

Homer G. Phillips and the Legacy of Public Hospitals in St. Louis

In 1905 Dr. John Green, President of the St. Louis Medical Society, with a keen understanding of the plight of public hospitals in other cities issued this charge to St. Louis physicians on the eve of opening a new City Hospital:

“Will it vouchsafe to the pauper a medical care equivalent to that which his pecuniarily more fortunate fellow citizens receive? Will it fulfill to the utmost its function of providing instruction in practical medicine to the undergraduate student? And will our hospital be thoroughly in accord with the spirit of medical enlightenment?”

*Presidential Report, St. Louis Medical Review
January 14, 1905*

A succession of public hospitals failed in that charge -- City Hospital No. 1 (Max C. Starkloff), City Hospital No. 2, and St. Louis County Hospital, despite their professed missions, opened as segregated facilities. Only under duress, and toward the twilight of their existence, did they admit and treat irrespective of race, creed or color. There is one bright exception, the Homer G. Phillips Hospital. It opened its doors as a truly “public” facility in 1937, still shrouded in intrigue after the mysterious assassination of its main advocate and benefactor, attorney Homer Gilliam Phillips. At a time in American society when people of color were restricted from most medical training programs, the Homer G. Phillips Hospital became the premier training ground for African American medical professionals – many of whom remained to deliver high quality health care in the St. Louis area and who later assumed prestigious positions throughout the nation. The successes of its subsequent years of operation (as well as the complex issues surrounding its closure) became legendary in the annals of public hospitals. It closed its doors on August 17, 1979, followed by St. Louis City No. 1 in 1985, St. Louis County Hospital in 1987, and St. Louis Regional Hospital in 1997. While we cannot now walk the halls of Homer G. Phillips Hospital, we can learn much from its history, presented by the very people who strived diligently to provide culturally sensitive care to the patients who so deeply trusted and loved them and their hospital. This lecture series is named in honor of the historic Homer G. Phillips Hospital in St. Louis.

The Homer G. Phillips Public Health Lecture Series

“Anchoring Communities: A Roadmap to Equity and Transformation in Marginalized Communities”



Honoring: Nathaniel Murdock, MD

Board-certified obstetrician gynecologist, retired

Guest Speaker: Brenda Battle, RN, BSN, MBA

*Senior Vice President for Community Health Transformation
and Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer
University of Chicago Medicine*

Friday, October 6, 2023

Washington University School of Medicine
Eric P. Newman Education Center (EPNEC)
320 South Euclid Avenue
Saint Louis, MO 63110

5:30 p.m.
Refreshments
Atrium

6:00 p.m.
Lecture
Auditorium

7:00 p.m.
Reception
Atrium

Brenda Battle, RN, BSN, MBA



Brenda Battle is an industry leader in health equity with a successful history of executing strategies that result in incremental and systemic change toward improving the health and wellness of vulnerable populations. Brenda is a national speaker on health equity and reducing health disparities, and has several publications.

Brenda serves as Senior Vice President for Community Health Transformation and Chief Equity Officer for The University of Chicago Medicine Health System where she designs and oversees UCM's community-health

transformation and equity strategies; develops and implements coordinated, innovative healthcare, social and economic solutions to address the social determinants of health and reduce inequities for communities and populations served by UCM; and fosters innovation in UCM's care delivery system by crafting care models and systems that promote diversity, equity and inclusion. Brenda leads efforts to integrate the resources and strategies of the UChicago Medicine and the broader University of Chicago enterprise with the assets and resources of the community to meet the healthcare needs of communities within UCM's catchment area.

Brenda also oversees the Urban Health Initiative (UHI), UCM's community health division focused on bridging the relationship between UCM and the communities it serves, and serving as connectors and facilitators of lasting, essential relationships between key stakeholders across the Chicagoland and Illinois regions to achieve better health outcomes for communities served by the UCM Health system. Battle is responsible for executing the UHI's framework for asset based community development, co-designing programs with the community and forging partnerships, allowing the value of UCM's globally leading research and care for the community.

Prior to joining the UCM, Brenda was the Founding director of the Center for Diversity and Cultural Competence at Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis, MO, where she developed and implemented Barnes-Jewish Hospital's strategy for diversity, equity, inclusion and community benefit.

Brenda has over 38 years of health care experience, serving as Executive Vice President, Government and Community Affairs for Medical Transportation Management (MTM), Inc. (St. Louis, Mo.), and leading operations in commercial and Medicaid managed care.

Brenda has served on several boards in St. Louis, Missouri in the past, and now serves on the Board of Directors of the Red Cross of Chicago and Northern Illinois, Cara Collective, The South Side Health Community Organization, and America's Essential Hospitals Institute (Washington, D.C.).

Nathaniel Murdock, MD



Dr. Nathaniel Hawthorne Murdock, Jr. is a board-certified obstetrician/gynecologist with over 50 years of experience in the medical field. In practice for more than 50 years, Dr. Murdock gave unselfishly to his community and his colleagues in medicine.

Dr. Murdock served on the faculty at Washington University School of Medicine for more than 45 years, and in leadership roles with the Mound City Medical Forum, the National Medical Association, the St. Louis Gynecological Society, and others. He joined the St. Louis Metropolitan Medical Society

in 1969 and served as president in 2001, and was an alternate delegate to the American Medical Association since 2002.

In 1997 Dr. Murdock was elected president of the National Medical Association, the largest group of minority physicians in the United States, where he spent most of his time testifying before Congress and working with the 22,000 physicians the NMA serves. In 1998, in the publication HealthQuest, Dr. Murdock argued against the Proposition 209 in California which banned racial and ethnic preferences.

In 2015 Dr. Murdock, MD, received the St. Louis Metropolitan Medical Society's highest honor, the Robert E. Schlueter Leadership Award. The award was created in 1985, and Dr. Murdock received the award based on very specific criteria of leadership, scientific attitude, advocacy and community service, and for long-standing contributions to medicine that are above and beyond the norm.

Dr. Murdock's contributions have also extended far into the St. Louis community, on the boards or as chief of medicine or a volunteer physician for numerous community health centers. He took considerable time out from his busy practice to visit local junior-high and high schools, where he talks about birth control, pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Long active in civic, religious and philanthropic activities, he and his wife Sandra Murdock served as chairs of the 2005 United Way's Charmaine Chapman Society. He is a life member of the Urban League and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. He received the NAACP Community Service Award in 2013, is an active member of the Sigma Pi Phi fraternity, and was named a Trailblazer of St. Louis by the Royal Vagabonds Foundation, Inc.

Born in Texas, Dr. Murdock obtained a bachelor's degree in chemistry in 1958 from Howard University in Washington, D.C., and a medical degree in 1963 from Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tenn. After further training at Homer G. Phillips Hospital in St. Louis and two years as an Air Force captain, he joined the Washington University faculty in 1969, starting as a clinical assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology.