



THE OASCR TIMES

A Quarterly Chronicle of Civil Rights Developments and Stories of General Interest

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Greetings Friends,

On behalf of The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR), I am excited to share our OASCR Times! I am truly grateful for the dynamic civil rights professionals who keep us informed and inspired through

this quarterly newsletter. I am excited to celebrate National Black History Month at USDA! Black History Month is celebrated each year in February to recognize the significant contributions that Black Americans have made in our nation's history. This observance reminds us to collectively celebrate racial pride, assess our nation's commitment to the ideals of freedom, and reflect on and commemorate the struggle for freedom and equality. This year's theme, "Black Health and Wellness" focuses on emotional, environmental, economic, and spiritual wellness.

OASCR is leading special emphasis activities and coordinating observances planned throughout the month by USDA agencies. A Departmental Observance is scheduled for February 24th.

I encourage you to participate and be inspired in one or more of these events. It is an opportunity to learn and be part of elevating the Biden Administration's equity agenda, which strives to empower communities and address systemic racism in our laws and public policies.

I am excited to share that OASCR is working to finalize the development of a new anti-harassment regulation as part of strategic goal six of our USDA's diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility strategic plan. This will ensure our employees have prompt and effective ways of reporting and addressing harassment, including sexual harassment, and getting the support they need during that process.

We have also launched a new IT system for Program Complaint processing and updated our Employment Complaints systems. The new systems will have stronger tracking and data analytics capabilities.

The OASCR Times is such a wonderful way to connect to important civil rights information and issues impacting our USDA community. This newsletter adds to our new communication tools including our new Civil Rights Mobile application that provides fast access to civil rights resources and information! Ensuring the USDA workforce has the tools to navigate a diverse work environment is a priority for OASCR.

Warm Regards,

Monica Armster Rainge
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights

2022 Black History Month Theme: Black Health and Wellness

by D. Leon King

The [Association for the Study of African American Life and History](#) (ASALH) has chosen for 2022, the Black History Month theme of Black Health and Wellness, with special emphasis on healthcare access and improving wellness. Summarized here, the theme recognizes the legacy of not only Black scholars and medical practitioners in Western medicine, but also contributions of birth-workers, doulas, midwives, naturopaths, herbalists, and others throughout the African Diaspora. The 2022 theme celebrates activities, rituals and initiatives that Black communities have undertaken to achieve and maintain wellness in often less than favorable conditions.

To foster good health and wellness Black people have embarked on self-help, mutual aid, and social support initiatives to build hospitals, medical and nursing schools (i.e., Meharry Medical College, Howard University College of Medicine, Morehouse School of Medicine, etc.) and community clinics. Clinics were established by individuals, grassroots organizations, and mutual aid societies to provide spaces for Black people to counter the economic and health disparities and discrimination that were and, in some instances, continue to be found at



mainstream institutions. Initiatives to help decrease disparities have centered having more diverse practitioners and representation in all segments of the medical and health programs. This desire for inclusivity in the medical field has even been manifested in popular culture, such as with the children's animated series *Doc McStuffins*.

The attention to Public and Community Health has led to a rise in preventive care and a focus on physical exercise, nutrition, exploring other dietary options such as veganism and vegetarianism, and gardening. Black Health and Wellness not only includes one's physical body, but also emotional and mental health. At this point in the 21st century, our understanding of Black health and Wellness is broader and more nuanced than ever. Social media has destigmatized conversing about mental health and going to therapy. More of us understand the need to hold down, lift-up, center, and fight fiercely for our beloved friends, siblings, and family no matter who they are. Black people are looking inward and doing the work to save

themselves. We are doing more to move forward holistically for the betterment of ourselves, our bodies, our relationships, our communities, and our planet. We are determined to create a platform that shines a light on the multiple facets of Black health and wellness through education and activism. There is much to uncover, amplify, question, and correct. In the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic, Black people use data and other information-sharing to document, decry, and agitate against the interconnected, intersecting inequalities intentionally baked into systems and structures. Moreover, Black communities must look to the past to provide the light for our future, by embracing the rituals, traditions, and healing ways of our ancestors. These ways of knowing require a decolonization of thought and practice.

In celebrating Black History Month, I will give a presentation that touches on many of these important and timely aspects of the ASALH 2022, theme of Black Health and Wellness. □

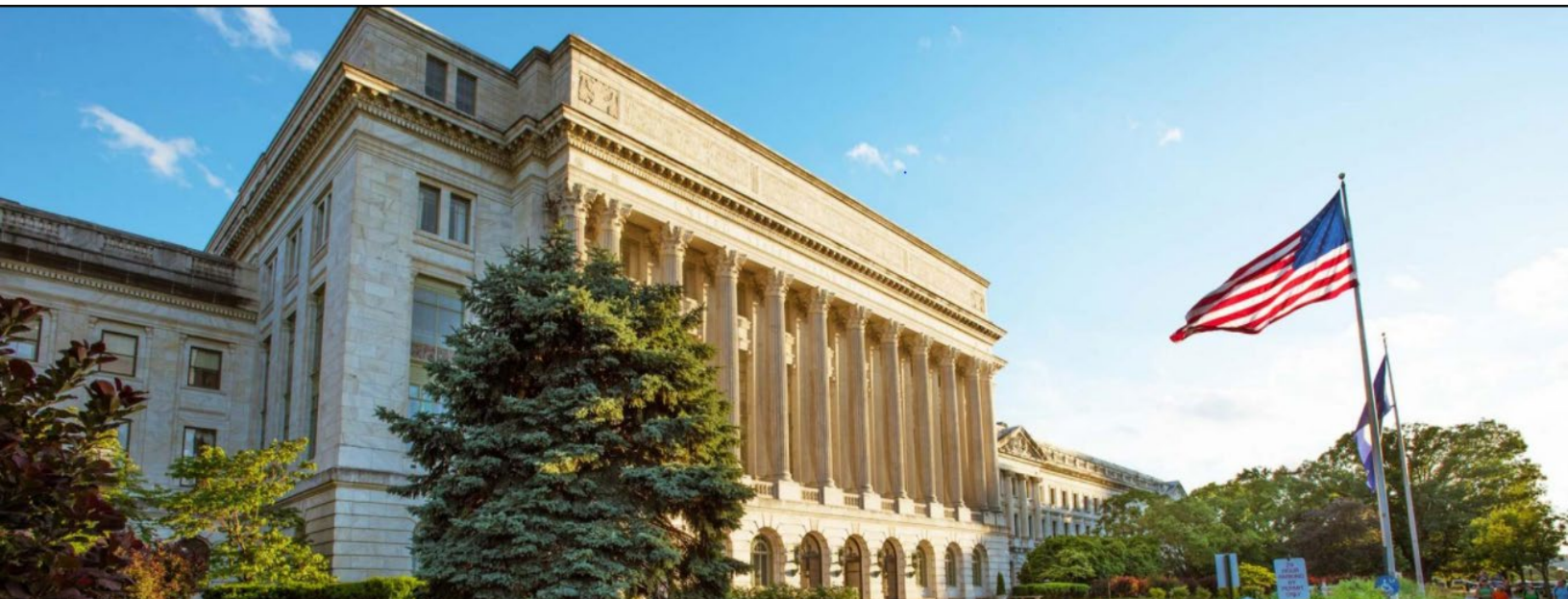
“In recognizing the humanity of our fellow beings, we pay ourselves the highest tribute.” -- Thurgood Marshall, first African American U.S. Supreme Court member

A Dialogue
with
Deputy Secretary Bronaugh
and the
USDA Black Employee Resource Group

Wednesday, February 23rd
10:00 AM — 11:00 AM ET

[Register](#)

Please join Deputy Secretary Bronaugh for a roundtable discussion with leaders and representatives from USDA's Black Employment Special Emphasis Program and Blacks in Government (BIG) Employee Resource Group (ERG). This roundtable is part of USDA's workforce and culture efforts to engage with employees and make USDA a great place to work. Over the past year, the Secretary and Deputy Secretary have engaged various ERGs and look forward to listening to and engaging with employees to understand their experiences working at USDA and learn recommendations to foster a more inclusive, diverse, equitable, and accessible USDA, both now and in the future.



OASCR Length of Service Awards

On behalf of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, the OASCR Employee Morale Task Force warmly congratulates all on reaching this important milestone with the Federal Government! Your loyalty, professionalism, and commitment to the success of the Office of the Assistant for Civil Rights did not go unnoticed. Again, thank you for your hard work and dedication and we look forward to your ongoing contributions and a bright and successful future with OASCR!

5 YEARS OF SERVICE

*Joelle T. Bowers
Jonathan Clark
Curtis Edwards*

10 YEARS OF SERVICE

*David Atkins
Michael Dukes
Candace Glover
Michele Hawkins
Kelli Reynolds*

15 YEARS OF SERVICE

Charles J Kingsland III

20 YEARS OF SERVICE

*Sterling J. August III
Kathryn Baun
Jacqueline Brock
Casimir Bruce
Sandra Hammond
Sequana Janifer
Justin Rhee*

49 YEARS OF SERVICE

Mildred West-Wiggins

25 YEARS OF SERVICE

*David Chilton
Sae Mi Kim
Jeffrey Knishkowsy
Mya Mya Myaing
Tu Minh Pham*

30 YEARS OF SERVICE

*Stephanie Brown
Lisa Coleman
Marsheela Hines
Corliss A. Patten
Monique Simmons
Hope Woods*

35 YEARS OF SERVICE

*Dianne Davis-Wright
Deborah Davis
Anna Stroman
Rosita Travett
Sheila Walcott
Pamela Wright*

Journey to Civil Rights: Employee Spotlight

by Jonathan Clark



Mildred West-Wiggins

Mildred West-Wiggins, or “Millie” as she is affectionally known, is a proud native of Newport News, Virginia, and a prouder mother of two daughters and six grandkids (ages 14-26). A graduate of the University of Maryland Global Campus (formally UMUC), Millie’s interests range from politics to community advocacy. “I am an active member and hold positions in the Montgomery County Section of the *National Council of Negro Women, Inc.*, Montgomery County Chapter of the *Top Ladies of Distinction, Inc.*, and an active member of several other civic organizations in the DMV area.

As a teenager growing up in Newport News, Millie witnessed the disparities between the races in the schools, retail stores, and on trains and buses, eventually urging her to stand up and protest such conditions. “I especially remember participating in a protest led by Comedian and Activist, Dick Gregory who fervently urged us to “*Stand and be heard!*” In those days, with my fist in the air, I often

chanted the lyrics to the James Brown song, “*Say it Loud-I’m Black and I’m Proud.*” Millie’s initial venture into the workplace landed her in the financial world; however, her desire to work in civil rights did not end there. “I worked for the Federal Reserve Board of Governors (FRB) as a Bank Merger Analyst, Bank Supervision Division, with the collateral duty as an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Counselor. One of my first EEO challenges was counseling a Complainant that was involved in a Class Action discrimination case filed by African American women clerical workers. The case was dismissed at the administrative stage, and the Court dismissed the Class Action without prejudice.” Millie’s journey at USDA began October 2000, an EEO Counselor. “Anyone who can recall about Rural Development back then knows their Civil Rights Call Center was very busy.” Near the end of her detail at RD, she was asked by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) Civil Rights Director if she could extend her detail and join FSA’s Program Division. “I was delighted to have the opportunity to continue working in civil rights, so I agreed. I had to get the approval to extend my detail, which was not a problem, because my EEO Director at FRB knew my desire to work in civil rights, which provided another opportunity for me to enhance my skills and knowledge in the civil rights arena.” Millie’s conducted investigations, reviewed Reports of Investigation (ROI) and wrote Agency Position Statements. “I enjoyed the work so when a vacancy became available in 2001, I applied and was hired as an Equal Opportunity Specialist.” While serving in that position, Millie conducted EEO counseling, compliance reviews, and reviewed ROIs, which subsequently led to her

becoming an EEO Specialist. In 2005, Millie was offered and accepted the opportunity to work in the Office of Communication as the EEO/Human Resources Advisor to the Director of Communication, an appointed position. “In that position, I had the opportunity to see up close the workings of the political side of USDA.” While serving in the Office of Communication, she obtained her certification as a USDA Employee Misconduct Investigator.

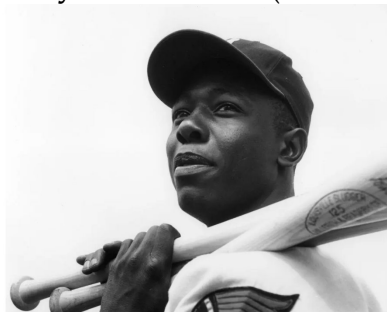
In January 2010, another opportunity came, and Millie accepted a position in OASCR’s Office of Adjudication as a Program Adjudicator. “In October of the same year, I was offered a detail position as the Special Assistant to the Director and Deputy Director of Compliance and Adjudication Division. The detail ended in 2012, but I retained the position and here I am today!” Millie currently works in the Center for Civil Rights Enforcement as the Special Assistant to the Executive Director but is always available to assist wherever there is a need.

2022 will mark 49 years of federal service for Millie. She will be retiring, which will allow her the time to spend with her family. “My time in civil rights here at USDA has been a great professional journey. I have been blessed to have made many lifelong friends. Of course, I have had my ups and downs, my joys, and sorrows, but I have been true to myself. I will continue to live by my motto, “*What have you done to help others?*” Once I leave USDA, I plan to continue to advocate for civil rights, just as Mr. Dick Gregory urged, “*Stand and be heard.*” □

by Semira Bullock

OASCR is saddened to announce over the past year many United States leaders and Civil Rights pioneers passed away. It is important we acknowledge those who have impacted the nation and created opportunities for oppressed voices. As we celebrate Black History Month, we reflect on some of those who have passed, but also paved the way.

Henry 'Hank' Aaron (1934-2021)



Henry Hank Aaron - Mark Rucker/Transcendental Graphics, via Getty Images

Aaron was a baseball legend and Baseball Hall of Famer. He was not only a Major League Baseball player, but also was also one of the last Negro League players. He beat Babe Ruth's homerun record in 1974, which led him to experience racism from fans in the stadium. His success in baseball was an inspiration and example to all. Click [here](#) to learn more about his life.

Cicely Tyson (1924-2021)



Cicely Tyson - AP Photo/Matt Sayles, File

Tyson was an iconic award-winning actress, who brought dignity and honor to the characters she played.

She is the first and only Black woman to receive an honorary Oscar, in 2018. She has won both Emmy and Tony awards for her performances. Tyson was selective in the roles she played because she wanted to embody characters that would empower and uplift the Black community. Click [here](#) to learn more about her life.

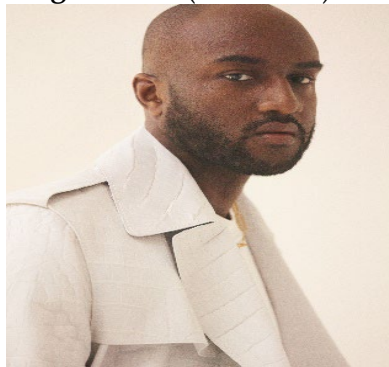
Colin L. Powell (1937-2021)



General Colin Powell /Office of the Historian Office of the Historian ([state.gov](https://www.state.gov))

General Powell was the first African American to serve as U.S. Secretary of State, after being confirmed by the U.S. Senate, unanimously, in 2001. During his first year as Secretary of State, Powell had to face the challenge of advising the president with a response to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. He was responsible for the increase of funds, development, and commitment to the fight of AIDS internationally. Powell served in the U.S. Army for 35 years. Click [here](#) to learn more about his life.

Virgil Abloh (1980-2021)



Abloh was a fashion designer and creative director. He was the first Black artistic director for the fashion house Louis Vuitton. Abloh founded his successful street-wear brand Off-White. His company's collaboration and various collections with Nike impacted sneaker culture globally, often selling out in minutes. Click [here](#) to learn more about his life.

Garth Dennis (1949-2021)



Garth Dennis - Screenshot/E-Live Unplugged

Dennis was a reggae musician and founding member of the band Black Uhuru. His group won the first Grammy Award for Best Reggae Recording for the song "Anthem" in 1984. Click [here](#) to learn more about his life.

Gloria 'bell hooks' Watkins (1952-2021)



Gloria 'bell hooks' Watkins - Margaret Thomas/The Washington Post

Professor Watkins was an educator, author, activist, and self-proclaimed Black feminist. She wrote about discrimination, feminism, racism, and sexism and her experience as a Black woman in America. The name bell hooks, was taken from her great-grandmother. Click [here](#) to learn more about her life.

Darryl Owens (1937-2022)



Darryl Owens - Credit: Pat McDonogh, THE CJ

Owens was the first Black person to serve as Assistant Attorney General for the State of Kentucky. He was an active member of The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and he volunteered his legal services to the organization for a lawsuit to desegregate schools. Owens served as the 43rd district in the House of Representatives for 13 years. Click [here](#) to learn more about his life.

Sidney Poitier (1927-2022)



Sidney Poitier - Olivier Douliery, Abaca Press, TNS

Poitier was the first Black actor to win the Academy Award for Best Actor. Sidney Poitier marched with the late Martin Luther King Jr. during the Civil Rights movement. During his career he took roles that humanized Black people which broke the tropes that stigmatized Black people in Hollywood. 1974 Queen Elizabeth II granted him a knighthood. President Barack Obama awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2009. Likewise, he is the recipient of the 2016 BAFTA Fellowship and a

Grammy Award for Best Spoken Word Album. Click [here](#) to view more about his life.

Lani Guinier (1950-2022)



Lani Guinier - Credit: AP Photo/ Charles Tasnadi, File

Prof. Guinier was a prominent civil rights attorney, civil rights activist, academic scholar, and a former Assistant Attorney General nominee. She was an active member of the NAACP, and she headed the NAACP Legal Defense Fund's Voting Rights Project during the 1980s. Her former classmate and the president of the U.S., Bill Clinton, nominated her to be the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. Unfortunately, President Clinton withdrew his nomination. She joined the academic staff at Harvard Law School in 1998, where she became the first woman of color to receive tenure as a Harvard Law professor. Click [here](#) to learn more about her life.

Israel S. Dresner (1929-2022)



Rabbi Israel S. Dresser (Right) - Courtesy of Avi Dresner photographer unknown

Rabbi Dresner was a New Jersey Rabbi, civil rights activist, and [Freedom Rider](#) who in 1961 protested the segregation of

interstate transit, with his presence at events including the [1963 March on Washington](#) and the 1965 [Selma to Montgomery marches](#), he protested alongside Martin Luther King, Jr., the Freedom Riders, and other civil rights leaders who put themselves in the frontline to fight for the rights of African Americans. Dresner encouraged other White clergymen to join the Civil Rights Movement during the 1960s to fight for racial equality in the United States. Dresner served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War. His time as a chaplain's assistant inspired him to become a Rabbi. He was famously quoted saying, "...We came because we know that, second only to silence, the greatest danger to man is loss of faith in man's capacity to act." Click [here](#) to view more about his life.

Cheslie Kryst (1991-2022)



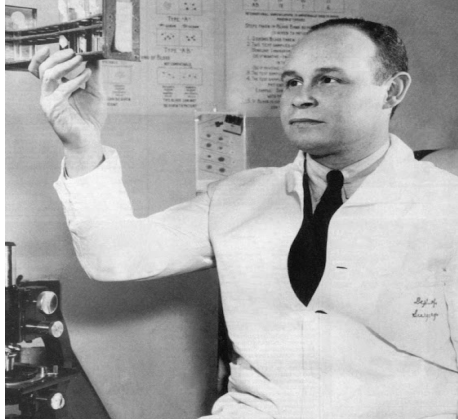
Credit: Slaven Vlasic/Getty Images

Kryst was a civil attorney, EXTRA entertainment correspondent, and former Miss USA. As a civil attorney, Kryst provided free legal services to help prisoners who believed they had received unjust sentences. She was an advocate for women and believed in creating inclusive workplaces to make everyone feel safe. Click [here](#) to learn more about her life. □

African American Doctors We Celebrate

by Jonathan Clark

Charles Drew, M.D.



Dr. Charles Drew was the first physician to use blood plasma to store blood for transfusion. Dr. Charles Drew discovered ways to organize the first large-scale blood bank and how to store blood plasma transfusion in the United States during World War II.

Following the war, Dr. Drew began developing a blood storage program at the American Red Cross but resigned soon after officials decided to segregate the blood of African Americans. Dr. Drew's career propelled as he went on to become the chief surgeon at Freedman's Hospital in Washington, D.C., now known as Howard University Hospital and the first Black examiner for the American Board of Surgery.

Patricia Bath, M.D.



Dr. Patricia E. Bath invented a surgical tool used to treat cataracts, the Laserphaco Probe, in 1986. She is also the first Black American to finish a residency in ophthalmology and the first African American female doctor to receive a medical patent. Dr. Bath was born in 1942, Harlem, New York and became interested in science after her mother bought her a chemistry set as a young girl. She later went to receive a Bachelor of Arts in chemistry at Hunter College and graduate with honors, from Howard University College of Medicine.

Louis T. Wright, M.D.



While serving in World War I he developed the intradermal injection vaccination technique. In 1948, became the first clinician to study the use of the drug Aureomycin in humans. He

graduated fourth in his class at Harvard Medical School.

Marilyn Hughes Gaston, M.D.



Dr. Gaston's 1986 study of sickle-cell disease led to a nationwide screening program to test newborns for immediate treatment, and she was the first African American woman to direct a public health service bureau (the Bureau of Primary Health Care in the United States Department of Health and Human Services). When Dr. Gaston retired in 2001, her staff presented her with newly received data from prophylactic penicillin programs recently carried out in Africa, underscoring the worldwide impact of her work.

Alexa Irene Canady, M.D.



Dr. Alexa Irene Canady nearly dropped out of college due to a crisis of self-confidence but ultimately went on to achieve dramatic success in medicine. In 1981, she became the first black neurosurgeon in the United States, and just a few years later, she rose to the ranks of Chief of Neurosurgery at Children's Hospital of Michigan.

Canady worked for decades as a successful pediatric neurosurgeon and was ready to retire in Florida in 2001. But she donned her surgical scrubs once again to practice part time at Sacred Heart Hospital in Pensacola, where there was a dearth of pediatric neurosurgery services.

Jane Cooke Wright, M.D.



After earning her medical degree, Dr. Jane Cooke Wright worked alongside her father, Dr. Louis T. Wright at the Cancer Research Foundation in Harlem, New York, which her father established in 1948. Together, father and daughter researched chemotherapy drugs that led to remissions in patients with leukemia and lymphoma.

She created an innovative technique to test the effect of drugs

on cancer cells by using patient tissue rather than laboratory mice. She advanced to work as the director of cancer chemotherapy at New York University Medical Center, and she was an associate dean at New York Medical College.

The New York Cancer Society elected Wright as its first woman president in 1971. Her research helped transform chemotherapy from a last resort to a viable treatment for cancer.

Solomon Carter Fuller, M.D.



Dr. Solomon Carter Fuller has been called the country's first Black psychiatrist. According to the Washington Post, his groundbreaking research into Alzheimer's, which helped the medical community understand

the true nature of the disease. According to the outlet, "the results of Fuller's research helped to confirm that the condition known as Alzheimer's was not the result of insanity but rather a physical disease of the brain."

Daniel Hale Williams, M.D.



Dr. Daniel Hale Williams performed the world's first open-heart surgery in 1893. According to [Columbia Surgery](#), Williams performed the surgery on a Chicago man after he was nearly stabbed to death. He later became Chief Surgeon at Freedmen's Hospital in Washington, DC, now Howard University Hospital, which provided care to former slaves. □



Howard University Medical School graduate Ashley Pinette celebrates after learning he'll complete his general surgery training in Ohio during Match Day on Friday. "We're a problem-solving generation," he said of incoming doctors being able to adapt to a changing medical landscape.

2021 Winner of the Federal Employee of the Year Award Leads at Harvard

by Joelle T. Bowers

Over the past two years, the field of medicine, specifically immunology and virology have featured prominently in our lives, in the news, and even on social media. The onslaught of the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in January 2020 forced ordinary citizens around the globe to grasp concepts generally studied by biology students and scientists. Scientists fervently worked behind the scenes to first identify the cause of the deadly illness and then develop a vaccine that would be effective against COVID-19.

While COVID-19 caught many off-guard, there was one team at the National Institute of Health (NIH) Vaccine Research Center who was uniquely prepared to tackle this threat. This team would be led by Drs. Kizzmekia Corbett and Blarney S. Graham, both of whom were recipients of the [2021 Winner of the Federal Employee of the Year Award](#).

“Graham and Corbett’s design ended up forming the backbone of many COVID-19 vaccines in use today, including those made by Moderna, Johnson & Johnson and Novavax. Pfizer’s vaccine, developed separately, relies on a nearly identical design. Graham, deputy director of the NIH Vaccine Research Center, and Corbett, who led the coronavirus research team that made versions of a spike protein based on prior work from other coronaviruses.”

In this issue, we celebrate Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett for her research and contributions to modern medicine that resulted in the rapid development of the COVID-19 vaccine.



Dr. Corbett was born in Hurdle Mills, North Carolina and grew up in Hillsboro, North Carolina. She received a Bachelor of Science (B.S.) degree in biological sciences and sociology from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. After earning a B.S., she became a biological sciences trainer at the National Institute of Health from 2006 - 2009. During this time, she studied how deadly respiratory diseases develop and spread as well as new ways to quickly develop vaccines. From 2009 - 2014, she studied human antibody responses to the dengue virus in Sri Lankan children.

2014 would be a pivotal year for Dr. Corbett. She earned a Ph.D. in microbiology and immunology from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. She became a research fellow as a viral immunologist at the NIH and focused on the development of novel or new vaccines for Coronaviridae. She researched the development of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) that spread throughout China and 28 countries, including the US from 2002 - 2004 and researched the development of the

Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). According to the Washington Times, Dr. Corbett, working with researchers at Scripps Research Institute and Dartmouth College, identified a way to make coronavirus spike proteins that could be manufactured under laboratory settings. “It was, essentially, advance work for the coming pandemic.”

This knowledge would allow the COVID-19 vaccine to be developed in record speed and hopefully set the pace for faster development of other vaccines in the future. TIME named her one of the four “heroes of the year” for her work on developing the COVID-19 vaccine and named her to the 2021 TIME100 Next List.

“I think about it a lot, how many of the little experimental questions we did not have to belabor this time around,” she said. When she saw the first promising mouse tests, “I felt like there was a beginning of all of this coming full circle.”

Dr. Corbett retired from federal service, and in June 2021 accepted a role at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, as Assistant Professor of Immunology and Infectious Diseases. Her lab will focus on “pandemic preparedness.” She often discusses the benefits of having good mentors and leaders and intends to create an environment where everyone feels like they belong and are heard. □

See [Kizzmekia Corbett - NIH Director's Blog](#) and [Kizzmekia Corbett is just getting started | Harvard Public Health Magazine | Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health](#)

OASCR 2021 Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) Recap

by Jessica Proctor

We have concluded our 2021 Combined Federal Campaign for the National Capital Area (CFCNCA)! Over the past 60 years, people like you and me have given over \$8.5 billion to help those in need locally, across the nation, and throughout the world!

In true OASCR fashion, we hit the ground running and managed to surpass our goal of \$6,057.89, finishing off with a total pledge amount of \$8,251! As a new OASCR employee, I was given the opportunity to become this year's CFC Coordinator for OASCR! The theme this year was, "You can be the face of change." With the help of nine amazing keyworkers as well as USDA's campaign manager Astrid Martinez, we organized a plan to ensure OASCR met our goal this year!

Unlike other years, we were completely virtual this year, which presented a bit of a challenge in the way we could interact and engage with OASCR. This challenge was met with ferocity! Together, we created a model that consisted of weekly cause emails and virtual charity events to raise awareness and generate donations for the CFC.



In December, we kicked off our "CFC Storytime Charity Lunch." The goal of this event was to learn and obtain information from various charities and share our own personal reasons why we donate to specific charities. For me, having dealt with the suicide of a close friend, I wanted to be a part of making a difference and contributing to charities related to mental health awareness. Other keyworkers also shared their stories and viewers were able to ask questions, which made for an interactive and informative event!

I want to personally thank our key workers for their great work throughout this campaign! David Atkins (EID), Gwen Edmonson (Front Office), Christopher Sacchetti (CCD), Robyn Courtney (PPAD), Latrice Washington (PCD), Shondell McDowney (MAL), Lynette Harris (DRMD-CCRO), Priscilla Brown (ECD), and Yolanda Tucker (EAD) were all vital parts in this moving train! They were a consistent help in assisting OASCR reach our destination and achieve our goal! We met bi-weekly to discuss a timeline of activities and correspondence that would ensure a positive outcome. On behalf of OASCR, thank you!

I want to also thank our Associate Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Winona Lake Scott, and our Deputy Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Monica Rainge, who took time out of their demanding schedules to speak and participate in our Storytime lunch! I want to give a final thank you to OASCR for helping us close this year's Combined Federal Campaign out successfully. Your donations and time are much appreciated! You are all the face of change! □



Thank you for being the face of change through the CFC. Together we are changing the world, one generous gift at a time.



Midwives: Birthing Babies Yesterday and Today

by Joelle T. Bowers

Ask most people whether they have heard of midwives and the response will probably be, "yes." Ask anything more about midwives, and you will probably receive any number of responses, including, "do they still have those?" The answer to that question is unequivocally, "yes."

From time immemorial, women have relied on women to help them give birth and assist with post-partum care. Midwifery is mentioned in many ancient texts, including the Old Testament. In Hebrew, the term "the midwife" (hameyaletet) may literally be translated "the childbirth assisting woman." According to Britain's *Royal College of Midwives*, written midwifery manuals have been traced to Egypt and Rome during the 1500s.

According to Wertz, Richard W. & Dorothy C., in *Lying-In: A History of Childbirth in America*, "The importance of midwives to the social order is shown by the fact that several New England towns provided a house or lot rent-free to a midwife on condition that 'she doth not refuse when called to it.' Non-English colonies often kept midwives on the colonial payroll. In New Amsterdam they were called Zieckentroosters, or comforters of the sick, and received liberal salaries and special privileges. The Dutch West India Company salaried midwives and gave others free houses to attend to the poor upon request. The French colony of

Louisiana paid midwives until 1756 and provided physicians regularly to examine the quality of their practice. Midwives in the South were usually slaves from large plantations who delivered both Blacks and whites and whose services were used by smaller plantations and independent farmers."

The honored status of midwives would eventually shift after the invention of the forceps. Formally educated doctors, who were men, as women were barred from medical school, sought to outlaw the practice of midwifery insisting the practice was unsafe. Midwives became villainized, likened to witches, in favor of the use of physicians. Midwifery was outlawed in many states.

According to Jessica Mitford in, *The American Way of Birth*, "by 1986, only about 4% of pregnant women received nurse-midwife care." The use of drugs and hospital births became more encouraged. Wealthy women relied upon the promise of modern medicine. Poor women would not be afforded such treatment and as a result, health outcomes would be different.

In the South, particularly in poor, African American, rural communities, African American midwives were utilized in at home births. Often taught by their mothers, it was common for the midwife to work in a specific city or town for decades birthing all the babies in a certain community. "Granny midwives," today called "Grand Midwives" were commonly called upon with great trust and respect in

their communities. Onnie Lee Logan, one of this country's most celebrated midwives, began learning the art at nine years of age by observing her mother. Logan did not do it for the money. She felt it was a calling by God. According to her *New York Times* [obituary](#), Logan delivered "virtually every child born in the predominantly Black Mobile, Alabama suburb of Prichard from 1931 to 1984," but still was forced to supplement her income by working as a maid. [ONNIE LEE LOGAN, ALABAMA MIDWIFE - Chicago Tribune](#).

Today, states have varying certification requirements for midwives; and higher institutions of learning, such as Yale and Emory University, have formalized education for nurse-midwifery. In certain states, a person can obtain a nursing degree and specialize as a nurse-midwife, while in others one must be certified as a midwife upon completion of a prescribed program. The California's Licensed Midwifery Practice Act of 1993, and other states have legalized the operation of lay midwives. The average salary for nurse-midwives is in the six-figure range and many hospitals offer their patients a nurse-midwife. [Nurse Midwives \(bls.gov\)](#) The practice has grown substantially and is expected to continue to grow. [The American College of Nurse-Midwives](#) a certifying body, advances the profession, and hosts annual conferences around the country. There is no doubt the profession will continue to grow and return to its honored status. □



by Jonathan Clark

Our OASCR team continues to grow! Please join us in welcoming our newest team members. As you are able, feel free to take a moment to reach out, introduce yourself, and extend a warm welcome.

Kenneth Tapp Program Planning & Accountability Division

A proud military veteran with eight years Active-Duty, Navy and three years Navy Reserve, Kenneth joins the OASCR Team as a Management and Program Analyst with the Program Planning & Accountability Division. While serving on active duty, Kenneth graduated from the Naval School of Health Sciences for Advanced Radiology. His assignments included serving as a Medical Assistant, Nursing Corps, and as a Combat Medic.

While serving on active duty, Kenneth deployed with the *U.S.S. Enterprise* Battle Group (Navy Aircraft Carrier) for eight months in response to the September 11th terrorist attacks. During his final four years of active duty, he worked as a Radiology Technician and Sonographer. After active duty and prior to entering federal

government, Kenneth was able to practice those valuable skills at several Maryland area hospitals such as; Calvert County Hospital, St. Mary's County Hospital, and Advanced Radiology. Prior to his arrival to OASCR, he worked at the Department of Veteran Affairs (Medical Service Assistant), Social Security Administration (Claims Assistant & Benefits Authorizer), and

Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (Employee Benefit Law Specialist). Kenneth has two teenaged daughters and a nine-month-old son. In his spare time, he is an avid reader, as well as a traveler with a love for adventure. Also, an entrepreneur with a vision, Kenneth and his friends just established a mobile cigar lounge, with plans for expansion. □

From the Archives: Navy Highlights First African Americans in Navy Medical Department



A Company of African American recruits at Camp Robert Smalls c. 1943. Courtesy of Navy Department Library

By Andre Sobocinski, historian, U.S. Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery.

From the dawn of the U.S. Navy, African Americans have played a vital role in its history and have embodied the basic tenets of service and commitment to duty. At the same time, the African American experience in Navy history is a story

about breaking through a segregated service and overcoming limitations of opportunities to what Admiral Elmo "Bud" Zumwalt called "One Navy."

On April 7, 1942, Secretary of Navy Frank Knox announced that the Navy would start accepting enlistment of Blacks in ratings other than Messmen. By 1943 African Americans were finally allowed to serve as Hospital Corpsmen and by 1944, following the lead of the [Golden Thirteen](#), were allowed to serve as dentists, nurses, physicians, as well as Hospital Corps Officers. Among the first corpsmen in 1943 was John Andrew Haskins, Jr. who later earned distinction as the first African American corpsmen awarded for heroism. □

*Excerpt reprinted from: [Navy Medicine Highlights First African Americans In The Navy Medical Department : U.S. Navy. Bureau of Medicine and Surgery : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#), Publication date 2013-2-26.

Around Town During Black History Month

by Winona Lake Scott

Museums and Virtual Exhibits, Art and Photography, Walking Trails and Driving Tours are waiting to be discovered!

[The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor Center](#)



Entrance to Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor Center.
Photo Credit: harrietubmanway.org

Located near Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge and about 25 minutes from Cambridge, Maryland, the visitor center includes an exhibit hall with powerful and thought-provoking multimedia exhibits, a theater, and gift shop.

Location: 4068 Golden Hill Rd., Church Creek, MD
Admission: Admission to the visitor center is free.
Hours: Tuesday-Sunday, 10am-4pm. Closed Monday.
For additional information: (410) 221-2290

[Celebrate Black History Month Through the Lens of Black Health and Wellness](#)

In celebration of Black History Month, the National Museum of African American History & Culture (NMAAHC) will examine the legacy of not only

Black scholars and medical practitioners in Western medicine, but also other ways of knowing (e.g., birth workers, doulas, midwives, naturopaths, herbalists, etc.) throughout the African Diaspora.



Location: The National Museum of African American History & Culture website.

A [virtual exhibit](#) initiative that highlights Black pioneers' trailblazing contributions to Western medicine, addresses health disparities facing our communities, and encourage healing through education.

If visiting in person, **Museum Hours:** Wednesday-Sunday 10am-5:30pm
Admission: Timed passes are required for entry

[Smithsonian American Art: The Renwick Gallery](#)



Photo: courtesy of Flickr. [staticflickr.com](https://www.staticflickr.com)

The Renwick Gallery is dedicated to contemporary craft and decorative the arts. Located near the White House in the heart of historic Washington, DC. The works of African-American [Portrait Photographer James VanDerZee](#), Harlem's resident photographer for more than six decades, and [Alma Thomas](#), an African-American artist and teacher best known for her exuberant and colorful abstract paintings can be viewed at the Renwick Gallery.

Location: Pennsylvania Avenue at 17th Street NW Washington, DC
Admission: No tickets are required.
Hours: Thursday-Sunday, 10am-5pm

[The Phillips Collection](#)



Entrance to The Phillips Collection Museum
Photo Credit: [phillipscollection.org/about](https://www.phillipscollection.org/about)

America's first Museum of Modern Art is in historic Dupont Circle in Washington, DC, the museum opened in 1921. The galleries are frequently rearranged to facilitate new conversations between artworks and fresh experiences for visitors.

Location: 1600 21st Street, NW, Washington, DC, near the corner of 21st and Q Streets, NW.
Admission: Timed tickets are required for general admission
Hours: Tuesday-Sunday 11am-6pm

STAY SAFE EVERYONE!

From the Editor:

Joelle T. Bowers

Sometimes I reminisce on how we celebrated Black History Month when I was a child. I recall introducing Rev. Jesse Jackson to my elementary school at our Black History Month program. It was the first time we were encouraged to chant, "I Am Somebody!" Young students recited Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. We discussed prominent African Americans who helped shape America. We were students in New Orleans, LA, a place where public school integration was not wanted and hard fought against. However, we were taught about the trail blazers, such as Phillis Wheatley, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad, Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver, Mary McLeod Bethune, W.E.B. Du Bois, Madam C.J. Walker. We learned the poetry and stories by Langston Hughes, Richard Wright, and James Baldwin, just to name a few. They were the freedom fighters, inventors, educators, entrepreneurs, and authors. Some were formerly enslaved, others were formally educated, but they all had sheer determination, intelligence, strength, figuratively and literally, and forged a path through uncharted territory. We children were astonished by their bravery, impressed with their eloquence, saddened by their struggle, and confused by the hate. Those discussions were short lived. As Spring emerged there was little discussion about Black people, especially Black people being presented in a noble and positive light. But those lessons were never forgotten.

As a college freshman proudly stepping through the gates of Howard University, I entered a place where I would lose time in the [Mooreland-Spingarn Research Center](#). This was where history was made, where Black historic figures learned, taught, spoke, and prayed. I would argue Historically Black Colleges and Universities are national treasures. For it was there, African American students, many of whom were first generation college students, received an unfiltered, excellent education, where truthful and positive narratives about Black people prevailed, where excellence was expected and exemplified, and where negative, racist stereotypes surrounding Black intellect, motivation and ambition were obliterated.

Law school painted another layer of American history across my mind as we were steeped in U.S. constitutional law and studied cases such as *Dred Scott*, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, *Brown v. Board of Education*, *Sweatt v. Painter*, *Loving v. Virginia*,

and *United States v. Virginia (Virginia Military Institute)*. These and other precedent setting cases were not taught as "Black history" or "civil rights," but were, and still are, taught in U.S. constitutional law courses in law schools across the country. As I read the dissenting opinions and the transcripts of the debates over the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, where the racism and fear were plainly on display, I was astonished by the bravery, impressed with the eloquence and brilliance of Attorney Thurgood Marshall (before he was appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court), Attorney Charles Hamilton Houston, and Rep. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., yet saddened by their struggle, and confused by the hate.

So here we are in 2022, in an indisputably racially and politically divided America. As I write this, bomb threats spring up almost daily like weeds across this nation to terrorize our children in their schools. This negativity no longer confuses me; it has become background noise. We all hear it. We know exactly what it is. The sound is familiar and concerning. Nevertheless, it drives us to be hyper focused on the good work that must continue. We cheer and celebrate with pride, the successes. The celebration of Black History is momentous because there is even more to commemorate and so much more to celebrate. □

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We would like to extend an invitation to all OASCR employees and Civil Rights practitioners to contribute to The OASCR Times newsletter, whether it be a one-time contribution or to join the staff.

We welcome you!