

Learn about and celebrate Black History: Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett



“**Black Health and Wellness**” – a fitting theme for this year’s Black History Month as the pandemic continues to expose inequities in our healthcare system – explores American healthcare and how it has often underserved the African American community. The theme also acknowledges and celebrates the legacy of Black scholars, doctors, nurses, midwives and others in the medical field. ([Learn more about this year’s theme here.](#))

Immunologist. Leading Researcher for the COVID vaccine. Professor.

"I am Christian. I am Black. I am Southern. I'm an empath. I'm feisty, sassy, and fashionable. That's kind of how I describe myself. I would say that my role as a scientist is really about my passion and purpose for the world and for giving back to the world."



Born in 1986, **Dr. Kizzmekia S. Corbett, Ph.D.** is a research fellow and was the scientific lead for the Coronavirus Vaccines & Immunopathogenesis Team at the National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, Vaccine Research Center. In 2008, Dr. Corbett received her Bachelor of Science in Biological Sciences, with a secondary major in Sociology, from the University of Maryland-Baltimore County where she was a Meyerhoff Scholar and an NIH undergraduate scholar. She received her Ph.D. in Microbiology and Immunology in 2014 from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Her work with coronavirus began in 2014 when she joined the NIH Vaccine Research Center as a postdoctoral fellow. When the pandemic began, she and her team were able to take those 6 years of work and apply them to developing a vaccine. Now, Dr. Corbett continues her research as an Assistant Professor of Immunology and Infectious Diseases at Harvard’s T.H. Chan School of Public Health and head of the Coronaviruses & Other Relevant Emerging Infectious Diseases Lab.

It's safe to say that Dr. Corbett has made a global impact.

- She has become a vaccine educator, particularly to BIPOC communities, which have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and healthcare disparities.
- Received the 2021 Benjamin Franklin NextGen Award from the Franklin Institute of Philadelphia, for her work in viral immunology and vaccine development.
- One of Time Magazine's 2021 Heroes of the Year for her leadership in the COVID vaccine development.

To learn more about Dr. Corbett and the impact she is making:

- <https://asm.org/Biographies/Kizzmekia-S-Corbett,-Ph-D>
- <https://www.blackenterprise.com/prior-to-covid-19-dr-kizzmekia-corbett-was-formulating-success-as-a-black-woman-in-science/>
- <https://www.fi.edu/laureates/kizzmekia-s-corbett>
- <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/press-releases/kizzmekia-corbett-joins-harvard-chan-school/>

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Want to learn about more Black scholars and medical professionals who have made an impact throughout history?

- **Emmett Chappelle** – Born in 1925, Emmett Chappelle was a scientific researcher and inventor who advanced the fields of biomedical science, astrobiology, remote sensing, and genetics. His research centered on how we could detect life on other planets by studying extraterrestrial soils. During his career he was awarded NASA's Exceptional Scientific Achievement Medal, held 14 patents, and was inducted into the National Inventor's Hall of Fame. ([Learn more here.](#))
- **Annie Malone** – Local changemaker Annie Malone was born in 1869 in Metropolis, IL and became a businesswoman, inventor, and philanthropist. She developed a line of hair care and beauty products specifically for Black women, and in 1902 moved her successful business to St. Louis. She quickly became a millionaire and established Poro College – a cosmetology school for Black women. However, we probably most remember Annie Malone for her philanthropic work. She supported many African American organizations and charities, most notably the St. Louis Colored Orphans Home where she served as the President of the Board of Directors for many years. In 1946, the St. Louis Colored Orphans Home was renamed in her honor and is now the Annie Malone Children & Family Service Center, continuing her legacy in the St. Louis area. ([Learn more here.](#))
- **Howard University School of Medicine** – The Medical School opened in 1868 with 8 students, 7 of whom were Black. Howard University was founded “to uplift African-Americans, especially those recently freed from slavery...[and] was established on the principle that it would be open to all races and colors, both sexes, and all social classes.” From the time the medical school opened until the 1960s, Howard and Meharry (in Tennessee) educated most Black physicians in this country. Howard University School of Medicine has also been committed to educating women physicians. The first Black woman to graduate was Dr. Eunice P. Shadd (Class of 1877) and the first woman teacher was Dr. Isabel C. Barrows (1870s). Dr. Sarah Garland Jones, who graduated from Howard in 1893, was the first African American AND the first woman to be certified by the Virginia State Board of Medicine. With her husband, she founded what is now the Richmond Community Hospital. [More about the incredible history of Howard University School of Medicine here.](#)
- **2022 Health and Wellbeing Champions** – See this [list of St. Louis area champions](#), compiled by the Brown School, who have impacted the health and wellbeing of African Americans locally.

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