

with a 45% African-American population, two of the hospitals involved had no black patients and the other hospitals had served only a token number of African-Americans.²¹

Institutional views toward the treatment of the poor tend to parallel their attitudes and treatment of African-Americans and other people of color. Racism can be seen in the admission practices of hospitals, bed assignments, assignment of physicians/interns, and the careless use of African-Americans in research. Please, let us not ever forget the infamous Tuskegee study.²²

There are many dedicated health professionals concerned about the health challenges facing the poor and people of color. However, how can one begin to answer the complex question, "Is health care racist?" without including the perceptions, voices, and experiences of the people of whom you speak? While trying to see, understand, and resolve the challenges presented to us all, a common ground is needed. A sharing of perceptions, experiences, and knowledge so that an environment may evolve which will help generate meaningful answers to very complex problems as experienced by the poor and people of color using the health care system. Unfortunately racism does exist in the health care system. We can be caring and culturally sensitive to the voices, perception, and lived experiences of the poor and people of color and continue to work to humanize a very imperfect health care system and strive to make a difference.

REFERENCES

1. Blassingame JW. *The Slave Community*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press; 1979.
2. Hine D, ed. *The state of Afro-American History: Past, Present and Future*. Baton Rouge, La: Louisiana State University Press; 1986.
3. Mintz D, ed. *Slavery, Colonialism and Racism*. New York, NY: Norton; 1975.
4. Myrdal G. *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*. New York, NY: Harper; 1944.
5. Griscom JL. Sex, race and class: Three dimensions of women's experience. *The Counseling Psychologist*. 1979;8:10-11.
6. Smith A, Stewart A. Approaches to studying racism and sexism in black women's lives. *J Soc Iss*. 1983;39(3):1-15.
7. Aptheker B. *Woman's Legacy: Essays on Race, Sex and Class in American History*. Amherst, Mass: University of Massachusetts Press; 1982.
8. Rice MF. On assessing black health status. *Urban League Review*. 1985-86;9:6-12.
9. Sidel V. Health care: Privatization, privileges, pollution and profit. In: Gortner A, Gree C, Riesman F, eds. *What Reagan Is Doing To Us*. New York, NY: Harper & Row; 1982.
10. *Report of the Secretary's Task Force on Black & Minority Health*. Volume 1: Executive summary. Department of Health and Human Services; 1985.
11. Funkhouser SW, Moser DK. Is health care racist? *ANS*. 1990;12(2):47-55.
12. Douglass F. *My Bondage and My Freedom*. Salem, NH: Ayer; 1986 (Original work published 1855).
13. Friere P. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York, NY: Seabury; 1968.
14. Kuper A. *Genocide*. Harmondsworth, Penguin; 1981.
15. Billingsley A. *Black Families and the Struggle for Survival*. New York, NY: Friendship Press; 1974.
16. Bullough VL, Bullough B. *Health Care for the Other Americans*. New York, NY: Appleton-Century-Crofts; 1982.
17. Pinkney A. *The Myth of Black Progress*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press; 1984.
18. Jones W, Rice M. Black health care: An overview. In: *Health Care Issues in Black America*. New York, NY: Greenwood Press; 1987.
19. Zanden JV. *American Minority Relations*, ed 4. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf; 1983.
20. Foley M, Johnson GR. Health care of blacks in American inner cities. In: *Health Care Issues in Black America*. New York, NY: Greenwood Press; 1987.
21. Rice MF, Jones W. Public policy compliance/enforcement and black American health: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In: *Health Care Issues in Black America*. New York, NY: Greenwood Press; 1987.
22. Jones JH. *Bad Blood: The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment*. New York, NY: Collier Macmillan Publishers; 1981.

—Jean E. Swinney, RN, MA
 Doctoral Candidate
 University of Texas at Austin
 School of Nursing
 Austin, Texas

Author's reply:

We appreciate Ms Swinney's thoughtful and scholarly response to our article. There is no question in our minds that this topic is indeed a multifaceted one. We certainly don't deny that racism exists; however, we still maintain that poverty is a large force in the inadequate delivery of health care to the poor and people of color. We refer her to Wilson's works^{1,2} and would suggest that this complex problem will not be solved if only racism is addressed.

Perhaps we have achieved one of our goals, that of stimulating thought and question in this arena. Let us keep open minds and an open dialogue; indeed, there may be several approaches one could take in addressing this multidimensional problem.

REFERENCES

1. Wilson WJ. *The Declining Significance of Race*. 2nd ed. Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press; 1980.
2. Wilson WJ. *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*. Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press; 1987.

—*Sheana Whelan Funkhouser, RN, MN*
Research Specialist
Nursing Research and Education
City of Hope National Medical Center
Duarte, California

—*Debra K. Moser, RN, MN*
Research Nurse
School of Nursing and Departmental
Cardiology
University of California at Los Angeles
Los Angeles, California