

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

“Towards Systemic Health Equity: The Unfinished Work of Reconstruction in St. Louis”



Guest Speaker: Geoff Ward, PhD

*Professor of African and African American Studies
Director, WashU & Slavery Project,
Center for the Study of Race, Ethnicity & Equity
Washington University in St. Louis*

Friday, October 11, 2024

6:00 p.m.

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

Program

Welcome **Will Ross, MD, MPH**
*Associate Dean for Diversity
Office of Diversity Programs*

Remarks **Sherree Wilson, PhD**
*Associate Vice Chancellor and
Associate Dean of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion*

Remarks **Eva Aagaard, MD**
*Carol B. and Jerome T. Loeb Professor of Medical Education,
Senior Associate Dean for Education,
Vice Chancellor for Medical Education*

**Introduction of
Geoff Ward, PhD** **Will Ross, MD, MPH**
*Associate Dean for Diversity
Office of Diversity Program*

**“Towards Systemic Health Equity:
The Unfinished Work of Reconstruction
in St. Louis”** **Geoff Ward, PhD**
*Professor of African and African American Studies
Director, WashU & Slavery Project,
Center for the Study of Race, Ethnicity & Equity
Washington University in St. Louis*

Questions **Audience**

Geoff Ward, PhD



Geoff Ward is a Professor of African and African American Studies and a faculty affiliate in the Department of Sociology and the American Culture Studies Program at Washington University in St. Louis. He directs the WashU & Slavery Project, a university initiative based in the Center for the Study of Race, Ethnicity & Equity (CRE2), in collaboration with the consortium of Universities Studying Slavery. His research explores the histories and legacies of racialized violence and their reparative implications.

Ward's work, rooted in the Black sociological tradition, merges scholarship with organizing and creative endeavors, including archives, exhibitions, and digital projects. He aims to engage broader audiences, enhance teaching innovation, and amplify the impact of his often collaborative research. His contributions include serving on the national advisory board for Monument Lab's National Monument Audit and being a member of the Mayor's Commemorative Landscape Taskforce in Clayton, MO, as well as the Reparative Justice Coalition of St. Louis. He is also collaborating with Professor Anika Walke (History) to co-lead Memory for the Future, a reparative public humanities lab.