



Belmont Human Rights Commission Statement on Black History Month

February marks the observance of Black History month, presenting an opportunity to celebrate the achievements and contributions of African Americans to the nation and to our local community. This year, the theme of Black History month is “Black Health and Wellness.” It seeks to acknowledge the individuals and organizations within the Black community that have made substantive contributions to the well-being of the community such as providing direct services, health equity advocacy, entrepreneurial solutions to increase healthcare access and researchers coming up with innovative solutions to public health issues. Historically, there are multiple examples of the creation of educational and provider organizations from within the community to increase educational opportunities and services in the Black community. For example, the [Howard University College of Medicine](#) was founded in 1868 to increase the number of Black physicians who can care for the needs of medically underserved communities across the nation. While the percentage of Black students in higher education has increased significantly since then, Black representation across all health services is still lagging. An example of the impact of Black creativity to health care and representation is the work of Nigerian medical illustrator and graphic designer, [Chidiebere Ibe](#). Conscious of the lack of representation of Black skin in medical illustrations he set out on a path to design them. His illustration of a Black fetus inside a Black mother’s womb went [viral](#).

Other local organizations walking the talk are the [Resilient Sisterhood Project](#), an organization working in partnership with Black women to advocate against racism and discrimination in health access and services, particularly when it comes to reproductive health. The organization [DeeDee’s Cry](#) focuses on suicide prevention and support, creating a space for community conversations about Black mental health.

The symbol of the [Sankofa](#) (a bird with its head turned back fetching an egg off its back) can be illustrative of the importance of community in healing. Sankofa is a word in the Twi language of Ghana which is often translated as “go back and get it.” Among many interpretations, it is suggestive of the importance of going back to one’s roots and

learning from the past, in order to move forward. In the context of public health, Sankofa illustrates the importance of community-generated and collaborative solutions when it comes to increasing empowerment and well-being. The Belmont Human Rights commission celebrates all the Black health entrepreneurs, practitioners, advocates, and educators improving lives everywhere.

The Belmont Human Rights Commission is dedicated to fighting discrimination in all forms and increasing visibility and awareness of issues regarding diversity and discrimination in our community. If you have experienced discrimination in Belmont, please contact us at belmont.hrc@gmail.com or call 617-993-2795.