The Impact of the 50th Anniversary of the 1963 March of Washington
The Legacy Is Still Important to Downstate

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Fifty years ago on August 28, 1963, Americans from all walks of life marched on the nation’s capital in what now is simply referred to as “The March on Washington.” Eighteen people were on the official program to give remarks, sing, and offer prayer. History forever set apart the sixteenth speaker, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

With Old Testament fervor, Dr. King delivered perhaps one of the greatest speeches in world history. Dr. King exalted, “We have come here today to dramatize the shameful condition….we have…come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now.”

On the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington and Dr. Martin Luther King’s famous speech, Kevin Antoine and Shaundelle Goldsmith reflect on its continuing relevance.

More than a quarter of a million people participated in the March on Washington, making it the largest gathering of Americans up to that time seeking redress of issues from the federal government. Within two years, Congress passed both President Kennedy’s landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Sadly, within three months of “The March,” President Kennedy would be assassinated, never living to see the passage of the civil rights and voting rights bills he sent to Congress. In less than 5 years, Dr. King would be assassinated, never living to see federal nondiscrimination laws become the law of the land and duplicated at state and local government levels, colleges and universities, private sector businesses, and at academic health centers.

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DOWNSTATE PHYSICIANS RECOGNIZED AS “BEST DOCTORS” IN NEW YORK MAGAZINE

Congratulations to Downstate Physicians recognized as a “Best Doctor” by New York Magazine

in its annual feature. The list is developed from Castle Connolly Medical Ltd’s annual guidebook, “Top Doctors: New York Metro Area.”

Jeffrey Birnbaum, MD (Pediatrics)
Jeffrey S. Borer, MD (Cardiovascular Disease)
Carl Cohen, MD (Geriatric Psychiatry)
John Kassotis, MD (Cardiac Electrophysiology)
Steven R. Levine, MD (Neurology)
Richard M. Rosenfeld, MD (Pediatric Otolaryngology)
Paul A. Pipia, MD (Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation)
March of Washington (continued)

Even here at Downstate Medical Center we enjoy benefits and opportuni-
ties as a result of that march fifty years ago. For example, both Downstate and
the various unions that represent state employees have standard non-discrimina-
tion policies in their employment policies and collective bargaining agreements
that mirror the language of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Downstate Medical
Center now sponsors a Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Leadership Award.

The first two recipients of that award - H. Carl McCall, chairman of the SUNY
Board of Trustees, and the Reverend Al Sharpton, host of MSNBC’s Politics
Nation - reminded us how both New York State and the unions excluded some
Brooklyn residents from construction jobs in the building of Downstate.

By 1964, excluding Americans from employment based on race, ethnicity,
gender, and religion was against federal law. As the impact of the March on
Washington reverberated, its reach could still be felt in 1972 with the passage of
Title IX of the Education Amendments (Title IX), which prohibits discrimination in
ten specific areas, including athletics. The other areas are: access to higher
education, career education, learning environment, math and science, sexual
harassment, standardized testing, technology, employment, and education for
pregnant and parenting students.

Today, private sector businesses also have nondiscrimination policies,
including the Joint Commission that has oversight over accreditation of American
hospitals. The new Culturally Competent Patient-Family Centered Hospital
Accreditation Standard provides that, “As patients move along the care continuum,
it is important for hospitals to be prepared to identify and address not just
the clinical aspects of care, but also the spectrum of each patient’s demographic
and personal characteristics.”

International organizations such as
the World Health Organization (WHO)
and the United Nations Foundation
Millennium Development Goals
(UNFMDG) have even adopted in part
the language of the American Civil Rights Act,
Voting Rights Act, and Title IX.

As civil rights workers in the South
used to say, once you start something
you can’t stop at the door. These next
fifty years should continue to open closed
doors to make the right to health care a
constitutional right.

Downstate in the Community:
Men and Health

Dr. Richard Sadovsky spoke on men’s health at Christian
Heritage Church.

On average, men die at a younger age than
women. And yet, men see physicians much
less frequently.

This was one of the men’s health
issues that Dr. Richard Sadovsky,
associate professor of family medicine and
an expert in men’s health, discussed at
a recent meeting with congregants of the
Christian Heritage Church.

Do you need a primary care
doctor? The physicians in our
Family Medicine Department will
be happy to treat you – either
here in Suite B, or at Downstate’s
Family Health Services at Lefferts
Avenue. Call 718-270-7207 for
an appointment.

Men and doctors? There are issues.
Typically, Dr. Sadovsky said, “men won’t
see a physician unless they have a specific
injury or an acute illness. They won’t reveal
if they have additional medical problems
or make a list of questions so they can
remember what to ask. They don’t want a
lot of information because they are afraid
of receiving bad news.”

And there’s more. Men have little
patience for long waits, don’t like waiting
rooms, and often refuse to take off from
work to see a doctor. It’s difficult for men
to think of themselves as being ill – and
therefore, they frequently don’t seek
medical attention until a late stage of their
disease.

The good news is, men can maintain
healthy living. From eating better to
increasing physical activity and reducing stress, men can take
control of their health. Healthy living also
includes regular check-ups, getting routine
screenings, and taking medications as
prescribed. And, Dr. Sadovsky advised,
men should always ask their doctor one
very important question: “How can I live
longer?”

Health professionals at Downstate
might also want to apply Dr. Sadovsky’s
advice to their own practice habits: For your male patients, remember to dig a little
deeper when conducting a history, and
you may need to be more persistent with
appointment reminders.