Dear Friends:

We hope you are all well and safe.

This week, we are sharing historical perspectives that inform the current moment. As NYAM President Dr. Judith Salerno wrote last week, “We are all witnesses to the raw manifestations of the grief, anger, frustration, and pain unfolding before us” in response to the public outcry following the death of George Floyd.

There’s much we can learn from the Civil Rights movement in the U.S. and other historical movements against racism, including within medicine and healthcare. Below, we look through our collections and share blog posts that chronicle the fight against racism in earlier, yet no less tumultuous, times.

For modern perspectives, research and resources, visit the new page on Racism, Violence and Health on NYAM’s What Can I Do? info hub.

Desegregating Harlem Hospital: A Centennial

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. embodied compassion fused to an unflinching commitment to the truth. After he was stabbed in Harlem in 1958, Coretta Scott King took some of the flowers sent him to the Children’s Ward of Harlem Hospital. May we also never lose our compassion as we seek to tell the truth and advance the cause of health equity.

Read More

Asthma and the Civil Rights Movement

In a classic case of blaming the victim, white America looked at the tensions raised by the 1960s demand for equal rights and saw them as the cause of higher asthma cases among African Americans—rather than considering the systemic inequities facing that community.

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Have You Heard of the Lincoln Collective?

A couple dozen physicians, fresh out of medical school, decided to do their residencies at Lincoln Hospital in the South Bronx in the 1970s. They called themselves “the Lincoln Collective” and hoped to change one institution for the better and provide a model for others.

Read More

The following posts from Books, Health, and History also focus on the African American community, race, and health:

- A Medical Symphony: Celebrating African Americans in New York Medicine
- The First Yellow Fever Pandemic: Slavery and its Consequences
- Remembering the Syphilis Study in Tuskegee
- Saving the Race from Extinction: African Americans and National Negro Health Week
- The Right to Health

We look forward to welcoming you back to the Library. In the meantime, stay alert, stay engaged, and stay safe. If you need us, visit our Stay Connected page.

The NYAM Library Team

Your support helps us preserve the Library’s treasures, share them with researchers and the public, and safeguard the history of medicine to inform the future of health.

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