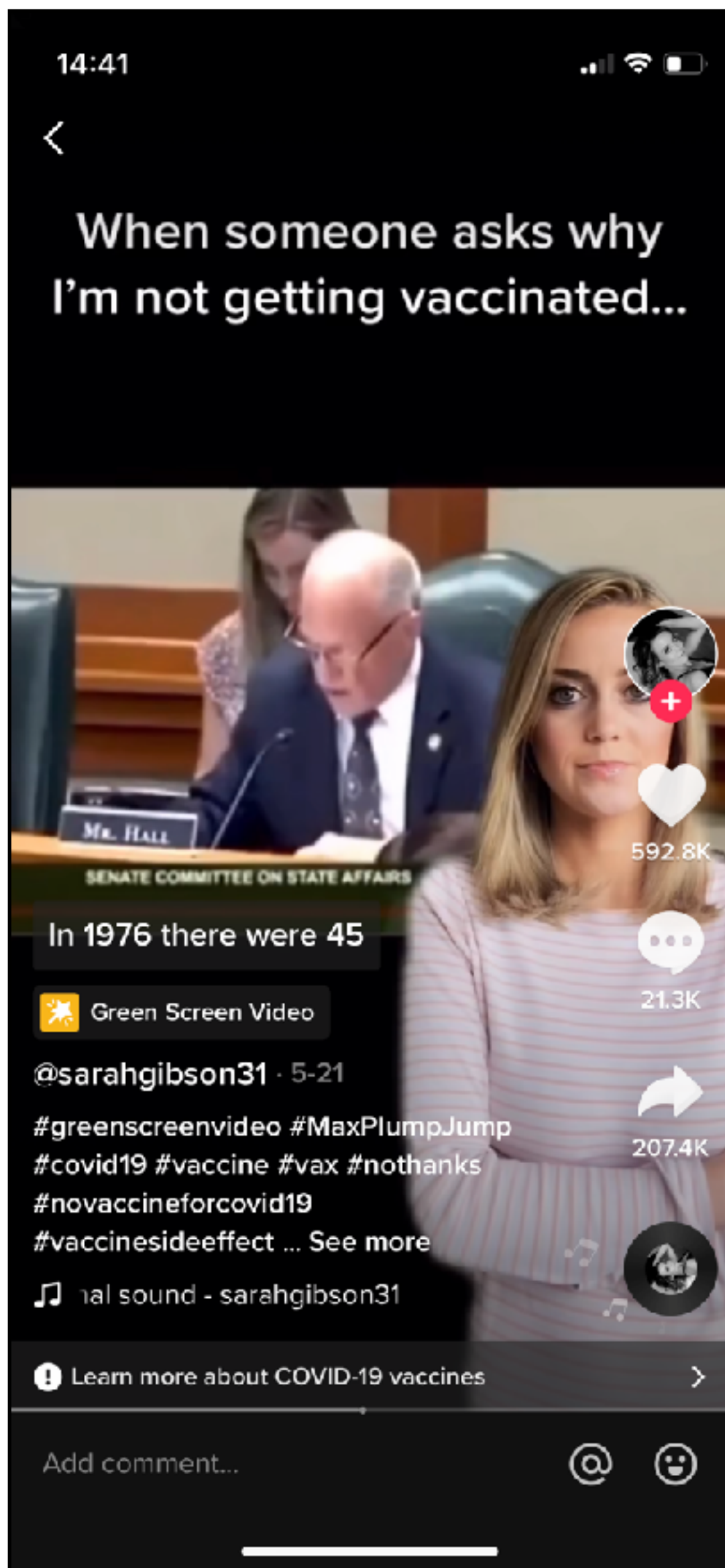
None of the COVID-19 vaccines authorized for widespread use in the U.S. and Europe contain magnetic ingredients or microchips. Lisa Morici, an associate professor at the Tulane University School of Medicine who studies vaccines, told [FactCheck.org](#) in May 2021 that the ingredients in the Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccines “are simply RNA/DNA, lipids, proteins, salts, and sugars.”

Dr. Edward Hutchinson, a lecturer at the Centre for Virus Research at the University of Glasgow, told Newsweek in a May 2021 [article](#) that “you would need to introduce a large lump of magnetic material beneath the skin to get the action through the skin that the videos claim to show — if you want to give this a go, try getting a fridge magnet to pick up anything, particularly tiny bits of metal, through the skin between your thumb and index finger.”

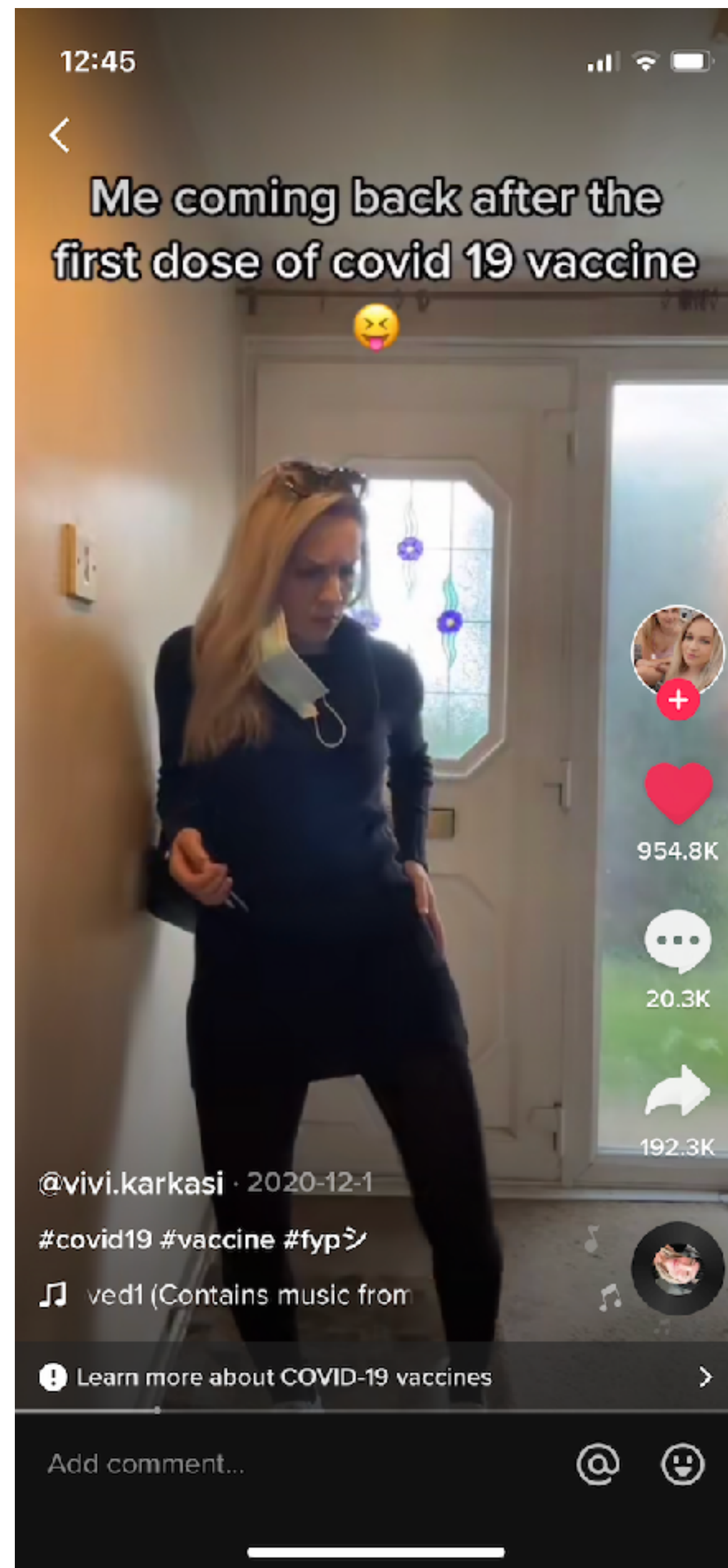
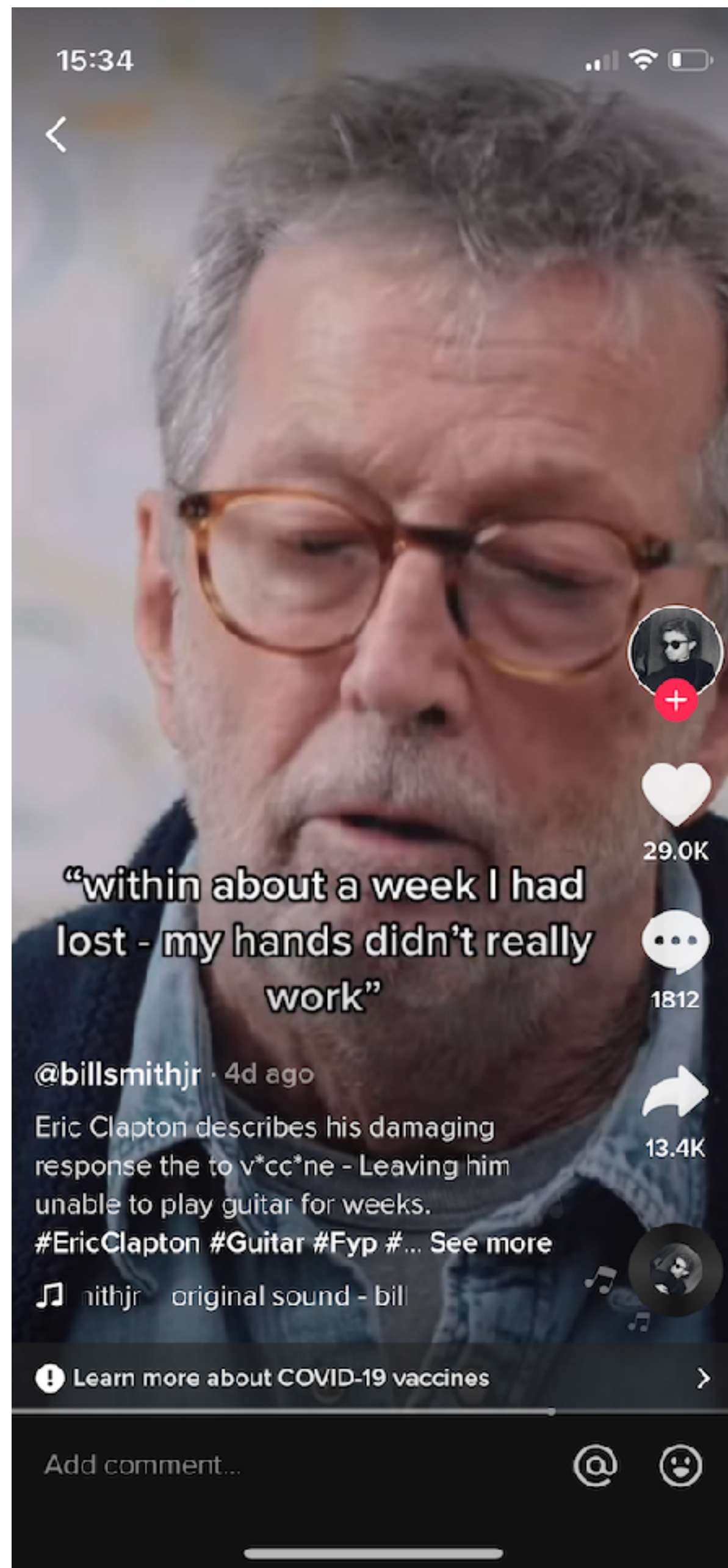
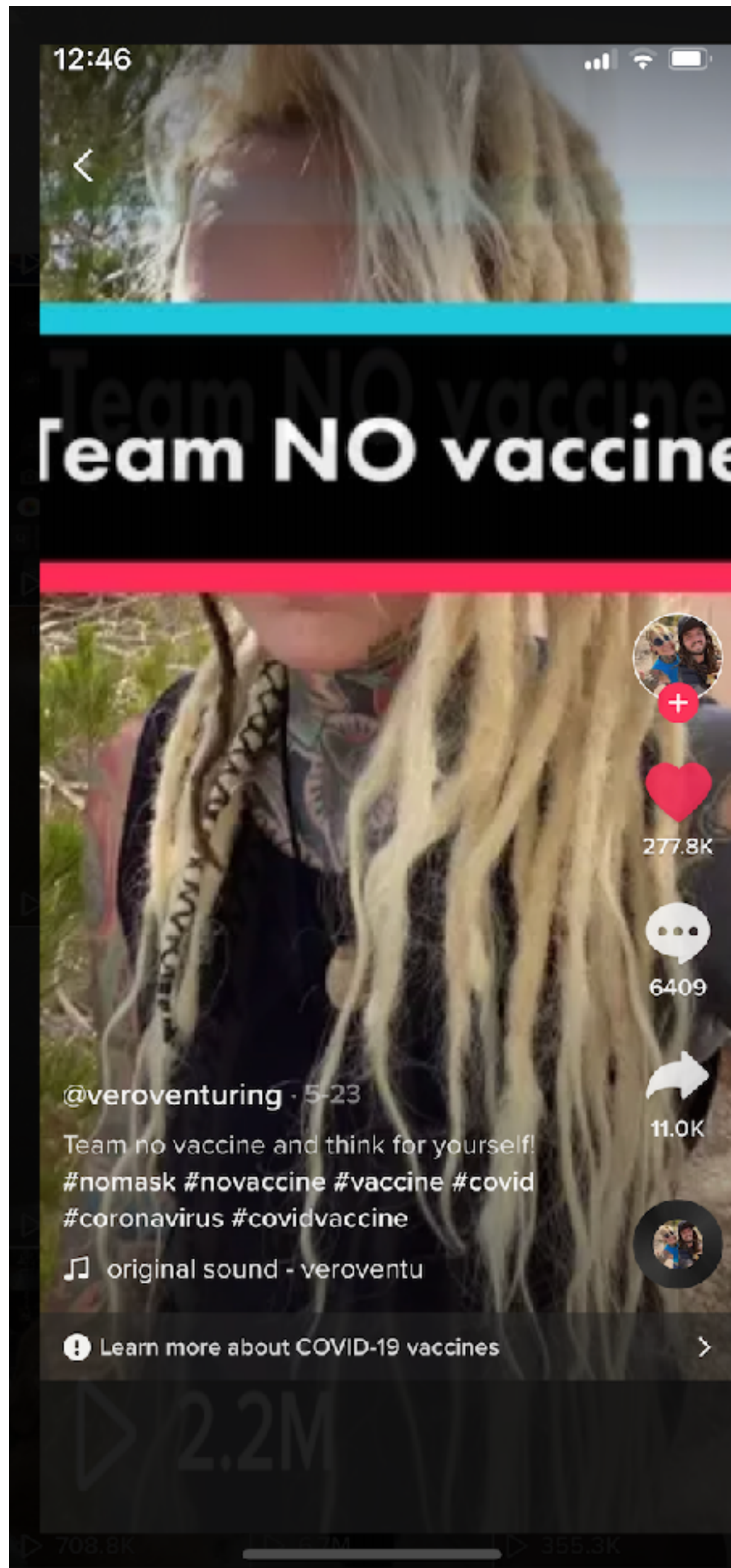


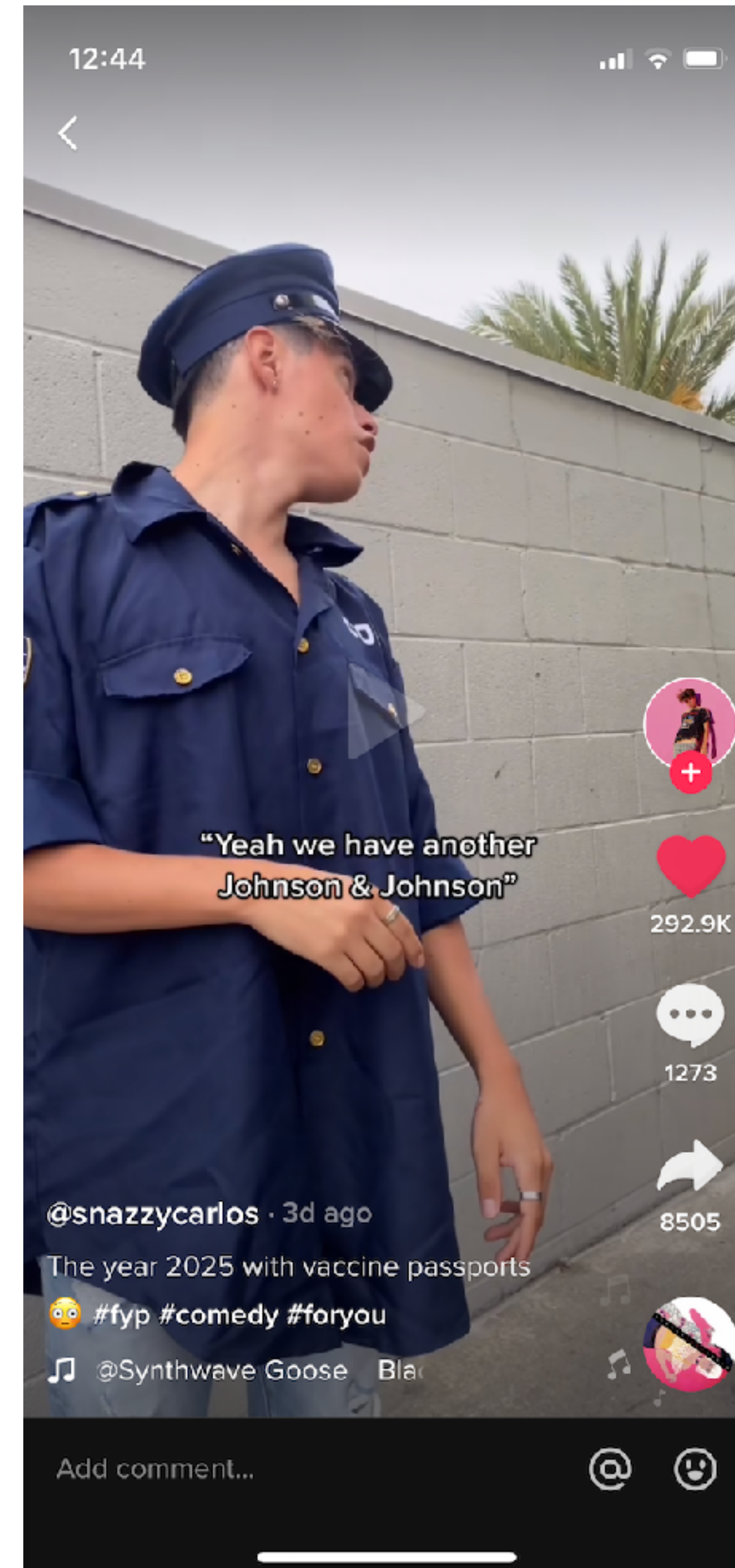
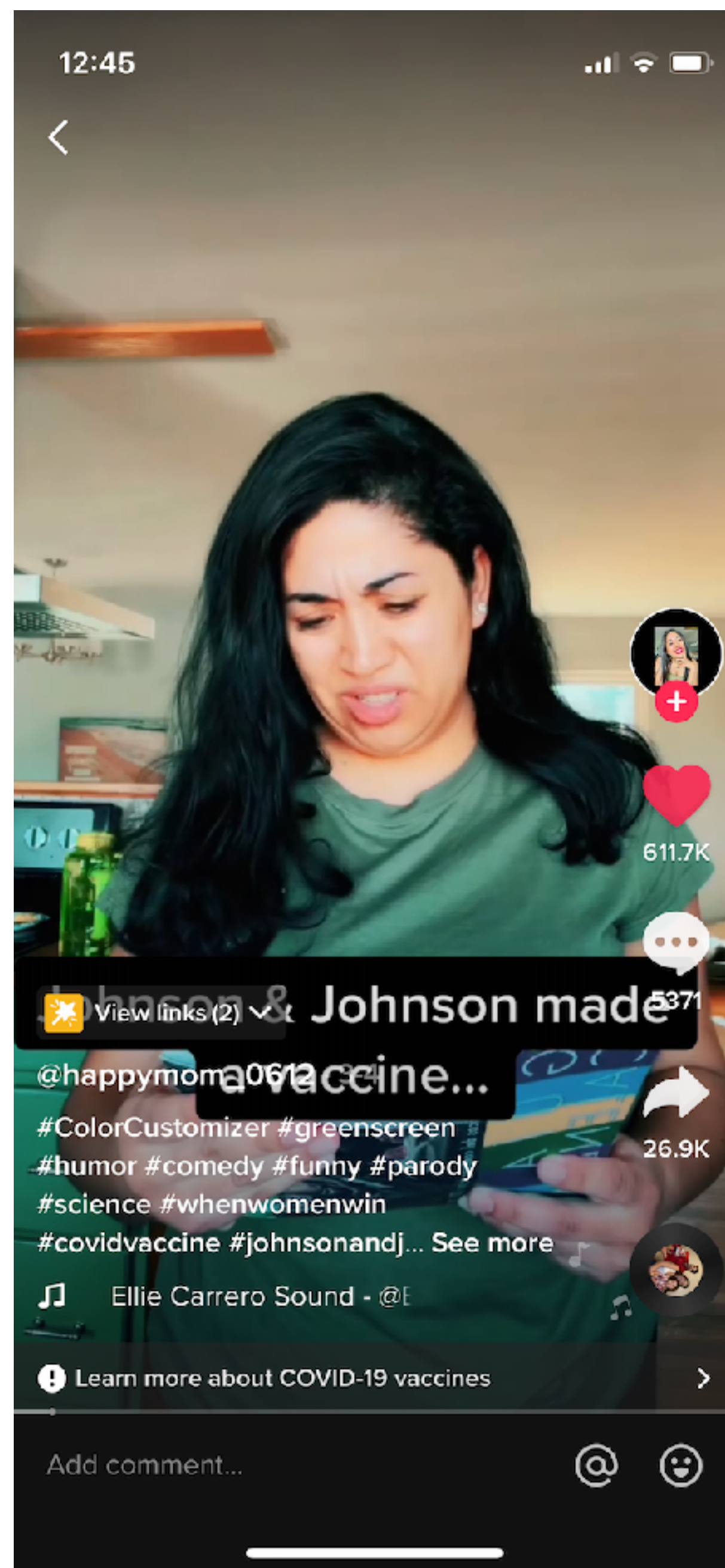
Two videos with 8.6 million views and 32.2 million views both show an apocalyptic future where COVID-19 vaccine recipients have turned into zombies. The comments largely discourage vaccine use and spread misinformation.

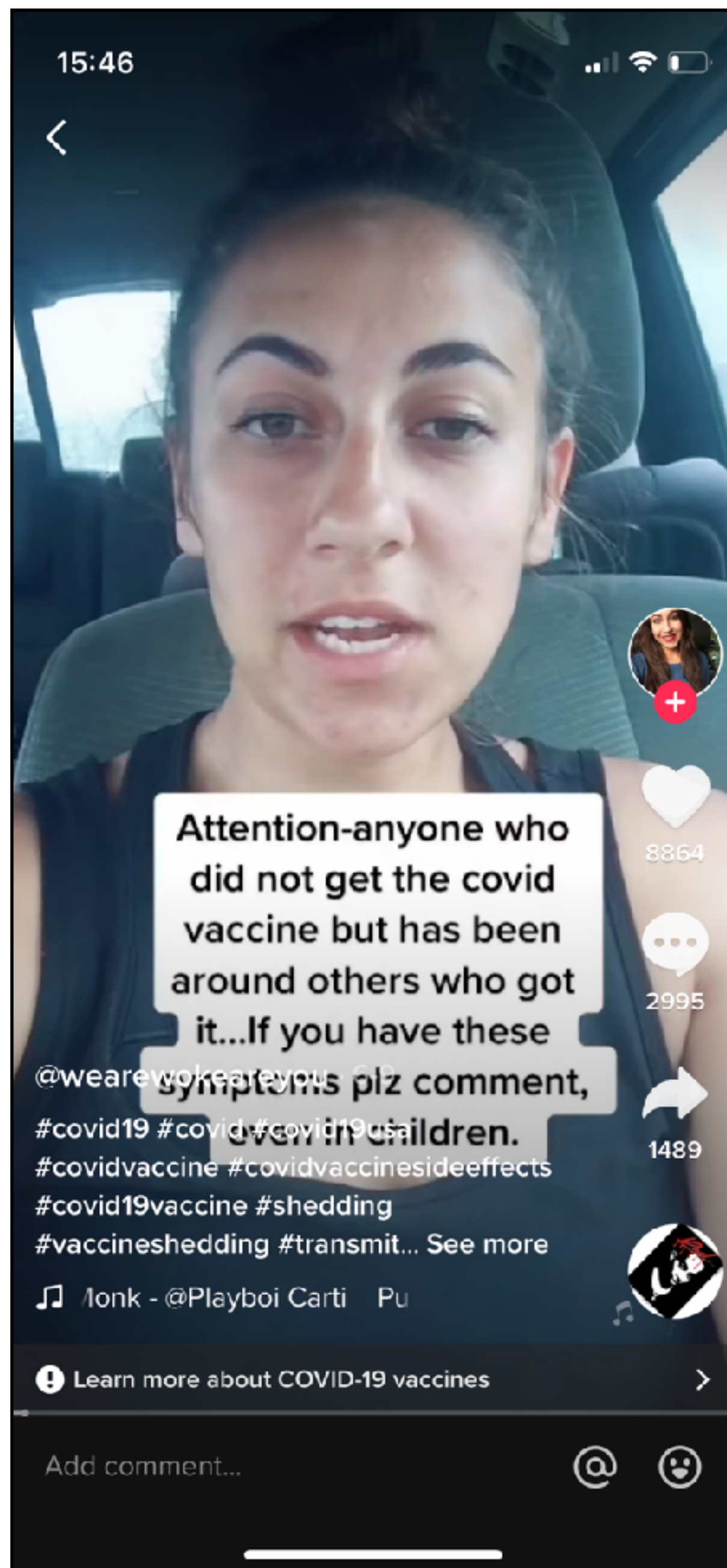
The videos are also many times more successful than average videos produced by the two accounts, indicating to users that spreading vaccine hesitancy can generate millions of views.



These videos, each with hundreds of thousands or millions of views, discourage TikTok users from getting the vaccine.







This video, which has over 240,000 views, is the first video that comes up when you search ‘vaccine shedding’. The video and top comments all promote the myth of vaccine shedding.

MYTH: People vaccinated with COVID-19 vaccines can shed disease-causing particles to others.

THE FACTS:

In an April 2021 statement to [Reuters](#), an unnamed U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention spokesperson said, “There is no way for a COVID-19 vaccinated person to ‘shed vaccine.’ COVID-19 vaccines give instructions to teach our cells how to make a protein—or even just a piece of a protein—that triggers an immune response inside our bodies. After the protein piece is made, the cell breaks down the instructions and gets rid of them. The immune response, which produces antibodies, is what protects us from getting infected if the real virus enters our bodies.”

Only vaccines that contain a live virus can shed enough to potentially infect other people. USA Today reported in a May 2017 [article](#) that this occurred with the oral polio vaccine, which was distributed beginning in 1961, because children who received the vaccine shed the virus through their feces, and in rare cases, could be spread to others who didn’t wash their hands after using the bathroom.

The oral polio vaccine stopped being used in the U.S. by 2000, and Dr. Paul Offit, director of the Vaccine Education Center at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, told USA Today that no other type of vaccine has ever been shown to shed in a manner that caused disease.

This report was produced using two proprietary datasets from NewsGuard.

The ***Misinformation Fingerprints*** dataset, a catalogue of data about top misinformation narratives, contains related keywords and search terms for all of the top misinformation and disinformation narratives spreading online--produced using human intelligence but designed for use with AI/ML/NLP tools to identify content matching specific false claims. NewsGuard analysts used the Misinformation Fingerprints dataset to identify relevant searches related to misinformation narratives about COVID-19 and other topics.

The second dataset used was the ***News Website Reliability Ratings***, which consists of credibility ratings for over 6,000 news and information websites that account for 95% of online engagement with news in the U.S., U.K., France, Germany and Italy. Each site's rating is based on nine basic, apolitical journalistic criteria. Based on the criteria, each site receives an overall designation of green (generally trustworthy) or red (generally not trustworthy) and a trust score of 0-100. NewsGuard's analyst used the News Website Reliability Ratings dataset to identify misinformation sources that appeared in the results for searches conducted as part of the analysis.

For the purposes of this analysis, we focused on searches for which the searcher's intent could reasonably have been to search for accurate information about a topic. The analysis used the same searches across all search engines analysed to ensure parity. Examples selected for the report represent an illustrative, but by no means exhaustive, list of search results that contain misinformation sources. Both the Misinformation Fingerprints and the News Website Reliability Index are available to be licensed for research and other purposes.