

F3. Race and Reproduction and the Politics of Care in the Twentieth Century

F3:1 Rose Holz, *Reproductive Freedom and Racial Reckoning: A Lost History of Planned Parenthood's Mid-Twentieth Century*

While much has been made of Planned Parenthood's long history of racism as a predominantly white organization, missing in this narrative are the ways in which people of color themselves engaged in a collective mission of racial justice within Planned Parenthood from the 1950s through the early 1970s. Drawing upon internal organizational records, this presentation begins by documenting the work of Naomi Gray and the women of color with whom she worked in Planned Parenthood's national Field Department in NYC. Gray began working for the department in 1952, becoming its director in 1961 and then in 1968 Planned Parenthood's first woman vice president and first leader of color. Sharing a commitment to family planning, Gray and the others understood the complicated dynamics of community outreach, particularly when it intersected with efforts to promote racial progress. This story then turns to Douglas Stewart, who was hired to lead Planned Parenthood's newly created Department of Community Affairs in 1966. Working alongside Gray and the others, Stewart set out to promote a collective racial reckoning within Planned Parenthood, even as he pushed back against race genocide critiques raised by marginalized communities.

As the first account of Planned Parenthood's history that centers the voices of people of color within the organization, this project stitches together to work of Rodrique and Hart on reproductive freedom work in the first half of the twentieth century with that of the formal Reproductive Justice Movement as it emerged in the 1980s as described by Luna. Moreover, by exploring the unique experiences non-white people face inside predominantly white institutions, this project situates itself alongside the scholarship by Cahill and Theobald who recounted the experiences of Indigenous people inside white governmental agencies and medical institutions. In re-imagining Planned Parenthood's history from the perspective of people of color, we are thus reminded that when reckoning with its long history of racism, we need to do so without denying the agency of those who spent years pushing back in real time against this racism from within.

Learning Outcomes

- To reveal the connections between Planned Parenthood's origins and systemic racism in modern reproductive healthcare.
- To investigate the ways in which people of color navigated white institutions, in this case Planned Parenthood.
- To underscore the stories of agency and resistance by communities of color as they simultaneously navigated the racism of the white birth control movement while still engaging in racial uplift.

F3:2 Molly Yeo and Dominique Tobbell, *Polio during Segregation: Black Nurses' and Communities' Contributions to Polio Prevention, Care, and Vaccination, 1940-1960*

Poliomyelitis (polio) was a scourge on communities across the U.S. for much of the first half of the twentieth century. The scientific breakthrough of the first-ever polio vaccine in 1954 initiated the largest, and most successful medical experiment in American history. The demands for innovation and new education raised by polio increased nurses' access to professional and educational possibilities, yet Black nurses faced systemic barriers accessing these opportunities.

Historians have noted how the segregated health system deepened racialized divides in polio care for Black Americans and the medical education of Black clinicians. In 1941, the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis (NFIP) funded the establishment of the Infantile Paralysis Center (IPC) at the Tuskegee Institute to provide training to Black nurses in the prevention and treatment of polio, as well as care for Black patients. The center, however, received less funding than white institutions, limiting its ability to serve Black communities. This study analyzes the unique experiences of, and contributions made by Black nurses and community members to polio prevention, treatment, and vaccination between the 1940s and 1960s. It also highlights how Black nurses and communities worked to address disparities and advocate for educational opportunities in polio response efforts, contributions often hidden from dominant polio narratives.

F3:3 Mosunmola Ogunmolaji, *Royalty in the Ward: Princess Adenrele Ademola and Elite African Women in British Nursing Training, 1930s-1940s*

This paper examines the nursing education experience of Princess Aderenle Ademola to explore how elite African women navigated British nursing institutions during the 1930s and 1940s. As the daughter of a Yoruba King from Southwestern Nigeria and one of the earliest Nigerian women to pursue professional nursing training in Britain, Ademola's career offers a unique lens into the intersection of gender, class, and professionalization. While existing scholarship on colonial nursing has primarily centered on missionary workers or working-class trainees, this study foregrounds elite participation in British medical training and the symbolic, institutional, and colonial consequences of that participation.

Drawing on archival records from British nursing schools, colonial administrative correspondence, training reports, and newspaper articles, this paper reconstructs Ademola's entry into British nursing education within a larger wave of surge in the education of African elites in Britain from the turn of the twentieth century. By tracing Ademola's nursing career and royal background, this paper demonstrates how elite African women were deployed as symbols of imperial progress and constrained by the hierarchies of difference within structures that celebrated their visibility. The paper argues that elite status operated as a conditional form of access rather than a guarantee of professional equality. Additionally, this study reframes colonial nursing history by demonstrating how African royalty contributed to the development of modern nursing through biomedical training, rather than relying solely on informal caregiving traditions. It challenges the assumption that early African nurses and student nurses in Britain were uniformly working-class migrants, revealing a more layered social composition.

By centering a royal African nurse in the history of British medical training, this paper contributes to transnational histories of nursing and African women's professional labor. It demonstrates how colonial education functioned not only as a site of workforce production but also as a stage in which meanings of empire and race were actively negotiated.