

# THE 2022 BLACK HISTORY MONTH Virtual FESTIVAL

ALL MONTH LONG DURING FEBRUARY

THE 2022 BLACK HISTORY THEME: **BLACK HEALTH AND WELLNESS**



ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN LIFE AND HISTORY®

301 RHODE ISLAND AVENUE, NW SUITE 2204 | WASHINGTON, DC 20001 | WWW.ASALH.ORG | 202.238.5910

This year's theme for Black History Month is **Black Health and Wellness**. ASALH has celebrated Negro History Week and Black History Month for ninety-five years and rarely has one of its themes for the annual celebrations been more appropriate and timely.

Our nation has suffered through two years of a worldwide pandemic called the coronavirus or COVID-19. Almost one million Americans have died during the pandemic. Although the administration of President Joseph R. Biden has made a valiant effort to curtail and stem the spread of the coronavirus by distributing a vaccine, the incompetence and lies about the virus of the previous administration and its supporters have set the tone for many Americans to resist being vaccinated and stemming its deadly spread. African Americans have suffered disproportionately from COVID-19 more than any other group of Americans.

The theme of **Black Health and Wellness** also addresses the long history of how African Americans have dealt with their exclusion from the nation's hospitals and clinics. African Americans have had to establish their own hospitals, clinics, medical and nursing schools in cities such as Charleston, Chicago, Dallas, Nashville, St. Louis, and Washington, D.C. This theme also shows how some of the nation's most important medical and scientific innovations were developed because African Americans in slavery and freedom were used literally as guinea pigs to help to develop the field of gynecology (e.g., the inhumane research of J. Marion Sims), to research cancer and polio (the cells of Henrietta Lacks) and the spread of syphilis (the Tuskegee study).

But all has not been all negative. African Americans have contributed many medical and scientific innovations to the nation's health and wellness. For example, in 1721 during a smallpox outbreak in Boston, Onesimus, an enslaved African, taught his master the method of inoculation. In 1893, Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, a surgeon at Chicago's Provident Hospital, performed the first successful open heart surgery. During World War Two, Dr. Charles Drew developed the method for preserving blood plasma that has saved millions of lives. Most recently, Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett led the team of scientists that developed the vaccine to immunize Americans against COVID-19.

The theme of **Black and Health Wellness** not only addresses the history of healthcare in the African American community, it is also a historical examination of the financial and economic health and wellness of Africans Americans. Broadening and expanding the theme to address what some historians and health care professionals call the "social and economic determinants" of health and wellness allows us to show the interconnectedness of a number of historical, social and economic factors on Black Health and Wellness.

Please join ASALH in celebrating Black History Month by attending the second annual Festival and learning more about the history of **Black Health and Wellness**.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of W. Marvin Dulaney

W. Marvin Dulaney  
President

Association for the Study of African American Life and History