WashU Medicine

Office of Diversity Programs
Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
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WashU Medicine

30th Annual Homer G. Phillips *Public Health Lecture Series*

Friday, October 9, 2026
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Eric P. Newman Education Center (EPNEC)
320 South Euclid Avenue
Saint Louis, MO 63110



Homer G. Phillips

“In 1922 Phillips joined with other black leaders in an effort to persuade the city of St. Louis to issue bonds for the construction of a hospital that would serve the black community. Although he did not live to see the fruition of this endeavor, a hospital that was named to honor his memory was completed in 1937.”

Ware, Leland. “Homer G. Phillips (1880–1931).” Missouri Encyclopedia, State Historical Society of Missouri. Published July 14, 2020. Accessed August 18, 2025

Previous Lectures

Year	Speaker
2009	Harriet Washington
2008	Joan Reede, MD, MPH, MS
2007	Deborah Prothrow-Smith, MD
2006	Andy Ziskind, MD
2005	Kristy Woods, MD, MPH
2004	L.D. Britt, MD, MPH
2003	Vanessa Northington Gamble, MD, PhD
2002	Beverly Coleman Miller, MD
2001	Audrey Forbes Manley, MD, MPH
2000	Levi Watkins Jr., MD
1999	Clive Callendar, MD, FACS
1998	Henry W. Foster, MD
1997	Henry Hampton Jr.
1996	LaSalle Leffall Jr., MD

"The History of Public Hospitals and The Advent of Homer G. Phillips Hospital"

Welcome

Sherree A. Wilson, PhD
Associate Vice Chancellor & Senior Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion – WashU Medicine

Opening Remarks

Lois C. Jackson, RN, COHN-S, BS
Second Vice President, Homer G. Phillips Nurses Alumni

Remarks & Introduction of Will R. Ross, MD, MPH

Dineo Khabele, MD
Mitchell & Elaine Yanow Professor and Chair, Dept. of Obstetrics and Gynecology

"The History of Public Hospitals and The Advent of Homer G. Phillips Hospital"

Will R. Ross, MD, MPH
Former Associate Dean for Diversity, Principal Officer for Community Partnerships, & Former Alumni Endowed Professor of Medicine

Closing Remarks

Sherree A. Wilson, PhD
Associate Vice Chancellor & Senior Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion – WashU Medicine



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

Previous Lectures

Year	Speaker
2025	Sandro Galea, MD, DrPH
2024	Geoff K. Ward, PhD, B.A.
2023	Brenda Battle, RN, BSN, MBA
2022	Donald Suggs, D.D.S.
2021	Candace O'Connor
2019	Consuelo H. Wilkins, MD, MSCI
2018	Viewing of *The Color of Medicine: The Story of Homer G. Phillips Hospital*
2017	Georges C. Benjamin, MD
2016	Carol Camp Yeakey, PhD
2015	John Wright, PhD
2014	Ira Kodner, MD
2013	Michael Drake, MD
2012	Mark Clanton, MD, MPH
2011	John Rich, MD, MOH
2010	Frank Richards Jr., MD, FAAP

Dr. Ross has numerous scientific publications. He has received several distinguished honors and awards, including the 2005 State of Missouri Dr. Martin Luther King Distinguished Service in Medicine Award, the 2009 Washington University Medical Center Alumni Faculty Achievement Award, the 2013 Samuel Goldstein Leadership in Medical Education Award, the 2022 American College of Physicians' Oscar E. Edwards Memorial Award for Volunteerism and Community Service, and the 2024 Louis Sullivan Award by the Association of American Medical Colleges. He is the recipient of the 2020 Outstanding Scientist Trustee Award from the Academy of Science of St. Louis. A graduate of Yale University, he completed medical school at Washington University School of Medicine, an Internal Medicine residency at Vanderbilt University, and a Renal Fellowship at Washington University. He completed a Master of Science in Epidemiology at Saint Louis University School of Public Health.

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.

Office of Diversity Programs

Will R. Ross, MD, MPH

Associate Dean for Diversity,
Principal Officer for Community Partnerships,
Former Alumni Endowed Professor of Medicine



Will Ross, MD, MPH, former associate dean for diversity, principal officer for community partnerships, and former alumni endowed professor of medicine in the Nephrology Division at Washington University School of Medicine. For over twenty-five years, Dr. Ross has developed innovative medical school pipeline programs and recruited and developed a diverse workforce of medical students, residents, and faculty. He has promoted health equity locally, nationally, and globally through collaborations with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and public health officials in Ethiopia and Haiti. He recently co-developed an undergraduate program in public health in Haiti. He is a co-founder of the Barnes-Jewish Hospital Center for Diversity and Cultural Competence (now the BJC Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) and served on the task force that created the Washington University Institute for Public Health, while serving as co-director of the new MD/MPH program.

Within the St. Louis community, he has been instrumental in redesigning local access to health care for the underserved as the founder of the former Saturday Neighborhood Health Clinic and co-founder of Casa de Salud health clinic. Dr. Ross also served as advisory board chair and founding member of the Collegiate School of Medicine and Bioscience, a magnet health professions high school in St. Louis.

In 2001, he was appointed a charter and founding member, and recently strategic planning chair, of the St. Louis Regional Health Commission (now the Missouri Commission on Community Health), which has leveraged over 500 million dollars to St. Louis to maintain an integrated network of safety-net primary care clinics and public health services. He served as Chairman of the board of directors of the Missouri Foundation for Health, where he directed the Foundation's creation of the nonprofit organization, Health Literacy Media, of which he served as Vice-Chair. He served on the Institute of Medicine's Health Literacy Roundtable, where he evaluated health literacy efforts at the international level. He was a past member of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Health Disparities Committee, where he helped incorporate social determinants of health in the CDC promotions framework and Healthy People 2020. In 2019, he was appointed to the St. Louis Economic Development Partnership, where he co-chaired the partnership's strategic planning, and is the founding associate editor of the public health journal *Frontiers in Public Health Education and Promotion*.