**IN THIS ISSUE**

**Reflection During Coronavirus Pandemic and Members of the Board of Directors** ........................................... 2
**2020 Scholarship Winners** .......................... 3
**Ethnography and Qualitative Research Conference and the American Association of Behavioral and Social Sciences Conference and Board of Directors** 2020 Day of Healing .......... 2
**Rev. Charles S. Chappelle** .......................... 3
**Mr. Doll Brown** .......................... 4
**Deacon Colonel Griffin** .......................... 4
**Fully Engaged** .......................... 5
**Did You Know** .......................... 5
**Protecting Myself & Others** ............... 6
**Virtual 2020 Annual Day of Healing** ......... 6
**From the desk of the Director** ............. 7
**From the desk of the Director** ............. 8

“Of all forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane.”
Dr. Martin Luther King 1966, Convention of the Medical Committee held in Chicago

**MISSION:** Preserving the Legacies and Histories of the 623 African American Men Victimized in the USPHS Syphilis Study by Fostering Social Justice, Education, and Public Health Research.

Fellow Descendants and Supporters,

Now that we all made it through last years’ of turmoil, it is time to begin filling our hearts and minds with tremendous hope. The year 2020 was packed with rapid change, confusion, fear, cancelations, financial and physical suffering. Looking back we witnessed and experienced personal agony, racial and social injustices. We were plagued with a worldwide COVID-19 pandemic that turned our lives inside out. Looking forward we must believe that this too will pass and that the days ahead will be exceedingly better.

We were unable to meet face to face at the Descendants’ Day of Healing, the Public Health Ethics Intensive and the Annual 1997 National Presidential Apology Commemoration in March 2020. Thanks to the technology that exists today, the planning and organization of Tuskegee University National Center for Bioethics in Research and Health Care and Voices for Our Fathers Legacy Foundation we happily met via zoom November 9 - 13, 2020. This new way of meeting allowed several first time descendants the opportunity to join all sessions during the week. Special thanks to Mr. Ashanti Ali-Davis for his professional and technical skills helping make the process friendly and possible for the senior participants.

We understand that the sacrifices of our fathers affected the biomedical research, health care, the trust and mistrust in the government and the medical community. Today more than ever, the United States Public Health Service Syphilis Study, 1932 – 1972 (USPHSS) is being referred to as the primary reason that the black and brown communities hesitate or refuse to trust the treatment of the COVID-19 vaccine. Centuries of health disparities, social and racial injustices forced on these communities cannot be forgotten or ignored. This long lasting history of inequalities must be remembered, recognized and acknowledged in order to understand the mistrust.

For the past six months, I, along with other Board Members and descendants have represented the men in the USPHSS on behalf of the Foundation. We have shared our stories with national newspapers, digital magazines, podcasts, radio morning shows, major news networks, public broadcasting service, medical school, and town halls. By being a part of the daily conversations we are at the table and not on the menu. We have a responsibility and profound opportunity at this time to address why there is hesitation in taking the COVID-19-virus vaccine within the black and brown communities. It is necessary during this time to tell the truth and the Untold Stories. Thanks to the dedicated work and service of each Board Member and the support of descendants we are moving forward transforming the legacy of the USPHSS with purpose.

The Foundation’s 2021 Scholarships Application are available for eligible descendants on our website; www. voicesforfathers.org. Deadline for Complete Applications is Friday April 9, 2021.

I hope you will visit the Foundation’s website and share it with family, friends and colleagues. Pay reverence to their names and join us in acknowledging their legacies. Membership is open to supporters as well. Donations are encouraged and can easily be done on the website.

Always with blessings,

Lillie Head, President
Descendants attended the November 9-13, 2020 Annual Day of Healing Public Health ethics Intensive and the 1997 National Presidential Apology Commemoration via Zoom technology. This was a new and exciting experience for us all.
Rev. Seaborn Charles Chappell
Submitted by Ms. Loette Williams Alex

Rev. Seaborn Charles Chappell was born in Macon County, Alabama. His works included a lifetime of a Baptist Minister and a farmer. Rev. Chappell traveled by horse back to surrounding communities to preach the Word of God.

He worked on a small farm to take care of his family. Rev. Chappell with his strong sense of pride was a neatly attired gentleman.

Mr. Doll Brown
Submitted by Mr. Eric Patterson, grandson

Doll Brown born 4/04/1904 and died 10/25/1976. He was 72 years of age at his death. Doll was born in Bullock County Alabama and later moved to Roba, in Macon County Alabama. Doll was married to Estella Brown. They raised a set of twins named James and Catherine Patterson as well as two nieces Leola and Ruth McDonald. All of the kids raised by Mr. and Mrs. Brown graduated from South Macon High School. They were all God-fearing people that believed in the Bible. The Brown family attended Countyline Church in Bullock County.

Mr. Brown was a strong believer in God. Each day his children had to read a bible verse before eating and pray before going to bed each night. For many years, Doll worked for a large land owner by the name of Mr. Spratley. He walked 10 miles daily to work in order to support his family. Mr. Brown was a domestic worker and an expert field chief. He possessed comprehensive knowledge of hay field management.

He was a part of the study of untreated syphilis in the negro male. During the beginning of the study, there were no known treatments for syphilis. In the summer of 1973, a class action lawsuit was filed on behalf of the study participants and their families.

After receiving his settlement; Doll Brown purchased a brick home and three acres of land for his family. He passed in October of 1976, one month after his home was completed. Mr. Brown’s children and grandchildren were raised in the home that he purchased back in 1976. His daughter Catherine and her husband Jerome Jones still live there today.

Rev. Chappell was the father of 18 children. His first wife Claudia Person mothered six children. She died early leaving those small children. Rev. Chappell eventually married again and fathered 12 other children.

Rev. Chappell died in May of 1957 after serving God in a ministry where his pride blossomed.

The house that Mr. Doll Brown purchased in 1976, where his daughter still lives.
Colonel was born, May 19, 1876 to young parents, Louisa and Oliver Griffin, in Bullock County, Alabama. He was the youngest of four children, including three sisters. When Colonel was still a single 22-year-old young man, his sisters and their children were his primary responsibility. Several years later, he married the love of his life, Carrie Belle Horton. Carrie and Colonel had seven children, two curious boys and five beautiful girls.

In 1904, the couple moved to Macon County, and lived for periods of time in Cotton Valley, Warrior Stand and Armstrong. They finally chose Fort Davis as the place to make their home.

Colonel was the family’s spiritual leader. He was an active member of the St Paul Baptist Church, Armstrong, Alabama. He served on the Deacon Board and was Superintendent, and Teacher of Sunday School. Church activities were a large part of family life. Colonel and Carrie created a warm, nurturing, Christian environment for their children to become caring, disciplined and hardworking individuals.

Farming, commercial painting, and signage were parts of the family business. Commercial painting and signage were outgrowths of natural talent and meticulous attention to details. Colonel started farming, initially, as a sharecropper. After much hard work and sacrifice he purchased land and built the family home. He was aided in this endeavor by his son-in-law who graduated from the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute with a major in the Manual Trades. The original site of this home remains in the possession of the family.

Later in life, after the Griffin’s children left home to start new lives, the couple helped raise six grandchildren. The grandchildren came and left over a period of 20 years. When Colonel died on March 3, 1956, there were still teenagers in the home. Carrie died September 30, 1980 in her daughter’s home.

Their grandchildren make up the senior generation. It is their mission to never forget!

Submitted by:
Mrs. Betty C. McDuffie, Granddaughter
Descendants Participate in COVID-19 Research

Descendants of Frank Cooper, Alex Ware, and Charlie Pollard became participants in Covid–19 research for the drug Regeneron, as a treatment for the virus. Leo Ware’s grandson Richard Council, Jr. tested positive in October and decided to participate in the Covid–19 research. He has been involved in clinical research trials since his teens, starting out doing taste tests of food and beverages. Barbara Council, [Richard’s mom] has been involved in medical clinical research trials since 2005. A research study has been in my blood since high school. I tested donuts, lake water, etc. in a clinical lab as a volunteer as part of work-study while in high school. I became a Covid–19 research participate after testing negative, due to exposure from my son in October. Recently, I tested positive on December 17th after both of my daughters and three grandsons became infected. A basketball player infected the entire household and now 8-9 basketball players are positive as well. My girls and their kids have always maintained safe practices during this pandemic; unfortunately this one person entered the home sick without a mask. So on December 11th, my baby daughter Sheresse Council and my eldest grandson Kamryn Waites became participants in the Covid–19 research study. My oldest daughter, Shantrese Waites attempted to participate but her veins are very difficult to find without using special equipment. After multiple tubes of blood were drawn and IV administered of either the placebo or Regeneron and consent given, they were compensated $190.00 each, which was probably the best part of having the virus. They both tolerated the experience very well, having a great staff of people who were enthusiastic, caring and confident helped also and of course a mom like me to encourage and support them throughout the entire process. A staff member told us on that day that the FDA approved Regeneron to be used as an emergency drug to treat Covid–19. The entire household is doing well, so keep us in prayer for a speedy recovery and no hospitalization. The next research visit is scheduled for December 24th. I pray that we all test negative by then, I have two more grandbabies to see during the holidays and don’t want them to get infected. So VFOFLF stay safe and have a blessed holiday season and happy 2021 New Year.

Submitted by,
Barbara Ware Council

Did You Know?

In addition to oversight from the FDA, the NIAID Institutional Review Board (IRB) must review the clinical protocol. This is a diverse group of clinicians, scientists, and community members who judge the risk/benefit of the proposed study and assure that it is being conducted according to the Code of Federal Regulations and in accordance with NIH policies. The IRB also reviews the informed consent documents and make sure they are accurate and complete. If you take part in a study at NIH, you will be given information about how to contact the IRB. This clinical protocol is a direct outcome of the United States Public Health Service Syphilis Study at Tuskegee and Macon County, Alabama because of the unethical and immoral treatment to 623 African American men from 1932–1972.
Protecting Myself and Others

On March 16, 2020, the state of New Jersey closed all non-essential businesses until further notice. I, however, am essential. Working as part of a team of speech language pathologists in a small, community hospital in Bergen County. Soon, I was the only SLP as many of my colleagues were furloughed. In these last months, I have witnessed the quick havoc that COVID can create. I have seen those too young taken too early; those who were active, healthy seniors laid low. As my days were spent caring directly for these individuals, I created a sterile cocoon to survive it all; praying for reprieve. Then in the midst of resurgence, there was the promise of a vaccine. It was made available to me as a frontline, essential practitioner. Apprehensive, I made sure to do my research; consulting friends, colleagues, reading information issued by the CDC. Ultimately, it was the discussion during an ICU rounds that included a pulmonologist, infectious disease nurse and ICU nurse that helped to firm the decision for me: I would take the vaccine. For me, the benefits far outweigh the risks. In taking the vaccine, I am staying healthy to be with those I love and cherish, in anticipation of creating new and beautiful memories. I am working toward keeping myself healthy to continue to work hard to provide good care to those in need while fighting this ongoing battle against an invisible enemy. On January 6, 2021, Moncia received her second vaccine without any side effects.

Stay Safe and Be Well During This COVID-19 Pandemic

Wear masks at all time when away from home
Wash hands or sanitize hands for 20 seconds frequently (Personal practice, say the Our Father)
Keep at least six feet from people outside of home, more if possible
Remain quarantine if tested positive for 10 days
If someone within the home test positive, they should quarantine themselves within the home
If you have been exposed, you should also quarantine
Strongly recommend that you get retested after your quarantine period

Get vaccinated if possible; consult your family doctor or a reliable health care provider first
From the Desk of the Director

The Voices for Our Fathers Legacy Foundation (VFOLF) regularly published newsletter continues to share important information about the descendant family members and the extraordinary work that you are doing. This has been a challenging year for everyone. However, the VFOLF continues to share important information about your work. The newsletter provides encouraging news about the positive activities that the VFOLF is doing during these difficult times.

Tuskegee University was in a hybrid work schedule during the Fall semester of 2020. The goal was to reduce the health risks from the coronavirus pandemic. In the Spring semester, the university returned to full time face-to-face work schedules. President Lily McNair is on medical leave during the Spring. However, we remain hopeful that she will return, as soon as possible. We are thankful however, that Dr. Charlotte Morris assumed the role of Interim President. She knows the Tuskegee University community extremely well, and we expect the Spring semester will continue uninterrupted. Last year marked the 23rd Commemoration Events and a celebration of the 1999 opening of the National Center for Bioethics in Research and Health Care (National Bioethics Center). The overall theme for the 23rd Commemoration Event was, “Ethics & Vulnerability: The United States Constitution.” The theme alluded to the importance of building trustworthiness and trust between vulnerable and susceptible populations and federal, state and local governments. However, in the midst of the Commemoration Events, the coronavirus pandemic was threatening the health of persons around the world. As a result, the entire Commemoration Event was virtual. The Public Health Intensive course (PHEI). On Friday, November 13th, a virtual session featured a panel of descendant family members discussed true stories about the men who were in the USPHS Syphilis Study at Tuskegee. Dr. Avilla Payne Jackson presented her research about the impact of the Study on the families, then and now. This session replaced the Annual Apology Luncheon and Banquet. The VOFLF again, provided scholarship to descendant family member high school and college/university students. On April 9, 2020, Dr. Bailus Walker died from the coronavirus (COVID-19). Many of you surely remember him. He spoke at every Public Health Ethics course until a few years ago, when his health would not allow him to travel from Washington, DC to Tuskegee University. Dr. Walker is my dear friend. We have worked together, for nearly 40 years. He is a giant in public health. Dr. Walker rewrote the proposal that started the MPH Program that the descendant family members wanted at Tuskegee University. I speak of him in the presence because, I believe, even though he is no longer physically here with us, as long as we call his name, he lives. We will continue his work! Macon County continue to experience high rates of COVID-19 infection and deaths. There are also cases of coronavirus infection among Tuskegee University students, faculty and staff. The University enacted extra steps to keep the campus safe and protect everyone from the spread of the coronavirus. The public health prevention strategies continue in the Spring semester. We continue to abide by the public health guidelines to protect ourselves and those whom we care about. The practice of physical distancing, wearing a mask, washing your hands regularly, with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and staying home, if possible, are critical. The recommendation for social distancing is not healthy, particularly for Black people. For many of us, being socially and spiritually connected are essential to our well-being. The media, particularly the social media, allows us to see and talk to each other, frequently. Our faith tradition demands that we stay in close contact with GOD, our religious and faith beliefs, which permit us to see beyond our current conditions to ones that bring, abiding love, prefect peace, divine harmony, and good well. I recognize abiding by every public health guidelines is not possible for everyone. But everyone, can wash their hands, find and wear a mask; some of us elect to selectively, use gloves. Please do the best that you can! The coronavirus has not changed, but we must, if we expect to stay healthy and do the work of the VFOLF. Please listen to the people whom you trust. However, everybody is not trustworthy. There is much
information about the reopening of the states, cities and local communities for the sake of the economy. In my view, we should not view a healthy community or a healthy economy. They both can and must co-exist. “Both and, instead of either or” is the mantra. In fact, healthy people promote and sustain healthy communities, which in turn build healthy economies. When we reopen communities too soon, essential frontline workers, who are disproportionately Black and Brown, are at the greatest risk of harm from the coronavirus. While some of us are blessed to work from home, many of our people are not. To discuss the safety of health professionals, such as physicians and nurses, in the same protection conversations with hospital janitorial workers, is not a reasonable proposition. The risks and rewards are not equal. Both groups should be recognized and rewarded for their work, but the two groups are not the same. There are at least three vaccines approved by the FDA for emergency use authorization, which means these vaccines were either approved for use for another disease/condition or they were FDA approved for one thing, but used for something else because there is a need for emergency use because of an urgent health threat. Many scientists, public and health policy leaders are encouraging people to be vaccinated. However, I believe the appropriate strategy is for everyone to seek valid and reliable information about vaccines, from trustworthy sources, so that they can make the decision that best fits their individual circumstances. Vaccines hold tremendous promise to curb the coronavirus pandemic. However, vaccinations do not prevent those already infected from spreading the virus. The public health prevention strategies of wearing a mask, physical distancing and frequently, washing your hands remain the most reliable and safe strategy. The science is evolving, and I am confident that valid scientific evidence will soon come. However, it is up to everyone to continue the public health practices that have demonstrated effectiveness. We are keeping up with what is going on around the world, in the U.S. in the region, the state of Alabama, in Macon County and the city of Tuskegee. Tuskegee University is participating in national conversations about the coronavirus pandemic, its spread, especially among Black people. We are also engaged in discussions about vaccinations. There is another pandemic particularly in the U.S., which is violent deaths of Black men and women in Georgia, Kentucky, Minnesota and other states by white police or former police officers. There is much work to do to address and resolve both public health problems. I believe that the work that the VFOFL Foundation is undertaking specially, on behalf of the men and their families who were in the U.S. Public Health Service Syphilis Study at Tuskegee is consistent with the movement to make this a better world, particularly for Black people. The U.S Public Health Service Syphilis Study at Tuskegee is continually referenced when public officials and the media discuss the challenges that people deciding to or not to be vaccinated. Unfortunately, few people really know the Truth about the study or other challenges Black people face. More importantly, they know even less about the men who were in the study. As we continue to share the truth about the men who were U.S Public Health Service Syphilis Study at Tuskegee, the VFOFL Foundation is positioned to make a tremendous contribution to the City of Tuskegee, Macon County, Alabama, the southern region, the nation and the world. I believe that 2021, is the year that much will be done and the VFOFL Foundation will be the change we all want to see.

Sincerely,
Rueben C. Warren DDS, MPH, MDiv.,
Professor of Tuskegee University National Center for Bioethics in Research and Health Care

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