



DIVERSITY COUNCIL MISSION STATEMENT

There are over 330 million people in the United States of America and everyone is diverse in their own way. At Carisk, we celebrate everyone's uniqueness.

Carisk Partners will be leaders by continuing to embrace the differences of its team members to expand its competitive edge; while promoting a diverse and inclusive environment through our commitment to education both internally and externally. We will leverage our unique capacity as change agents to strengthen our relationships with our Carisk team members, and with the communities and business partners we all serve.

Carisk Partners is proud of the diversity of its company's members, irrespective of genetic information, race, color, religion, age, sex, range of abilities, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, or veteran's status.

We will strive to do well by doing good.



"I have always loved meeting new people from different backgrounds. It was always intriguing to me to hear someone else's "story". It is my strong belief that people and organizations make better decisions when they have diversity of thoughts. Each of us bring our life experiences into all we do. Everyone's life experiences generally created a perspective, whether consciously or unconsciously. Having a diverse workplace only strengthens the paths we choose to take."

—Joseph Berardo, Jr., Chairman and CEO

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Welcome to Carisk Kaleidoscope's 2024 spring edition. The Council wishes a fun filled season for the Carisk Family and their loved ones. We are welcoming three new Council members, Natasha Charleston, Nikia Harris and Lori Terraciano.

Allen's "Exceptional Women Series" continues, featuring former First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt. She played a key role in leading the nation through two national crises, the Great Depression and World War II.

Bob presented "Welcome Alcove," "Celebrating Carisk's Diversity," "Days of Reflection" and "News from HR" series. He also contributed towards "Women's History Month."

Diane delivered "The Talk," "Positivity Poster" and contributed towards "Women's History Month."

Lori H., introduced "The Kindness Café," a wonderful establishment operated by individuals with differing abilities.

Please visit our Resources page for additional information.

Thank you CK planning committee (Bob, Diane, Lori & Sunita), as well as all Council members for all of your collaborations which include our serious conversations, light hearted banter, and participation in our Council meetings. Great job by all. See you in the summer.



Anabel

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UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Unified in Diversity.
That’s what people today should be.
Humans embracing harmony and happiness.
Hope that flowers from the seed,
That will allow us all to prosper.

Why does colour or race matter?
Why not join together, instead of being scrambled and scattered?
Why can’t we just not plainly see,
The unity in diversity?

People will be people all the same,
And under the setting sun,
Nothing may ever change,

But I am here to take a stand,
To show the world how to finally be,

Unified in Diversity.

Peter Vector



MEMBERS OF THE DIVERSITY COUNCIL



LEADER OF THE DIVERSITY COUNCIL

Anabel Rawlins, FOUNDER

Provider Relations Specialist
Miami, FL

"We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their color."
– Maya Angelou



Jen Andrews

Executive Assistant
Remote

"The beauty of the world lies in the diversity of its people."
–Unknown



Sally Balioni, FOUNDER

VP of Sales, CiC
Wall, NJ

"You cannot change what you are, only what you do."



Brian DeNichilo

System Administrator
Florham Park, NJ

"No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite." –Nelson Mandela



Shannon Ehrola

Director, Brand Creative
Wall, NJ

"The beauty of the world lies in the diversity of its people."
–Unknown



Peter Halas

Surgical Implant Management
Wall, NJ

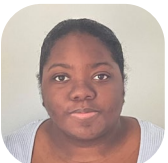
Diversity and inclusion were issues I never focused on because they were part of my every day life through sports and interactions with people of every race/religion/ creed etc. Now, as the proud parent of a daughter with Down Syndrome diversity and inclusion are at the fore of everything we do trying to find places for everyone to be accepted and valued as they are.



Natasha Charleston

Behavioral Health Specialist
Miami, FL

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that."
– The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



Nikia Harris

Claims Assistant
Florham Park, NJ

"Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love." –Martin Luther King Jr.



Lori Height, FOUNDER

Executive Sales Assistant
Wall, NJ

Promoting a community of acceptance and belonging



Anne Lepre

Sales Executive
Wall, NJ

"In diversity there is beauty and there is strength"
–Maya Angelou



Sunita Mathur, FOUNDER

Claim File Coordinator
Florham Park, NJ

"Our ability to reach unity in diversity will be the beauty and the test of our civilization."
–Mahatma Gandhi



Diane Nicolo, FOUNDER

Vice President of Administration
Remote

"Every person is a new door to a different world"



Robert Post, FOUNDER

Senior Vice President of Strategic Initiatives,
Human Resources and Training
Florham Park, NJ

"We have become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic. Different people, different beliefs, different yearnings, different hopes, different dreams."
–Jimmy Carter



Michael Rydman, FOUNDER

Senior Vice President, Sales
Benicia, California

"All men are created equal" –Thomas Jefferson, 1776



Allen Spokane, FOUNDER

Chief Technology Officer
Florham Park, NJ

"Nobody Wins Unless Everybody Wins"
– Bruce Springsteen



Lori Terraciano

Staff Accountant
Florham Park, NJ

"We all live with the objective of being happy; our lives are all different and yet the same."
–Anne Frank



David Vittoria, FOUNDER

Chief Behavioral Health Officer
Miami, FL

"Our diversity is the one thing we all have in common."

WELCOME ALCOVE

Carisk Partners welcomes our ten new team members who joined us in Q1, 2024. We wish them the best of luck for a great and long-term working association. All the best in their new positions.



- **Surina Cardenas, LPC** has now joined Carisk as a full time Behavioral Health Specialist in the Carisk Outcomes division, reporting to David Vittoria, Carisk's Chief Behavioral Health Officer. Previously, Surina was working part time with the Carisk Clinical Team in the same role.
- **Dr. Amy Kolarova** is the newest Physician on Carisk's Clinical Team, reporting to Dr. Carrie Stewart, one of Carisk's Medical Directors. Dr. Kolarova specializes in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, specifically as it relates to brain injuries. She most recently worked for a major Rehabilitation facility in Atlanta, where she created and acted as the Program Director for a Brain Injury Medicine Fellowship. She also worked for a Medical Center in Alaska, where she initiated the Tele-Physiatry consulting service.
- **Nan Luedeke** had almost 10 years' experience as a Licensed Insurance Agent, before becoming a nurse. She worked as an OB and clinic nurse prior to being promoted to management. About a year ago, Nan felt called to get a little closer to patient care again, went into case management and began working with a home healthcare organization. According to Nan, "I joined Carisk for the opportunity to work with patients, who are quite possibly at their most vulnerable time of their lives, in achieving their goals and returning them back to their "new" normal. It already seems very apparent that the culture at Carisk is one to be proud of. The kindness extends from patients to coworkers alike. I love the caring attitude. I love building relationships. It is so rewarding to have patients entrust you with something as precious as their lives."
- **Andee Maloney** is Carisk's newest Clinical Quality Nurse, reporting to Pat DeFrancisco, our Quality Manager. She is a Registered Nurse and a Certified Case Manager who most recently worked as an Auditor of Clinical Services for a large Managed Healthcare organization in New York State.
- **Denise Martinez** is our new Billing and Contract Specialist, reporting to Dalila Garay, Director of Operations. Prior to joining Carisk, Denise was a Medical Assistant and Patient Care Representative for a DME organization, and a Patient Care Representative/Billing Specialist for an insurer.
- **Alexandra Pillar** is joining our Clinical Team as Clinical Outcomes Coordinator, reporting to Dr. Steven Walton, one of Carisk's Medical Directors. Most recently, Alex had been working with Carisk as an Independent Consultant and in various inpatient and outpatient OT positions.
- **Edith Point Du Jour** is our newest Provider Relations Coordinator, reporting to Elizabeth Jennings, Senior Vice President of Provider Relations. Her responsibilities include, accurately entering, maintaining and updating information in Carisk's provider database and operating system. Diligently managing demographic and contract-related provider data on an ongoing basis and conducting periodic audits of information to maintain accuracy.
- **Jennifer Robinson** and **William Seifert** are both joining Carisk as Medical Pricing Analysts, reporting to Matt Sexton, the Manager of Business Analytics. Before joining Carisk, Jennifer was a Senior Revenue Cycle Specialist for an analytics organization and a Data Analyst for a large PPO. Will most recently worked as a Pricing Analyst for a Logistics/Engineering/Supply Chain Management organization and is presently completing his MBA.
- **Karynn Verrett** worked for over 7 years as a Certified Case Manager specializing in workers' compensation and for 10 years in Floor Nursing with a specialty in Rehab and Acute Care. According to Karynn, "My favorite part about working with patients is being able to help and make a difference in their lives. Sometimes, even the littlest of things that you do for your patient can make a difference. If I can walk away knowing that I eased a person's worry or fear or brought peace to them, then my day is fulfilled, and the best part of that is I get the opportunity to wake up every day and do it all over again."

Surina, Dr. Kolarova, Nan, Andee, Denise, Alex, Edy, Jennifer, Will, and Karynn best of luck to all of you and welcome to the Carisk family. 

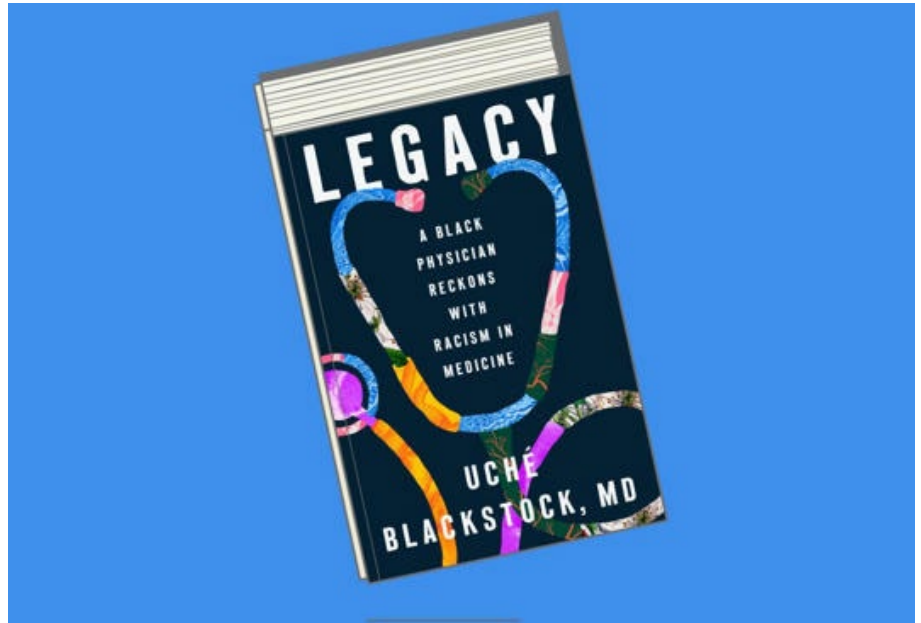
THE TALK

Featuring Topics On Diversity, Equity
And Inclusion Which Trigger Thought
And Conversation

Racism is rampant in health care and a new memoir reveals how deadly the consequences can be.

Story by L'Oreal Thompson Payton

When Dr. Uché Blackstock left her faculty position in academic medicine four years ago, she had no way of knowing she was making a life-or-death decision. After enduring years of racism and sexism in a toxic work environment, she'd had enough and decided to prioritize her own mental health and well-being.



"Legacy: A Black Physician Reckons with Racism in Medicine" Uche Blackstock, MD © Provided by Fortune

Now, on the heels of the release of her debut memoir, *Legacy: A Black Physician Reckons with Racism in Medicine*, which also takes a critical look at the intersection of racism and healthcare, Blackstock is grateful she chose herself.

"Best decision I ever made and it's not lost on me that I was one of the lucky ones to be able to find a way out," she recently [posted](#) on X (formerly Twitter) nearly one week after the suicide of Dr. Antoinette "Bonnie" Candia-Bailey, vice president of student affairs at Lincoln University. "We just want to be able to do the work we love on behalf of our communities in ways that feel authentic to us, where we can speak up about [systemic inequities](#) without fear of retaliation, but really it feels like we are asking for too much so we just create our own spaces."

Which is exactly what Blackstock did in 2019 when she founded her consultancy, [Advancing Health Equity](#), as a way to dismantle racism in healthcare by partnering with health organizations to diversify their hiring and combat [racial health inequities](#). With Black women accounting for [less than 3% of U.S. doctors](#) (even though Black people make up 13% of the U.S. population), Blackstock is aware that training more Black physicians is only part of the solution.

"I would love for there to be more Black physicians because that can help to solve the problem," she says in a video interview with *Fortune*. "But the other piece of it is we need physicians who are not Black to be able to adequately and competently care for Black people as well."

This culturally competent care is an important skill Blackstock learned firsthand from her mother, Dr. Dale Gloria Blackstock. Together, with Uche's twin sister, Oni, the trio became the first Black mother-daughter legacies from Harvard Medical School. Tragically, their mother died from acute myelogenous leukemia (AML) at the age of 47. The experience opened Uché's eyes to the many ways systemic racism plays a critical (and often fatal) role in the lives of Black Americans.

Studies have shown that people who live in low-income communities, such as the one Uché's mother grew up in, have higher exposure to toxic environmental contaminants, which can lead to [higher rates of cancer](#). Additionally, as Blackstock writes in *Legacy*, [cancer diagnoses](#) are often delayed for Black patients due to "lack of access to health care and lack of quality, culturally responsive care."

"Often when people hear these very dismal and sobering statistics about Black communities and health, there is this assumption that there is something wrong with us," she says. "I need people to see how systemic racism behaves and how it impacts our communities through these practices."

In a country where Black men have the [shortest life expectancy](#); Black women are [more likely to die in childbirth](#) than any other group and Black babies have the highest infant mortality rate, Blackstock is committed to shining a light on the deep inequities that exist in the U.S. healthcare system. Although she's crystal clear that it is not on Black people to fix a problem we didn't create.

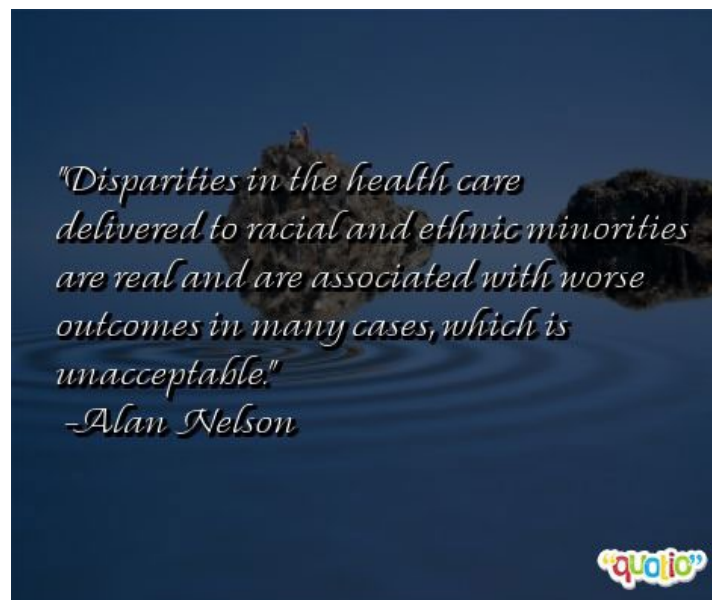
"Sometimes I think it's easy for people to see interpersonal racism, like when someone is called a racist slur or mistreated because they're Black," she says. "It's something entirely different to see how policies our own federal government sanctioned and created have led to racial health inequities. Once you're able to connect the dots, it's very hard to unsee them."

Indeed, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) has acknowledged that social determinants of health, such as housing, education, and employment, are "key drivers of health inequities within communities of color, placing those within these populations at greater risk for poor health outcomes."

And it should not rest solely on these communities to fix a problem we didn't create, as Blackstock is calling on elected officials, non-Black allies, healthcare institutions, medical schools and academic medical centers, as well as white physicians and healthcare professionals to reevaluate the processes and procedures that led to these injustices.

"It's not just about writing a prescription. It's not about telling someone to exercise. Because how can someone exercise if they don't have the green space in their neighborhood or don't feel safe in their neighborhood to exercise?" Blackstock asks. "Physicians need to understand the context in which their patients are living, playing, praying and being. They need to understand all of that."

This story was originally featured on [Fortune.com](#) 



NEWS FROM HR

Women and Ageism: Unpacking an 'Ongoing Issue' at Work

Evaluating biases, training managers and surveying employees could reduce ageism and create a more civil workplace

March 14, 2024 | [Matt Gonzales](#)

Women have historically faced higher rates of ageism and incivility when compared with their male counterparts. A new report released during Women's History Month showed that this issue remains a problem for workplaces globally.

A survey of 1,258 female respondents across 46 countries by Women of Influence+ found that about

77.8 percent have encountered age-related discrimination in their careers. Another 80.7 percent said they have witnessed other women being treated differently in the workplace because of their age.

Nearly half (46.2 percent) reported ageism among women to be an "ongoing issue."

Rumeet Billan, CEO of Women of Influence+, [said in a statement](#) - that ageism in the workplace is "a clear indication that we are facing a pervasive and systemic issue."

"Our survey sheds light on the hidden barriers many self-identifying women face that not only hinder their career progression but also impact their confidence and well-being," she said.

Additional findings found:

40.7 percent of respondents experienced ageism within the first decade of their career.

55.9 percent encountered ageism after passing 21 years in their career.

The most common type of ageism was age-based stereotypes or assumptions, cited by 74.8 percent of the respondents. Others said it manifested through a lack of respect from colleagues (50.1 percent) and unfair treatment in the promotion process (49 percent).

"Women are never the right age. We are either 'going to get pregnant' or 'too old,'" one anonymous respondent noted. "This reflects a societal tendency to place undue expectations on women."

Examples of Ageism Against Women

The [Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967](#) protects certain applicants and employees 40 years of age and older from bias on the basis of age, but employers still consistently discriminate against older workers.

Ageism has largely been driven by the misperception that performance worsens and capacity decreases as people age. In many instances, older employees are expected to just quietly take a back seat to younger talent.

Sarah Wells, an entrepreneur and author of *Go Ask Your Mothers: One Simple Step for Managers to Support Working Moms for Team Success* (Matt Holt Books, 2024), said older women often deal with [both ageism and sexism](#) making the workplace a land mine of bias activity.

She explained that many women in her network have found ageism "all over the language used by their colleagues and bosses."



“Women are not hired, promoted or given opportunities they are capable of and qualified for because of negative perceptions about their age and stage of life,” Wells said. “Organizations may even be unaware they are perpetuating ageism in their workplace culture.”

She outlined several examples of ageism against women in the workplace that can also impact workplace civility:

An older woman isn’t considered for projects involving new technology or emerging social media platforms due to the stereotype that younger employees are better with technology.

A working mother with young children is passed up for a promotion due to an assumption that she will not be as committed as a younger employee without children.

An older woman in a customer-facing job overhears her younger colleagues gossiping about the way she dresses being outdated.

A start-up company refuses to consider an older woman for a job for which she is highly qualified because her college graduation date on her resume elicits subconscious negative feelings about aging women.

[A 2023 survey by SHRM](#) revealed that one-third of HR professionals (32 percent) said that an applicant’s age played a role in decisions their organization made during the job process. According to people managers, older employees are more likely to be perceived by others as not competent with technology (49 percent), resistant to new ways of doing things (38 percent), and stubborn or grumpy (48 percent).

The Women of Influence+ report noted that ageism can negatively impact individuals at all stages of their careers, leading to unfair treatment, limited opportunities and marginalization. It can also result in increased social isolation and loneliness along with greater financial insecurity and depression, according to the [World Health Organization](#).

“We know that our employees experiencing mental health challenges have higher rates of absenteeism and lower productivity when they don’t get the support they need and, worse yet, if the workplace is causing the issue,” Wells said.

Recommendations to Consider

Janet Harvey, the CEO of inviteCHANGE, a coaching and human development organization in Freeland, Wash., said developing a strategic inclusion, equity and diversity (IE&D) program can help reduce ageism in the workplace.


She said that leaders often misperceive the risk in making IE&D initiatives transactional and the opportunity cost of “making their largest consumer use their wallet somewhere else because the company is blind to the impact of policies that are exclusionary and out of tune with society.”

Wells offered three key recommendations to help companies combat ageism to improve civility at work:

Evaluate their own biases regularly.

Assess the state of their culture, which could be done via employee surveys, to identify hints of ageism at work.

Train and educate the workforce, particularly front-line management, on bias-related topics.

“Combating ageism in the workplace starts with each of us,” Wells added. “Let’s all remember that the value of our older colleagues is exponential, not expired.” 



BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2024

The African Diaspora and the Arts

Each year, Black History Month brings another opportunity to discover contributions that enrich our nation. The 2024 theme, “African Americans and the Arts,” explores the creativity, resilience and innovation from a culture that has uplifted spirits and soothed souls in countless ways across centuries.

Gordon Parks, one of the greatest photographers of the twentieth century, was a humanitarian with a deep commitment to social justice, exemplifies the 2024 theme. He left behind an exceptional body of work that documents American life and culture from the early 1940s into the 2000s, with a focus on race relations, poverty, civil rights, and urban life. Parks was also a distinguished composer, author, and filmmaker who interacted with many of the leading people of his era—from politicians and artists to athletes and celebrities.

Born into poverty and segregation in Fort Scott, Kansas, in 1912, Parks was drawn to photography as a young man when he saw images of migrant workers taken by Farm Security Administration (FSA) photographers in a magazine. After buying a camera at a pawnshop, he taught himself how to use it. Despite his lack of professional training, he won the Julius Rosenwald Fellowship in 1942; this led to a position with the photography section of the FSA in Washington, D.C., and, later, the Office of War Information (OWI). Working for these agencies, which were then chronicling the nation’s social conditions, Parks quickly developed a personal style that would make him among the most celebrated photographers of his era. His extraordinary pictures allowed him to break the color line in professional photography while he created remarkably expressive images that consistently explored the social and economic impact of poverty, racism, and other forms of discrimination.

In 1944, Parks left the OWI to work for the Standard Oil Company’s photo documentary project. Around this time, he was also a freelance photographer for *Glamour* and *Ebony*, which expanded his photographic practice and further developed his distinct style. His 1948 photo essay on the life of a Harlem gang leader won him widespread acclaim and a position as the first African American staff photographer for *Life*. Parks would remain at the magazine for two decades, covering subjects ranging from racism and poverty to fashion and entertainment, and taking memorable pictures of such figures as Muhammad Ali, Malcolm X, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., and Stokely Carmichael. His most famous images, for instance *American Gothic* (1942) and *Emerging Man* (1952), capture the essence of his activism and humanitarianism and have become iconic, defining their generation. They also helped rally support for the burgeoning civil rights movement, for which Parks himself was a tireless advocate as well as a documentarian.

Parks was a modern-day Renaissance man, whose creative practice extended beyond photography to encompass fiction and nonfiction writing, musical composition, filmmaking, and painting. In 1969 he became the first African American to write and direct a major Hollywood studio feature film, *The Learning Tree*, based on his bestselling

semiautobiographical novel. His next film, *Shaft* (1971), was a critical and box-office success, inspiring a number of sequels. Parks published many books, including memoirs, novels, poetry, and volumes on photographic technique. In 1989 he produced, directed, and composed the music for a ballet, *Martin*, dedicated to the late civil rights leader, Martin Luther King, Jr.

Parks spent much of the last three decades of his life evolving his artistic style, and he continued working until his death in 2006. He was recognized with more than fifty honorary doctorates, and among his numerous awards was the National Medal of Arts, which he received in 1988.

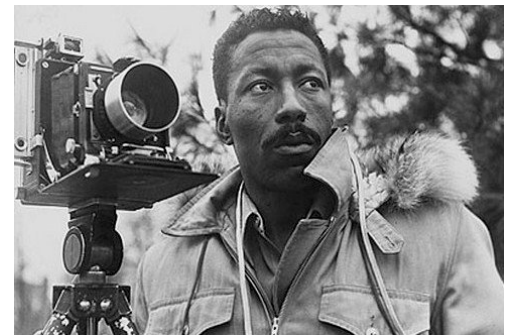
Parks's work is in the permanent collections of major museums, among them The Art Institute of Chicago; Baltimore Museum of Art, Cincinnati Art Museum, Detroit Institute of Arts, International Center of Photography, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Museum of Modern Art in New York, Minneapolis Institute of Art, The Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, Saint Louis Art Museum; Smithsonian National Museum of American History, and Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

In recent years, Parks has been the subject of many solo exhibitions, all accompanied by illustrated publications, organized by The Gordon Parks Foundation with other institutions.

Please visit this link to learn more about Gordon Parks

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OIDm6PAfKw>

"I saw that the camera could be a weapon against poverty, against racism, against all sorts of social wrongs. I knew at that point I had to have a camera." Gordon Parks 📷



November 30, 1912- March 7, 2006

FEBRUARY IS HEART MONTH

It's not 'all in their head.' Heart disease is misdiagnosed in women. It's killing us.

Given that heart disease is the leading killer of women, it should be a requirement that every medical student learn what we've known for years – that women's hearts are different from men's.

Barbra Streisand and Dr. Noel Bairey Merz

February is [American Heart Month](#) – when cardiovascular disease, [the No. 1 killer of women](#), gets its moment in the spotlight. Every year when this month comes around, as co-founders of a women's heart health organization dedicated to fighting gender inequity in cardiovascular research, treatment and prevention, we wonder the same thing: How far have we come?

Yes, we've made progress. After years of stagnation, sex-specific research is steadily increasing. We've funded the first large-scale heart disease outcome trial in women, aptly named [WARRIOR](#), with results due later this year. There's a greater understanding of the biological differences between men's and women's hearts.

Yet gaps remain. Awareness of heart disease [is on the decline](#) among women – especially younger ones, who are at increased risk. Only [38% of clinical trial participants are women](#), and research is chronically underfunded.

Fewer than 20% of medical schools have [sex- and gender-based curriculum](#) that goes beyond obstetrics and gynecology. And women are more concerned about other parts of our bodies, when in fact the heart – our



Barbra Streisand is lending her voice to a campaign to raise awareness and spark action against heart disease.
Firooz Zahedi

very essence – is at higher risk.

There's another factor contributing to heart disease's stubborn hold, and it's dangerously underdiscussed: Heart disease in women is often completely missed or its diagnosis delayed.

Heart disease in women is too often misdiagnosed as 'all in their head'

Confusion surrounding the unique signs of heart disease in women, compounded by systemic issues, has created a crisis of misdiagnosis. Even when presenting with symptoms of heart disease or cardiac distress, women are too often told it's "[all in their head](#)."

Fixing this problem will require more, and better, action from doctors, medical schools, policymakers and women themselves.

While there's scant data on the overall impact, there's little doubt that misdiagnosis is all too common. Here's what we've heard women say:

"The EMT advised me to breathe into a bag. He said I was having a panic attack."

"A cardiologist said to me, 'Young lady, I've been doing this for 30 years. I am telling you it's not your heart. I'm going to send you back to your doctor to have your nerves checked.'"

"A doctor told me that my arm pain was tennis elbow and to wear a brace. In fact, I was having a heart attack."

These are the stories of real women who have been misdiagnosed – with near-deadly consequences. It's impossible to capture the voices of the women who "felt off," went to the hospital, were sent home and died of a heart attack in their sleep.

Misdiagnosis is a crisis hiding in plain sight. Women presenting with symptoms of heart disease are routinely dismissed, gaslighted or given a [mental health diagnosis](#). Because women's symptoms of heart disease can be subtle and differ from men's, missed or delayed diagnosis can result – not only by health care professionals but also among women, who aren't aware of the signs to look out for.

Disparities in medical system mean disparities in care

At the heart of misdiagnoses are profound gender disparities. [Just a little over half of physicians and cardiologists](#) report they feel prepared to diagnose a heart attack in women. Women are less [likely than men](#) to be admitted to the hospital, receive thorough evaluations that can identify heart problems or be given lifesaving procedures.

More women than men die within a year of having a heart attack. And women – especially women of color – wait an average of [11 minutes longer](#) to see a physician than men who reported chest pain.

Misdiagnosis is a personal affront – an infuriating example of how women are often not heard and our health concerns dismissed or belittled.

It comes out of systemic issues: [inherent bias](#) in the health care system, how medicine is taught, underfunding of gender-specific research and an old guard of doctors who can't – or won't – advocate for change. Rushed health care professionals have less time to make an accurate diagnosis, and many patients have [limited or no access](#) to heart specialists.

And, yes, it's also because women don't know enough about cardiovascular disease to connect what's going on in our bodies to our hearts. We often downplay symptoms, blaming stress, menopause or aging – or just ignore the warning signs completely.

Misperceptions that heart disease is an "older" woman's problem also abound, with chilling implications for young women, who have [worse outcomes following a heart attack](#) and tend to wait longer to seek out



treatment. Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of pregnancy-related mortality in the United States, endangering the lives of young women, especially women of color.

Health care inequities: [Why are so many Black patients dying from heart failure?](#)

Know the signs of heart attack in women

Ending the crisis of misdiagnosis cannot, and should not, rest solely on women's shoulders. But greater awareness and self-advocacy can go a long way toward prevention. Knowing the [unique signs and symptoms](#) of a heart attack in women – chest pain or pressure; jaw, throat, back, arm or neck pain; shortness of breath; extreme fatigue; nausea or vomiting; heartburn or indigestion – is critically important, as is being specific and direct with health care professionals when experiencing symptoms.

On a systemic level, we also need more gender-specific research on cardiovascular disease. The [White House Initiative on Women's Health Research](#), led by first lady Jill Biden and the White House Gender Policy Council, hopes to fill significant gaps in research, with the goal of better understanding how to diagnose, treat and prevent cardiovascular disease in women.

We also need to better integrate sex and gender differences into medical school curricula. Given that heart disease is the leading killer of women, it should be a requirement that every medical student learn what we've known for years – that women's hearts are different from men's.

Lastly, we are calling for a nationwide public health campaign to make sure that heart disease awareness and prevention messages reach every corner of America.

Most of us don't know our risks, and it's killing us. Let's change that. American women deserve better.

Barbra Streisand is an acclaimed artist and activist. Dr. Noel Bairey Merz is director of the [Barbra Streisand Women's Heart Center](#) in the Smidt Heart Institute at Cedars-Sinai, and scientific adviser to Women's Heart Alliance.



Dr. Noel Bairey Merz is director of the Barbra Streisand Women's Heart Center in the Smidt Heart Institute at Cedars Sinai.



Irish-American Heritage Month is celebrated during the month of March to honor the achievements and contributions of Irish immigrants and their descendants living in the United States. Nellie Bly was one of those achievers in more ways than one.

She was born as Elizabeth Cochrane on May 5th 1864 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The Irish have settled in Pennsylvania since pre-American Revolution days. Many settled in the booming industrial town of Pittsburgh and worked in the iron and steel mills, the mines and the railroads. Elizabeth's father, Michael Cochrane, was the son of an immigrant from Derry who started as a labourer but had prospered so well that he bought the local mill. Michael Cochrane had ten children with his first wife, and five more with his second wife. Elizabeth was one of those five children.

Nellie Bly became a star journalist by going undercover as a patient at a New York City mental health asylum in 1887 and exposing its terrible conditions in the *New York World*. Her reporting not only raised awareness about mental health treatment and led to improvements in institutional conditions, it also ushered in an age of

investigative journalism. Her illustrious career also included a headline-making journey around the world, running an oil manufacturing firm, and reporting on World War I from Europe.

Bly looked for work to help support her family, but found fewer opportunities than her less-educated brothers. In response to an article in the *Pittsburgh Dispatch* that criticized the presence of women in the workforce, Bly penned an open letter to the editor that called for more opportunities for women, especially those responsible for the financial wellbeing of their families. The newspaper's editor, George Madden, saw potential in her piece and invited her to work for the *Dispatch* as a reporter. She used the pen name Nellie Bly, which she took from a well-known song at the time, "Nelly Bly." Bly was a popular columnist, but she was limited to writing pieces that only addressed women and soon quit in dissatisfaction.

Wanting to write pieces that addressed both men and women, Bly began looking for a newspaper that would allow her to write on more serious topics. She moved to New York City in 1886, but found it extremely difficult to find work as a female reporter in the male-dominated field. In 1887, Bly stormed into the office of the *New York World*, one of the leading newspapers in the country. She wanted to write a story on the immigrant experience in the United States. The editor, Joseph Pulitzer, declined that story, but he challenged Bly to investigate one of New York's most notorious mental asylums, Blackwell's Island. Bly not only accepted the challenge, she decided to feign mental illness to gain admission and expose firsthand how patients were treated. With her courageous and bold act, she cemented her legacy as one of the most notable journalists in history.

Bly's six-part series on her experience in the asylum was called *Ten Days in the Madhouse* and quickly made Bly one of the most famous journalists in the country. Her reporting on life in the asylum shocked the public and led to increased funding to improve conditions in the institution. Furthermore, her hands-on approach to reporting developed into a practice now called investigative journalism. Bly continued to produce regular exposés on New York's ills, such as corruption in the state legislature, unscrupulous employment agencies for domestic workers, and the black market for buying infants. Her straightforward yet compassionate approach to these issues captivated audiences.

Bly's successful career reached new heights in 1889 when she decided to travel around the world after reading the popular book by Jules Verne, *Around the World in 80 Days*. The *New York World* published daily updates on her journey and the entire country followed her story. Her trip only took 72 days, which set a world record. But Bly held the record for only a few months before it was broken by businessman George Francis Train who completed the journey in 67 days.

Bly continued to publish influential pieces of journalism, including interviews with prominent individuals like anarchist activist and writer Emma Goldman and socialist politician and labor organizer Eugene V. Debs. She also covered major stories like the march of Jacob Coxey's Army on Washington, D.C. and the Pullman strike in Chicago, both of which were 1894 protests in favor of workers' rights.

At the age of 30, Bly married millionaire Robert Seamen and retired from journalism. Bly's husband died in 1903, leaving her in control of the massive Iron Clad Manufacturing Company and American Steel Barrel Company. In business, her curiosity and independent spirit flourished. Bly went on to patent several inventions related to oil manufacturing, many of which are still used today. She also prioritized the welfare of the employees, providing health care benefits and recreational facilities. Unfortunately, Bly did not manage the finances well and fell victim to fraud by employees that led the firm to declare bankruptcy.

In her later years, Bly returned to journalism, covering World War I from Europe and continuing to shed light on major issues that impacted women. While still working as a writer, Bly died from pneumonia on January 27, 1922. In a tribute after her death, the acclaimed newspaper editor Arthur Brisbane remembered Bly as "the best reporter in America."

Please visit this link to learn more about Nellie Bly: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQ1zfwtgXXE>



May 5, 1864-January 27, 1922

"Never having failed, I could not picture what failure meant." Nellie Bly 

SCHOOL HOUSE SCOOP NATIONAL READING MONTH

March, 2024

Embrace the joy of reading with your little ones and watch their imaginations soar! 📖 Here are 6 ways you can celebrate the power of books and nurture a lifelong love of stories! 📖



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POSITIVITY POSTER



WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Inspire Inclusion



Cole Brauer, (Born: May 24, 1994) is the first American woman to [sail](#) solo nonstop and unassisted around the world. Fewer than 200 people have ever sailed solo non-stop around the world. The 29-year-old native of East Hampton, New York, finished second out of 16 competitors in the Global Solo Challenge, a race that started and ended in A Coruña, Spain. She braved three oceans and the elements as she navigated her sailboat for months. The marathon 30,000-mile journey took 130 days, and she crossed the finish line on March 7, 2024, in her 40-foot sailboat, "First Light."



Shirley Chisholm, (November 30, 1924-January 1, 2005) is best known for becoming the first Black [congresswoman](#) (1968), representing New York State in the U.S. House of Representatives for seven terms. She went on to run for the 1972 Democratic nomination for the presidency, becoming the first major-party African-American candidate to do so. Throughout her political career, Chisholm fought for education opportunities and social justice. She left Congress in 1983 to teach. When discussing her legacy, Chisholm said, "I'd like them to say that Shirley Chisholm had guts. That's how I'd like to be remembered."



María Orosa y Ylagan, (November 29, 1892 – February 13, 1945) was a Filipina food technologist, pharmaceutical chemist, humanitarian, and war [heroine](#). She experimented with foods native to the Philippines, and during World War II developed Soyalac (a nutrient rich drink from soybeans) and Darak (rice cookies packed with vitamin B-1, which prevents beriberi disease), which she also helped smuggle into Japanese-run internment camps that helped save the lives of thousands of Filipinos, Americans, and other nationals.



Alexia Rivera, (Born: 2003) is a [fighter](#) in more than one way. She has Down syndrome or what she likes to call "Up syndrome." Alexia also overcame stroke and paralysis after a rare diagnosis of Moyamoya disease. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the 20-year-old founded a boxing class with her dad, Eddie, for those with differing abilities. Now her latest venture is giving knockout a new meaning. Alexia was inspired by British model Ellie Goldstein. "She was just like 'Oh my god, she has my face' and so I said 'Ok, let's do it,'" said her mom, Alexandria. Alexia is a model and her photos are front and center at Sephora stores worldwide.

"Diversity doesn't look like anyone. It looks like everyone."

–Karen Draper (Writer, 'The Place of Us') 

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EXCEPTIONAL WOMEN

Eleanor Roosevelt

The Eleanor Roosevelt Quarter is the eighth coin in the [American Women Quarters™ Program](#). Eleanor Roosevelt was a first lady, author, civil liberties advocate, and Chairperson of the United Nations Human Rights Commission. She was instrumental in the passage of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Roosevelt was born on October 11, 1884 in New York City to a politically prominent family. In 1905, she married her distant cousin Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

After her husband was stricken with polio in 1921, Eleanor Roosevelt became increasingly active in politics. She promoted women's political engagement, playing a leadership role in several organizations, including the League of Women Voters and the Women's Trade Union League. Her activities were extensively covered in the media in the 1920s, making her publicly recognizable.

Roosevelt grew to more importance after her husband became president of the United States. She became the most politically active and influential first lady in history, using the position to advance many of her progressive and egalitarian goals. She traveled the nation extensively, visiting relief projects, surveying working and living conditions, and reporting to the president on her observations.

After President Roosevelt's death in 1945, Eleanor Roosevelt continued in her public life. President Truman appointed her to the United Nations. She served as Chair of the Human Rights Commission. She worked tirelessly to draft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the U.N. General Assembly on December 10, 1948.

Eleanor Roosevelt died on November 7, 1962, and is buried alongside her husband on their estate at Hyde Park.

"In the long run, we shape our lives, and we shape ourselves. The process never ends until we die. And the choices we make are ultimately our own responsibility." Eleanor Roosevelt 🌐



October 11, 1884–November 7, 1962

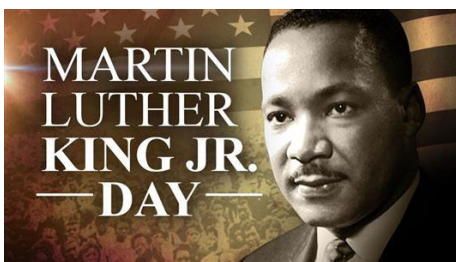


DAYS OF REFLECTION

Influencing Our Humanity



January 11—National Human Trafficking Awareness Day—is dedicated to raising awareness of sexual slavery and human trafficking worldwide. Today, there are between 21-30 million people enslaved in the world, more than at any time in human history. Every day, modern slavery can be recognized: children become soldiers; young women are forced into prostitution and migrant workers exploited in the workforce. Human Trafficking Awareness Day seeks to end this slavery, return rights to individuals and make the world a safer place for all inhabitants.



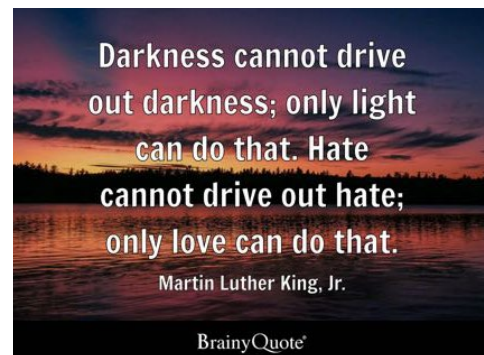
January 15—Martin Luther King Day—celebrates the life and accomplishments of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. MLK promoted Civil Rights through nonviolent civil disobedience. April 4, 2024 marked the 56th anniversary of this death. The speech “*I’ve Been to the Mountaintop*,” was made in support of the striking sanitation workers at Mason Temple in Memphis, TN on April 3rd, 1968 the day before he was assassinated. The first year this holiday was observed was 1986, and not by all states. In 2000, it became a nationally observed holiday in all states. Martin Luther King Jr. Day is observed annually on the third Monday of January. Please visit this link to hear an excerpt of his last speech. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zgVrlx68v-O>. The entire 43 minute speech may be viewed here. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HlhGhu3ZKh4>



January 27—Commemoration of Victims of the Holocaust—is a day commemorating the millions of Jews and minority groups who were murdered by the Nazis during the Holocaust in the 1930s and 40s. The Holocaust, a systematic and state-planned program to kill millions of Jews and other minority groups in Europe, was one of the most horrific genocides in history with an estimated 11 million lives lost. The purpose of the day is to encourage discussion of this difficult subject in order to make sure that it never happens again.



March 1—Zero Discrimination Day—aims to celebrate individuality, inclusion and human rights while promoting tolerance, compassion and peace. Discrimination refers to the selective practice of unfairly treating a person or a group of people differently than others due to factors such as religion, gender, race, sexuality, age, or disability. Despite laws and education, discrimination continues to be a widespread problem throughout the world. 🌐



DIVERSITY POSTER



CELEBRATING DIVERSITY IN THE CARISK COMMUNITY



March 10 – April 9—Ramadan—is the holiest month in the Islamic calendar. During the month of Ramadan, Muslims abstain from eating and drinking from sunrise to sunset. It is said, God decreed this entire month holy for Muslims so that they can increase their remembrance of life after death. Muslims also abstain from all bad deeds and habits, like smoking, swearing, backbiting, and disrespectfulness. Muslims reflect upon themselves, their religion, and the characteristics of God. Fasting is one of the five pillars of Islam and as such, it is obligatory for Muslims. Fasting and abstaining from bad habits allow Muslims to learn self-control, humility, and generosity. Unlike the fast of Ashurah, the fasts of Ramadan are declared mandatory by God because like salah (praying towards Mecca), fasting helps Muslims maintain spiritual and physical health.



March 17—St. Patrick's Day—Saint Patrick's Day is a cultural and religious holiday observed by both Irish and non-Irish communities. It is traditionally a commemoration of Saint Patrick and the arrival of Christianity in Ireland. Furthermore, it is also a celebration of the heritage and culture of the Irish. The holiday has cultural and religious significance, displaying Irish symbols such as the shamrock and the color green. The celebration of Saint Patrick's Day in the United States goes back to the 18th century. It was first celebrated in Boston in 1737 and in New York City in 1762, mainly by Irish immigrants as a means of preserving and celebrating their Irish heritage. Today, it serves as a time for Americans of all backgrounds to celebrate Irish culture by wearing green, eating Irish meals, participating in parades, and engaging in celebrations across the country.



March 23 – March 24—Purim—is a Jewish Holiday, which commemorates Jewish people being saved from extermination in Persia. The story of Purim comes from the Biblical book of Esther. In it, Haman, a high-ranking advisor to King Ahasuerus, sought to kill all Jews in ancient Persia. He is motivated by an incident in which Mordechai, a Jewish leader, defied the king's orders and refused to bow to Haman. Haman is stopped through the actions of Mordechai and his niece Esther, a beautiful and courageous Jewish woman. Esther initially disguises her Jewish Identity and eventually becomes Queen.



March 25—Holi—Holi is the ancient Hindu Festival of Love and also known as the Festival of Colors. The origins of Holi lie in ancient Hindu traditions where Holi was celebrated to mark the arrival of spring. Holi is also related to the legend of Holika, the evil sister of demon king Hiranyakashipu, who tried to burn Hiranyakashipu's son Prahlada. Prahlada had maintained faith in god (Vishnu), while Hiranyakashipu contended that he was god. Wearing a cloak that guarded her from fire, Holika lured Prahlada into a fire but the cloak that was guarding Holika flew and protected Prahlada instead. Because of this Holi also celebrates the triumph of good over evil, knowledge over ignorance, and love over hate.

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY IN THE CARISK COMMUNITY



March 29—Good Friday—commemorates the day that Jesus was crucified. Following Jesus' arrest, he was found guilty of proclaiming himself to be the King of Jews. He was sentenced to crucifixion. This day is celebrated a number of ways. These include taking down the cross in the Orthodox faith to recounting the story of Jesus' last days, which is called the Passion of Christ.



March 31—Easter—is a significant religious holiday observed by Christians worldwide to commemorate the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, as described in the New Testament. The significance of the Observance translates into deep religious reverence, and this is often expressed through church services, fasting, praying, and acts of penitence. There is also a joyful undertone to the Observance as Easter symbolizes victory over death, promising eternal life to believers. The holiday resonates deeply with Christian faith and spirituality, while also encompassing a broad spectrum of cultural expressions and traditions.



April 22 – April 30—Passover—is a seven-day Jewish festival that celebrates the Israelites fleeing from Egypt about 3,300 years ago. Passover is called such because the Israelites marked their door frames with a sign. It is believed that because of this sign, God passed over their houses during the plague of the firstborn. The Israelites were servants from the days of Jacob until Moses. They lived through famine in most of Mesopotamia, including Israel. The Israelites built store cities for grain in Egypt (possibly, the pyramids). After 210 years of servitude in Egypt, the Israelites had become servant-minded and did not believe that they could flee. They eventually fled via the Wilderness of Sinai, where they resided for forty years.



MOMENT OF TRUTH

“

Hate, it has caused a lot of problems in the world, but has not solved one yet.”

Maya Angelou
WRITER AND ACTIVIST

Forbes

KINDNESS CAFÉ

Kindness Cafe

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RESOURCES

"I am a part of everything that I have read." —Unknown

[Alexia Rivera](#)

[Breakout Star](#)

[Cole Brauer](#)

[Gordon Parks Biography](#)

[Heart Disease-Differences between Men and Women](#)

[Maria Orosa](#)

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[Nellie Bly Irish-American Pioneer Journalist](#)

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[Uncovering America/Gordon Parks Photography](#)

