

NAACP

"Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in healthcare is the most shocking and inhumane." Martin Luther King jr.

Kickapoo High School

The Kickapoo student that created a short racist rant and lynching threats has been disciplined by the High School. The event is being investigated by the Springfield Police Department. Efforts by parents and the NAACP to make our youth feel safe at school continue. School Board meetings are at the Kraft building 1359 E St Louis St. The meetings start at 5:30 pm. The next meeting is June 25th.

"The Milly Project"

The appellate justices of Missouri will watch "The Milly Project" this fall at their convention. This is part of their attempts to spark discussion in the judicial system regarding racial inequality in the justice system. Other performances are being scheduled.

Meet Kelvin Spears MD Emergency Medicine

What drew you to medicine? I used to spend summers with my



maternal grandmother on her farm near the town of Delhi, (pronounced "del-HI") Louisiana. In the late sixties (when I was 8 or 9) there was still much "Jim Crow" practiced in the South. My grandmother was a local practitioner of folk medicine and sometimes I would go with her on calls. We went to a woman's house who was very sick, probably sepsis as we would now recognize it. We treated her with

cool washcloths and prayer. Children at that time were expected to be seen and not heard. I asked, "Why don't we take her to the hospital?" I immediately recognized I should not have asked and braced for the backlash. Instead she patiently explained that the doctor that took care of black people was out of town and the hospital didn't take care of blacks. **I decided then, I would be the doctor for everyone.** *Tell us about your background.* I was born in Alexandria, LA in 1961 and mostly grew up there. My dad was in the Airforce and did a couple of tours in Vietnam. I went to college at Dillard University (an HBCU) and then medical school at Meharry University in Nashville, TN (also an HBCU). I did my residency in emergency medicine at MLK Hospital in Los Angeles from '88-'91 a critical care rotation from '91-'92 and the practiced emergency medicine at MLK hospital from '92-'97. *Tell*

Childhood Obesity Facts

Obesity in the African American community threatens the health of our precious children. The next generation is likely to have increases in the numbers of chronic health conditions and shorten the lives of our children.

- By 2008-09, 29.2% of Black adolescent girls ages 12-19 were obese; the highest prevalence of any age group by gender, race or ethnicity.
- African American children ages 6 to 11 are more likely to be obese or overweight than White children.
- African American females born in 2000 have a 49% lifetime risk of being diagnosed with diabetes while White females have a 31% risk, respectively.
- African American males born in 2000 have a 40% lifetime risk while White males have a 27% risk of being diagnosed with diabetes during their lifetimes

Parent attitudes play a role, public policy and school policies also play roles in this healthcare problem. We will continue to address this epidemic in upcoming issues.

* Statistics pulled from the National NAACP Obesity Initiative.

us about your family. My dad achieved the rank of staff sergeant in the US Airforce, my mom worked in childcare. They both insisted on their children getting good educations. There are four siblings in my family. My older brother is an attorney, my sister is a pharmacist and my younger brother works for the city of Alexandria. My wife is a Respiratory Therapist and we have three children, our oldest daughter is an Attorney, our middle daughter is in medical school our youngest, a son, is an artist. *Have you ever experienced racism?* Yes, on many levels. I was probably 8 or 9 before I realized the difference. We were living outside of Phoenix, AZ while my dad was stationed at a nearby air base and there were three black kids in the entire school (me and my siblings). One day some of the kids refused to play with us and sang a song at us that included the “n” word. I told my mom about it and she explained that “sometimes there are mean people”. After that you notice and become acutely aware. That was about the same time I was with my grandmother and realized the pervasiveness and systemic nature of racism. On a professional level, even at MLK hospital in the Compton area of Los Angeles, people of color would say, “I prefer a white doctor”. White people might say the same thing. I was on the admissions committee and was associated with the Charles Richard Drew (CRD) University of Medicine and Science (A Historically Black Graduate Institution, or HBGI). The first two years of the medical school program were combined with the UCLA school of medicine so the combined faculty would review the files of prospective students. CRD had 25 seats to fill in the program. One time we had a couple of very strong candidates. One, a white male from State University of New York (SUNY) was presented to the committee by the white man who had reviewed his file and I presented a black woman who had attended Xavier University (an HBCU). She had higher Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT) scores but about the same GPA as the white male. The man presenting the white male student made the argument that the GPA from Xavier was less valid (because it was an HBCU). Ultimately the black woman was admitted. I realized bias present in the decision makers makes a huge difference. After that experience I decided I needed to stay on the committee to make a difference. *Advice for young people?* Although a formal 4 year degree is not for everyone, education will free you up to control your own destiny. We have to excel due to the sacrifice of those who came before us. Get into the game.