

## Chapter 12: Medicine

- I. Story of Susan Moore's death.
  - a. Susan, a Black physician, was denied sufficient treatment for Covid and, as a result, died.
  - b. Black Americans were 1.4 times more likely than white ones to contract the virus, 3.2 times more likely to be hospitalized, and 2.8 times more likely to die.
  - c. These statistics are a result of Blacks living in crowded housing, working low-level jobs, and lacking access to outdoor spaces, and healthful affordable food, and long-term exposure to dirty air to higher risk of death from the virus.
  - d. Blacks tend to receive inadequate treatment for pain.
- II. Black Bodies
  - a. Two myths that persist: Blacks are impervious to pain and they have weak lungs that can be strengthened by hard work.
  - b. The health status of Black Americans is on par with that of people living in far poorer nations. At every stage of life Black Americans have poorer health outcomes than white Americans.
  - c. Generally, Blacks fare less well than Whites in measures of health well-being, infant survival, hypertension, and then longevity.
- III. History of efforts to prove the assumption that Blacks were anatomically different from Whites and therefore suited for enslavement and hard labor
  - a. In the 1787 manual A Treatise on Tropical Diseases; and on the Climate of the West-Indies, a British doctor, Benjamin Moseley, argued that Blacks can endure pain and even amputations much more easily than Whites.
  - b. Thomas Jefferson had opinions about Black body odor, sleep requirements, etc.
  - c. Samuel Cartwright, a physician, and professor of "diseases of the Negro" at Tulane University. published in the May 1851 the claim that Black people had lower lung capacity.
    - i. He became one of the first doctors in the United States to measure pulmonary function with an instrument called a spirometer.
    - ii. Coined *drapetomania* an evidence free mental condition that accounted for slaves fleeing captivity. Severe flogging was prescribed as cure.
  - d. Marion Sims, 1845-9 researched vaginal fistula by performing anesthesia free surgeries on enslaved women.
  - e. John Brown endured painful skin blistering from Dr. Thomas Hamilton in mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.
  - f. Views, which lacked evidence, that Black's had small skulls and large genitals became fixed in medical journals.
  - g. Tuskegee Syphilis Study, 1932 to 1972, left some infected men untreated.
  - h. The race-factor in small lungs lingers today
- IV. Some of these prejudices have been rectified today. And they persist.
  - a. A statue dedicated to Marion Sims has been removed

Summary: This chapter cites several egregious examples of the enduring idea that Black bodies are somehow different from and therefore particularly suited for hard labor. The author begins with the story of Dr. Susan Moore who died of Covid after being denied adequate care in the hospital. Moore's death fits the pattern in America where Blacks, based on their living conditions, jobs and economic status have poorer health outcomes. But these aside, Blacks endure a healthcare system where uncorrected misinformation sometimes originating in slavery times endures today. The chapter explores the misinformation that came from the work of Samuel Cartwright, Thomas Jefferson, Marion Sims, and the Tuskegee Syphilis Study. The chapter acknowledges that modest efforts to correct these mistakes started in the very recent past.