

## The Civil Rights Era 1955-1968



# Medicine and the Civil Rights Movement

- Medicine played a major role in civil rights movement, but largely outside of AMA
- Physicians organized and participated in civil rights marches
- Physicians played a role in picket lines and patient advocacy
- Physicians filed lawsuits that sought to end hospital segregation
- *JNMA* published “Integration Battlefront”



William Montague Cobb (1904-1990).  
Editor of *JNMA* (1949-1977) and  
President of the NMA (1964-1965).

# Hospitals and Professional Advancement



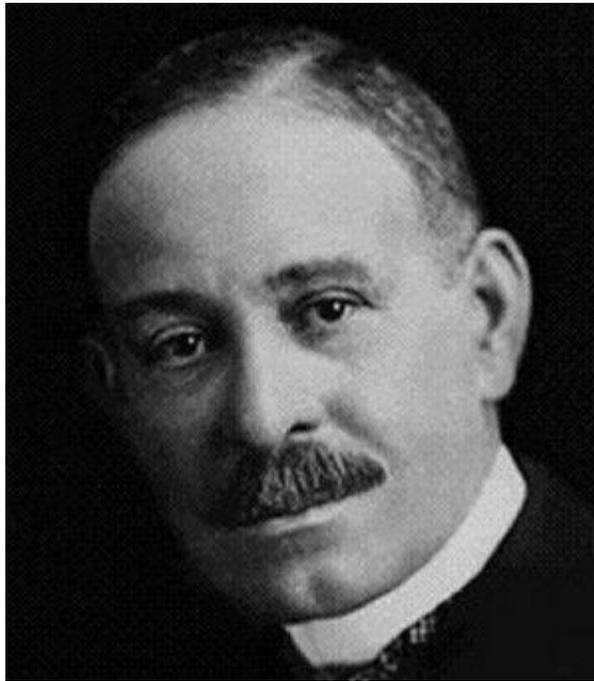
- The importance of hospital staff integration, and relationship to integration in organized medicine
  - Board certification important for pursuing medical specialties and honing skills
  - Specialty training took place in hospitals
  - Hospitals often required their staff to be members of a medical society and/or AMA
  - Thus, racial bars to society membership were barriers to specialty training and professional advancement

Source: IR Clark Collection (right)

<http://www.oldnorthstatemedicalsociety.org/virtualMuseum/Main%20-%20ONSMS%20Virtual%20Museum.html>

<http://www.american.edu/bgriff/H207web/civrights/coloredwaitingroom.jpg> (left)

In 1931, out of 25,000 specialists in US,  
2 were African American



Daniel Hale Williams  
(American College of Surgeons, 1913)

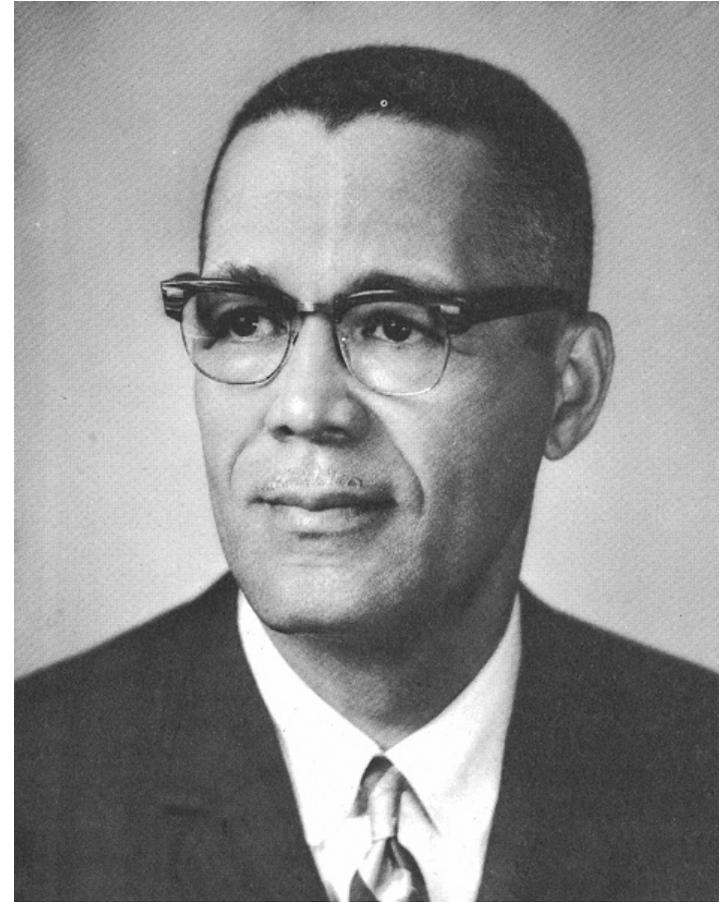
&

William Harry Barnes  
(American Board of Otolaryngology, 1927)

Source: <http://www.africanamericans.com/images2/DanielHaleWilliams.jpg>

# Legal Remedies to Hospital Desegregation

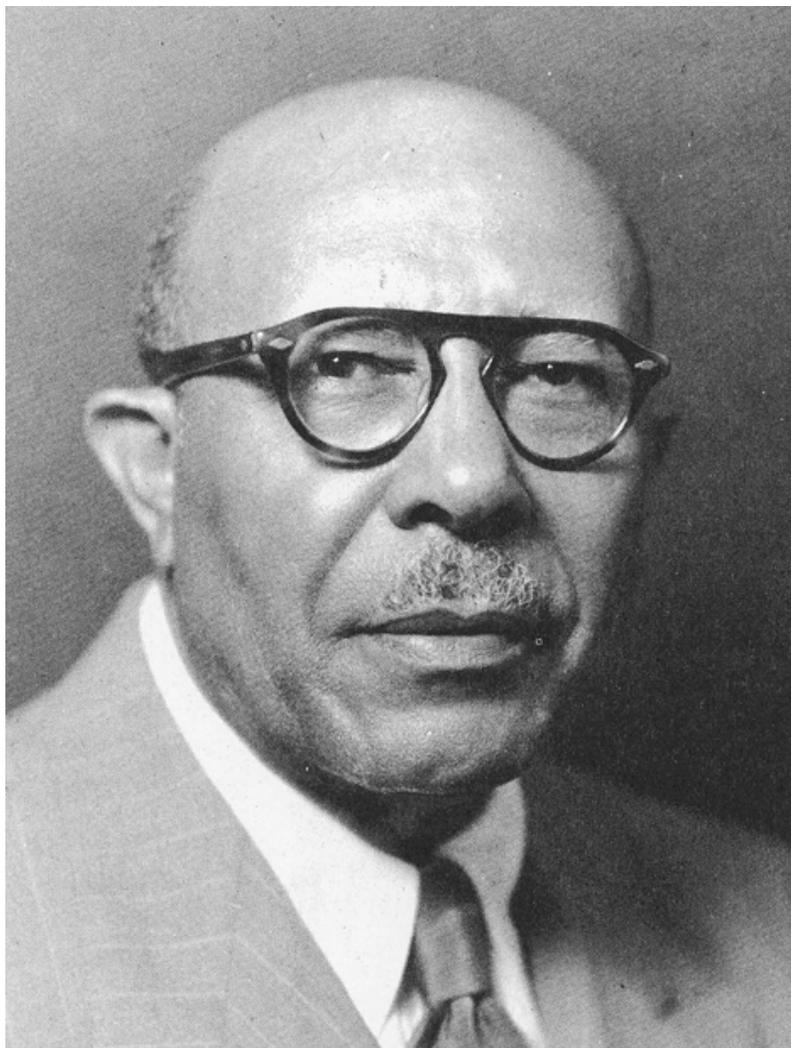
- *Eaton v. James Walker Memorial Hospital*
  - (1961) Court finds that Hubert A. Eaton and other African Americans were wrongfully denied staff privileges. Eaton won his appeal after a decade of litigation.
- *Simkins v. Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital*
  - (1963) Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals finds it unconstitutional to discriminate against black physicians in hospitals built with federal funds under the Hill-Burton program.



Hubert A. Eaton (1916-1991)

# AMA Reaffirms Jim Crow Segregation

- 1939 – AMA appointed committee to consider problems “inimical to the welfare of colored physicians”
- AMA decried racial discrimination in state/local society membership
- AMA noted that a “large number of colored physicians were AMA members
- But every “medical society has the right of self governance in...membership”



Peter Marshall Murray of NY (1888-1969).  
First African American elected to the AMA House  
House of Delegates (1950-1961).

# AMA Policies on Discrimination in State and Local Societies

1940-1964, many attempts to change discriminatory membership policies were rebuffed

<u>Policy Proposal</u>	<u>AMA Action</u>
• 1944 – NMA members requested “associate membership” in AMA	Denied
• 1952 – Old North State Medical Society requested to be a “constituent association” of AMA	Denied
• 1963 – Exclude societies with discriminatory membership policies	Denied

# Reasons given for AMA Inaction

- “Progress” is being made in integrating Southern societies
- The AMA has many “Negro” members
- Many “Negro members of state medical societies...have not chosen to become members of the [AMA]”
- Membership in state/local societies “is outside the jurisdiction of the [AMA]”

# Martha Mendell Physicians' Forum

In 1952:

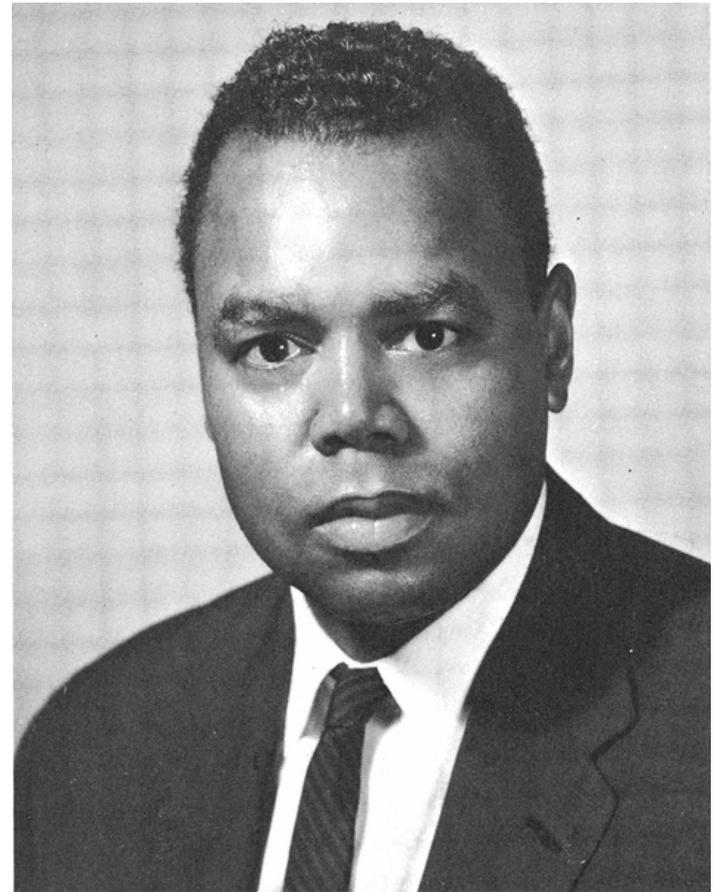
*“The continued exclusion of Negro physicians by southern medical societies is not just a national, but an international disgrace. The claim of the AMA that it is powerless to correct this practice because of the ‘autonomy’ of its component societies is an evasion of its responsibility. Surely, if the southern medical societies decided to admit chiropractors to membership the AMA would quickly find the means of re-defining this autonomy.”*

# Dr. Arthur H. Coleman

## *JNMA* Legal Correspondent

In 1964 says the AMA is acting like:

*“[a] man who is standing on the shoreline watching a fellow-man floundering in the sea and proclaiming to the world and to his God that he does not believe in drowning. This alone does nothing for the man in the sea.... Their conscience may be eased so that they can sleep at night to ‘take a stand against discrimination,’ but, it takes a concerted effort of positive action to rescue those caught in the sea of discrimination.”*



Arthur H. Coleman (1920-)

# Civil Rights Not a Priority for AMA



Anthony J. Celebrezze  
HEW Secretary (1962-1965)

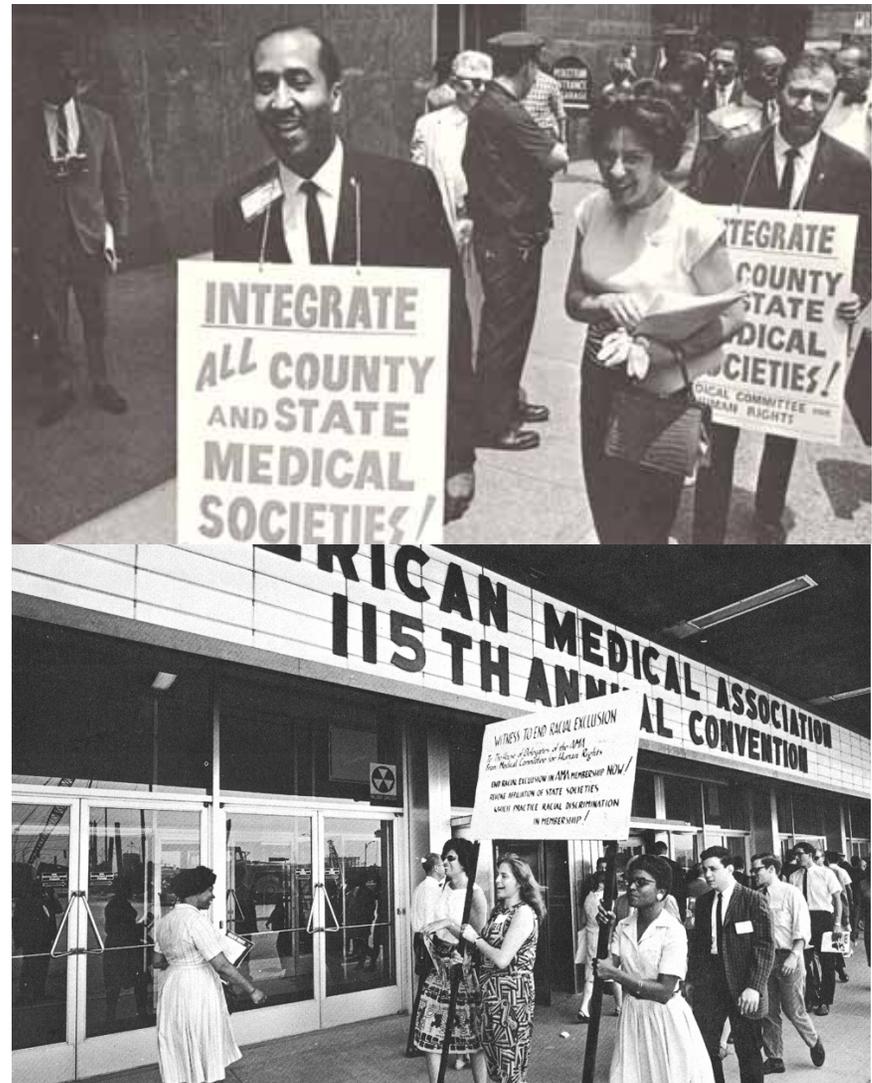
- Civil rights are almost completely unmentioned in AMA records
- AMA ignores or even obstructs civil rights agenda
  - Elects not to defend African American physicians arrested in Atlanta for attending the Fulton County Medical Association's whites-only luncheon
  - Opposes "Oath of Compliance" to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act
  - JAMA declines to publish letter about Selma march because it is "controversial"
  - Repeatedly declines to support NMA on Hill-Burton changes

Source: US Social Security Administration  
<http://www.ssa.gov/history/pics/celebrez.jpg>

# Picketing the AMA

- NMA found AMA inaction to be “totally inadequate”
- NMA, Medical Committee for Human Rights, and others picketed AMA meetings in 1963, 1965, 1966, and 1968
- AMA responded in 1963:
  - “[The Picketing serves only] to obscure the achievements in medical science being reported at the meeting”

Photos- Members of the NMA, MCHR, and others picket AMA meetings in 1965 (above) and 1966 (below). John L. S. Holloman, Jr. (1919-2002) (above left)



# Imhotep Conferences on Hospital Integration

- 1957 – First conference organized by *JNMA* editor, W. Montague Cobb, NMA, NAACP, et al.
- AMA was invited and sent representatives
- At future Imhotep meetings, AMA refused to “participate fully and actively”

THE IMHOTEP  
NATIONAL CONFERENCE  
ON HOSPITAL INTEGRATION



*sponsored by*  
THE NATIONAL MEDICAL ASSOCIATION  
THE MEDICO-CHIRURGICAL SOCIETY OF THE DISTRICT  
OF COLUMBIA  
THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT  
OF COLORED PEOPLE

*I m h o t e p*  
*"He who cometh in peace"*

MARCH 8-9, 1957

THE FIFTEENTH STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
15TH & R STREETS, N.W., WASHINGTON, D. C.

# After Repeated AMA Absenteeism

In 1963, NMA President Cobb stated in part:

*“...for seven years we have invited [AMA representatives] to sit down with us and solve the problem [of hospital integration]. The high professional and economic levels of these bodies and the altruistic religious principles according to which they are supposed to operate seem to have meant nothing...By their refusal to confer they force action by crisis. And now events have passed beyond them. The initiative offered is no longer theirs to accept.”*

The initiative was, indeed, no longer the AMA's to accept...



President Johnson Signing Civil Rights Act of 1964  
Martin Luther King, Jr. (behind)

<http://www.american.edu/bgriff/H207web/civrights/LBJcivrights1964.jpg>

# The AMA Judicial Council

After desegregation became the law of the land, the AMA voted to amend the *Constitution and Bylaws*, giving the Judicial Council the authority to

- (1966) Investigate allegations of discrimination in state/local societies
- (1968) Expel state/local societies found guilty of racial discrimination

# A number of key events since 1968

- 1968 – AMA first expressed need to increase number of African American physicians
- 1989 – First AMA report on “Black-White Disparities in Health Care”
- 1992 – AMA’s Minority Affairs Consortium created
- 1994 – Lonnie Bristow becomes first African American AMA President
- 2004 – Commission to End Health Care Disparities created, with NMA and NHMA
  - Doctors Back to School
  - Minority Scholar Awards
  - Cultural Competence work, etc...

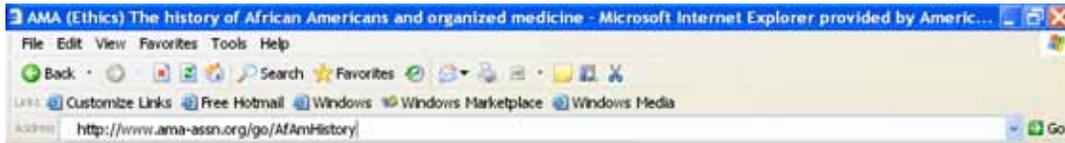
# Powerful Effects of this Legacy

African Americans make up

- 12.3% of the US population (2006)
- 2.2% of physicians and medical students (2006)
  - As compared to 2.5% in 1910, at the time of the Flexner Report
- 1.8% of AMA members (2006)
- What are the effects of this lack of diversity?
  - What happens when a group is under-represented in a democratic organization?
- Ongoing segregation, and mistrust of medicine, are key drivers of disparities

## Summary

- In the US, organized medicine emerged from a society deeply divided over slavery, but largely accepting of racial inequities and theories espousing black inferiority.
- Emblematic of existing societal values and practices, medical schools, residency programs, hospital staffs and professional societies largely excluded African Americans.
- For more than 100 years, many medical associations, including the AMA, actively reinforced or passively accepted this exclusion.
- Throughout this history, vocal groups of physicians—black and white, and within and outside these associations—challenged segregation and racism.
- This history is still being written ...



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**The history of African Americans and organized medicine**  
e-mail story | print story

Segregation and racism within the medical profession have, and continue to, profoundly impact the African American community. Yet, the complex history of race in the medical profession is rarely acknowledged and often misunderstood. The AMA Institute for Ethics invited a panel of experts to review and analyze the historical roots of the black-white divide in American medicine. The following is a summary of the panel's findings, along with other resources.

- Journal of the American Medical Association article
- Journal of the American Medical Association commentary
- AMA APPEALS MESSAGE
- Medical history (PDF, 104KB)
- Historical sources (Web resource)
- Constitutional issues, part 1 (PDF, 14KB)
- Constitutional issues, part 2 (PDF, 24KB)
- Bibliography (PDF, 51KB)
- Panel acknowledgments (PDF, 16KB)
- 1978 National Medical Journal article (PDF, 24KB)
- American Medical Association Archives

**Background reports on the history of African Americans and organized medicine**  
Background research reports for the project on the history of African Americans and organized medicine

**Reviews for the history of African Americans and organized medicine**  
Reviews for the research project on the history of African Americans and organized medicine



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**Background reports on the history of African Americans and organized medicine**  
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The following supplemental reports were commissioned by the Writing Group to provide additional information and direct quotations from primary source materials on specific aspects of the history of African American physicians and organized medicine.

- A. [AMA annual meeting attendance roster \(civil war era\), 1860-1868](#) (PDF, 27KB)
- B. [Seating delegates from the Massachusetts Medical Society, 1870](#) (PDF, 38KB)
- C. [Exclusion of the National Medical Society of DC, 1870-1872](#) (PDF, 76KB)
- D. [Evolution of AMA membership, 1847-1981](#) (PDF, 39KB)
- E. [Racial designations in the American medical directory, 1906-1940](#) (PDF, 49KB)
- F. [AMA policies on racial discrimination of constituents, 1870-1968](#) (PDF, 72KB)
- G. [The "Flexner Report" and the AMA, 1910](#) (PDF, 43KB)
- H. [The Hill-Burton Act and the AMA, 1946](#) (PDF, 86KB)
- I. [The Civil Rights Act and the AMA, 1964](#) (PDF, 53KB)
- J. [The AMA and Medicare and Medicaid, 1965](#) (PDF, 62KB)
- K. [Proposal to "amalgamate" the AMA and NMA, 1973](#) (PDF, 22KB)
- L. [Segregation within national professional associations](#) (PDF, 64KB)

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