



All public health observances that Americans recognize today, including [National Minority Health Month](#) (NMHM), trace their roots to the establishment of National Negro Health Week (NNHW) in 1915.<sup>1</sup> At the Tuskegee Institute's annual conference, Booker T. Washington was troubled by findings that showed staggering health disparities for Black Americans.<sup>2</sup> In response, he established National Health Improvement Week (later renamed NNHW) to create opportunities within the Black community to improve Black health outside of the "traditional" medical system that excluded them.<sup>2</sup> The event ran in April for 8 days Sunday to Sunday from 1915-51 and was one of the longest sustained health promotion campaigns for and by Black Americans in public health history.<sup>2-3</sup>

### **NMHM and You**

Today, public health observances are recognized as a powerful tool to raise awareness and share information about important health topics. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Minority Health, NMHM "builds awareness about the health disparities that persist among racial and ethnic minority and American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) populations and encourages everyone to take action to end these inequities."<sup>1</sup> Health disparities are defined as "preventable differences in the burden of disease, injury, violence, or opportunities to achieve optimal health"<sup>4</sup> and are directly related to the historic and current unequal distribution of resources. In cancer, health disparities for racial and ethnic minority and AI/AN populations are seen across the control continuum from prevention through survivorship in examples like AI/AN people having the highest use of commercial tobacco products and Black people having the highest death rate for most cancers.<sup>5-6</sup>

Racism is a root cause of health disparities for racial and ethnic minority and AI/AN people in the U.S. Its impact on Americans' health is longstanding and devastating, and it will certainly take more than a public health observance to end it and the health disparities it has caused. The promising thing is that health disparities by definition are preventable which means they can be stopped and kept from happening again. It is up to us to do that. So this NMHM, consider how you can join the effort to "be a source for better health" by learning about disparities that exist and how to [take action to address racism](#). This effort needs us all.

### **Resources**

For resources on cancer in racial and ethnic minority and AI/AN groups, check out the [American Cancer Society](#) and the [National Cancer Institute](#). To learn more about how the history of racism has influenced cancer and other health disparities, check out the [Kaiser Family Foundation](#) and [CDC](#), or consider requesting a training for your group from [BLKHLTH](#). To learn more about cancer-specific support services for racial and ethnic minority groups, check out the following resources. Some are specific to counties outside of the CSRA or not specific to certain groups but include helpful information. Please share with us if you know of any others!

**American Indian or Alaskan Native:** [American Indian Cancer Foundation](#) & [Native American Cancer Initiatives](#) | **Asian:** [Asian American Cancer Support Network](#) | **Black or African American:** Cancer Care created a [list of resources](#) | **Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander:** Dr. Tingting Zhang created a [list of resources](#) | **Latino or Hispanic:** [Latinas Contra Cancer](#) & [Latino Cancer Institute](#)



“The C Word” is a news brief of the Georgia Cancer Center at Augusta University. For cancer information visit our [website](#). To request presentations or other resources, contact Nyree Riley at [nriley@augusta.edu](mailto:nriley@augusta.edu)|706-721-8353 or Maryclaire Regan at [mregan@augusta.edu](mailto:mregan@augusta.edu)|706-721-4539. Virtual presentations can be arranged.

**Sources:**

1. <https://www.hhs.gov/national-minority-health-month/toolkit/index.html>
2. <https://rediscovering-black-history.blogs.archives.gov/2016/03/29/national-negro-health-week-1915-to-1951/>
3. <https://www.nps.gov/bowa/booker-t-washington-created-national-negro-health-week.htm#:~:text=National%20Negro%20Health%20Week%20was,major%20convener%20of%20community%20groups.>
4. <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/disparities/index.htm#:~:text=Health%20disparities%20are%20preventable%20differences,other%20population%20groups%2C%20and%20communities.>
5. <https://www.fda.gov/consumers/minority-health-and-health-equity-resources/commercial-tobacco-use-american-indian-and-alaska-native-populations#:~:text=Since%201978%2C%20American%20Indians%2FAlaska,of%20other%20races%20or%20ethnicities.>
6. <https://www.cancer.org/research/cancer-facts-statistics/cancer-facts-figures-for-african-americans.html>

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