

# **African American Medical Societies**

# African American Medical Societies

- In response to their exclusion from the existing medical societies, African American physicians formed their own medical organizations:
- 1884 - Medico-Chirurgical Society of DC
- 1886 - Lone Star State Medical, Dental, and Pharmaceutical Association (TX)
- 1887 - Old North State Medical Society (NC)
- 1865 - North Jersey National Medical Association (NJ)

# Formation of the National Medical Association

- None of the African American medical societies could send delegates to AMA meetings
- 1895 – African American physicians and other professionals formed the National Medical Association

# **Separate and Unequal Medical Education**

# African American Medical Schools

- Few African Americans accepted into US medical schools
- Missionary groups founded medical schools that accepted black students:
  - 1868 - Howard University Medical School (DC)
  - 1870 - Lincoln University Medical Department (PA)
  - 1876 - Meharry Medical College (TN)
  - 1882 - Leonard Medical School (NC)



Shaw Hall at Shaw University, Raleigh, NC (ca. 1908)

Source: UNC Chapel Hill Library Collections

<http://www.oldnorthstatemedicalsociety.org/virtualMuseum/Main%20-%20ONSMS%20Virtual%20Museum.html>



First Class of Leonard Medical School at Shaw University,  
Raleigh, NC (ca.1886)

Source: Shaw University Archives

<http://www.oldnorthstatemedicalsociety.org/virtualMuseum/Main%20-%20ONSMS%20Virtual%20Museum.html>



Faculty of Leonard Medical School at Shaw University,  
Raleigh, NC (1886)

Source: Shaw University Archives

<http://www.oldnorthstatemedicalsociety.org/virtualMuseum/Main%20-%20ONSMS%20Virtual%20Museum.html>



# The AMA and Medical Education

- 1847 - Committee on Medical Education is established
- 1904 - Council on Medical Education (CME) founded
- CME tracked state licensing board failure rates and other statistics
- CME created grading system to rate schools

# African American Medical Schools and the CME Rating System

- African American schools lacked the financial resources to comply with rising educational standards
- AMA rated all African American schools in bottom third of US schools
- Licensure failure rates for graduates of African American schools were over 20%

# AMA Approaches Carnegie Foundation

- AMA's rating system was seen by many as not objective
- AMA asks Carnegie Foundation to sponsor a survey of medical schools in US and Canada
- Survey was meant to promote work of the Council on Medical Education

# Abraham Flexner



Abraham Flexner

- Educator from Louisville
- Carnegie Foundation hired Flexner to head study
- The CME Secretary accompanied Flexner on site visits
- Flexner wrote most of his report at AMA headquarters

Source: Rockefeller Archive Center

<http://www.hbci.com/~wenonah/history/img/flexner.jpg>

# Flexner Report Published in 1910

## MEDICAL EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

A REPORT TO  
THE CARNEGIE FOUNDATION  
FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF TEACHING

BY  
ABRAHAM FLEXNER

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
HENRY S. PRITCHETT  
PRESIDENT OF THE FOUNDATION

# Flexner Report: Principle Findings

- In the US, “physicians are four or five times [too] numerous”
- Many poor quality schools
  - 90% have inadequate admission standards
  - Many lacked adequately trained faculty
  - Most had inadequate course offerings
  - Many lacked adequate laboratory facilities
- Close weak schools, focus resources on stronger schools

# Flexner Report: Women's Medical Education

- 80% of women attend “coeducational institutions”
- Close all medical schools for women
- Integrate women into predominantly male medical schools

# Flexner Report: “Negro” Medical Education

- *Separate*
  - “the practice of the negro physician will be limited to his own race”
- *Different* education
  - “negro doctors” should become sanitarians
- Close 5 of the 7 historically African American medical schools
- Support only Howard University Medical School and Meharry Medical College
  - Though they will be “unequal to the need”
  - “the medical care of the negro race will never be left wholly to negro physicians”

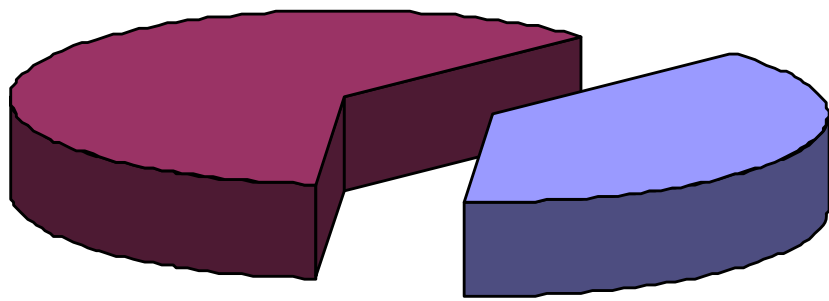
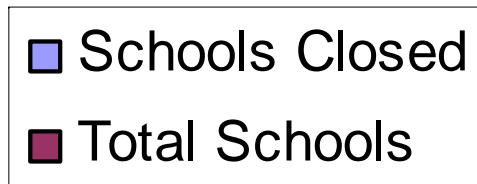


# Aftermath of Flexner Report

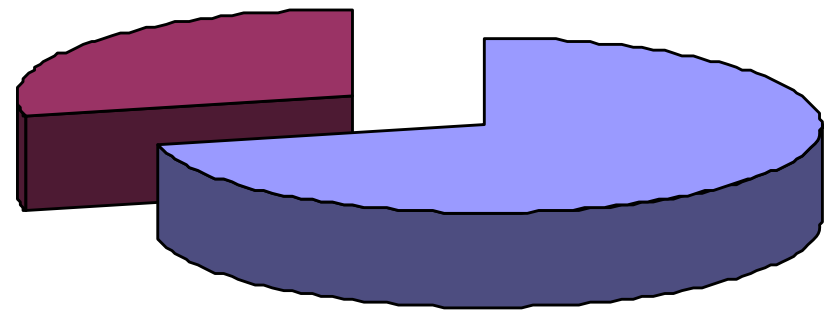
- *N.B. Part of much larger picture of the evolution of medical education (esp. integration of labs, hospitals, universities, etc)*
- With specific regard to AA medical education
  - White medical schools were funded first
  - Flexner did not immediately recommend adequate funding for Howard or Meharry
  - African American schools struggled financially
  - CME kept up pressure for educational reform through their annual evaluations
  - CME continued to give African American medical schools low ratings

# By 1923

Among the US medical schools operating in 1910...



51 of the 131 (40%)  
**total schools** closed



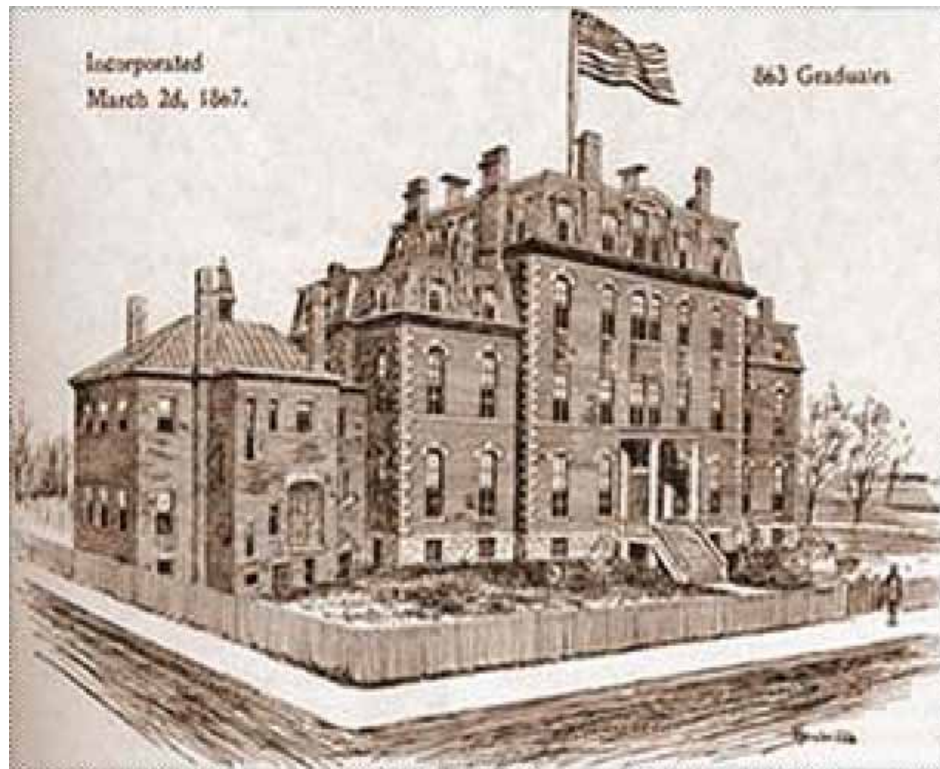
5 of the 7 (71%) **African  
American schools** closed



Meharry Medical College, Nashville, TN (ca. 1895)

Source: UNC Chapel Hill Library Collections

<http://www.oldnorthstatemedicalsociety.org/virtualMuseum/Main%20-%20ONSMS%20Virtual%20Museum.html>



Howard University Medical College,  
Washington, DC (ca. 1867)

Source: Howard University Archives

<http://www.oldnorthstatemedicalsociety.org/virtualMuseum/Main%20-%20ONSMS%20Virtual%20Museum.html>

# Outcome for Howard and Meharry

- Howard University Medical School and Meharry Medical College survived
- But both schools struggled financially
- As late as the 1970s, Howard and Meharry educated over 2/3 of all African American medical students admitted per year in the US.

# **The AMA Directory and “Colored” Physicians**

# NMA Relations with AMA

- NMA struggled during its first decades of existence, unable even to meet each year
- NMA rarely mentioned in AMA records
- Few NMA-AMA interactions between 1895 and World War II

# Racial Designations in the *American Medical Directory*

- 1906 - AMA began publishing a *Directory*, which listed all US physicians
- The *Directory* listed black physicians as “colored”
- Effect on black physicians:
  - More difficult, or impossible, to obtain malpractice insurance and credit



# NMA Protests “col.” Designations

- 1931 - AMA at first refused to meet with NMA to discuss the issue
  - AMA Board did “not feel disposed to make any change in its ... policy of designating colored physicians.”
- AMA eventually sought different ways of designating black physicians
- 1939 - After NMA protests drew media attention, the AMA stopped listing African American physicians as “col.”