



— JOINT STATEMENT —

# Collective Action Addressing Racism: Acknowledging Betsey, Lucy and Anarcha

Our organizations, which comprise leading professional organizations in health care, officially designate February 28 and March 1—the dates that bridge Black History and Women’s History months—for the formal acknowledgement of Betsey, Lucy, and Anarcha, the three enslaved Black women whose exploitation led to foundational advances in the field of obstetrics and gynecology that benefit millions of patients today.

Betsey, Lucy, and Anarcha, and other unnamed enslaved women, were experimented on by Dr. James Marion Sims in development of surgical techniques in the mid-1800s. Their documented experiences have helped raise awareness about racism in medicine and the abuses endured by people of color that have often been overlooked in medical history.

This year’s commemoration marks the inaugural formal reflection on the injustices—deeply rooted in racism and oppression—carried out against these women and others throughout history. As leading organizations comprised of medical care professionals, we have made an actionable commitment to accountability and doing the purposeful work of dismantling systemic and institutional racism that is pervasive in U.S. healthcare institutions and led to continued disparate and negative health outcomes for Black, indigenous, people of color and other marginalized persons.

This effort starts with the seven actions outlined in the joint statement [Collective Action Addressing Racism](#). One of the primary objectives of this collective action is to assist our organizations’ members in reflecting, learning, and acting on ways they can individually work to change the culture of medicine.

This inaugural year, on Feb. 22, Dr. Veronica Pimentel, a maternal-fetal medicine specialist whose activism was the impetus for the commemoration days, hosted a live event with Award-Winning Historian Dr. Deirdre Cooper Owens, discussing the history and accounts of Betsey, Lucy and Anarcha. You can access the [recording of that event here](#).

Dr. Pimentel has also provided a [video](#) reflecting on the importance of recognizing Betsey, Lucy and Anarcha and the impact this recognition and reflection can have on the medical community as a whole.

Please join us in this year’s commemoration by engaging with these resources and sharing them with members and colleagues via social media and other communications on Feb. 28 and March 1. Also, please provide your feedback on this effort in this [member-only survey](#).

See additional resources on Betsey, Lucy and Anarcha [here](#).