

# Celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

February 2014

*"Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane."*  
--Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., in a speech to the Medical Committee for Human Rights, 1966

## OCR News

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services joins in celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In the upcoming weeks, OCR, in partnership with the Office of Minority Health, will jointly host activities to both promote health equity and honor courageous individuals and momentous events that continue to define the civil rights movement today. To commemorate the historic buildup to the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, we hope you will enjoy and share this first copy of our special monthly newsletter which will be disseminated through OCR's listserv.



PHOTO: Nurses serve meals in segregated gynecology ward in Johns Hopkins women's clinic in 1939. (Source: Johns Hopkins Nursing Magazine Spring 2010 <http://magazine.nursing.jhu.edu/2011/11/ward-by-ward/>)

## Spotlight on Racial Discrimination in Healthcare

Health disparities tied to racism reflect our history of entrenched discrimination in healthcare and society at large. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Legal Defense and Education Fund litigated a series of cases between 1956 and 1967 to end discrimination in health care settings. *Simkins v. Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital*, 323 F.2d 959 (4th Cir. 1963), questioned whether Hill-Burton funds could be dispersed only to desegregated hospital facilities. In *Cypress v. Newport News Hospital Association*, the court held that race could not be a determinant of patient admissions, education programs, and staff privileges. *Cypress v. Newport News Gen. & Nonsectarian Hosp. Ass'n*, 375 F.2d 648, 655 (4th Cir. 1967). These cases highlight a time when patients were admitted to separate floors, blood was distributed to patients according to the race of the donor, and non-white physicians were rarely appointed. Understanding the history of racial discrimination helps to frame current limited access to healthcare and disparate treatment experienced by minority groups today.

Sources: "Professional and Hospital DISCRIMINATION and the US Court of Appeals Fourth Circuit 1956-1967" Reynolds, Preston P Am J Public Health. 2004 May; 94(5): 710-720 . Cavagnaro, Louise. "The Way We Were: A History of Segregation and Desegregation at The Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions." *Dome*. no. 7 (2004). <http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/dome/0409/feature1.cfm> (accessed February 27, 2014).

## This Month in Civil Rights History

### February 2, 1955

President Harry Truman urges Congress to adopt a civil rights program.

### February 6, 1964

Rep. Martha Griffith's address ensures civil rights protection for women is included in the Civil Rights Act.

### February 17, 1964

U.S. House of Representatives sends H.R. 7152, the administration's civil rights bill, to the Senate.

### February 28, 1963

100 years after President Abraham Lincoln announced his emancipation proclamation, President Kennedy asks Congress to pass the bill that became the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Source: Dirksen Congressional Center  
"Major Features of the Civil Rights Law"  
[http://www.congresslink.org/print\\_basics\\_histmats\\_civilrights64text.htm](http://www.congresslink.org/print_basics_histmats_civilrights64text.htm)



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