

**Charles Drew's speech to Temple Israel Brotherhood  
Boston, Massachusetts, 1946**

*Below you will find a speech given by Drew to mark the commencement of a scholarship for African American medical students established in his name by the Temple Israel Brotherhood. After reading the speech, begin developing your précis.*

Mr. Chairman:

This scholarship which your group is creating is in the finest tradition of New England. It is fitting that such a program should be initiated here, for out of the heart and mind and blood of New England was forged the hammer which broke the chains of slavery. Out of its towns and hills and valleys went forth the fearless, Godlike, lonely men and women to teach these lowly and despised people so robbed and bound and ignorantly weak that God himself concealed their destiny. In those days you gave them hope. Into your schools and colleges came the first groups of those who had caught the dream of growing in knowledge and understanding and in service. From your schools have gone out the men and women who, in the past and today, play so large a role in attempting to complete the emancipation begun at an earlier day at such high cost to your spiritual ancestors.

The Temple Israel Brotherhood, by its actions in the past and its action today, carries on in the great New England tradition. We of a younger generation of Negroes know well the significance of the names Garrison, Phillips, Stevens. We know how Shaw fell. We humbly acknowledge a debt of gratitude.

Your present mode of action in establishing a scholarship in medicine for a Negro student is extraordinarily timely because there is a great need for just such aid. In the United States at the present time there are approximately 160,000 physicians. Only 2.3% of these physicians are Negroes - a total of 3,618 - according to statistics released by the War Manpower Commission in 1944. For the population as a whole there is one physician for approximately every 750 people. When the ratio of Negro physicians to the 13,000,000 Negroes in the United States is considered, it is found that there is one Negro physician to every 4,000 individuals. In certain sections of the country this ratio reaches one Negro physician for every 5,000 colored persons; while in certain states the ratio is as great as one Negro physician to every 22,000 colored persons. This obviously is a woefully inadequate number. In certain sections of the country this great inadequacy is compensated for by the splendid care which our people can receive in large medical centers and clinics, but in other sections of the country no such services are available and the people die.

Of greater significance is the fact that the number of Negro physicians has gradually decreased during the ten-year period between 1932 and 1942. In 1932 there were 122 graduates. By 1938 this number had slipped to exactly half - 61 graduates from all the medical schools in America. During this same period there was an 8% increase in the Negro population. At the present time statistics presented by Dr. Cornely of Howard University

suggest that we may expect to lose by death 80 to 100 Negro physicians per year for the next ten years. These few facts represent the chief problem. What is the reason for this gradual decrease of trained men in a profession which all recognize to be so essential? There appear to be two chief causes: The first is the fact that medical education is extremely expensive, and the Negro is extremely poor. "How poor?" you ask. Richard Sterner, "The Negro Share" states that in the United States during the 1930-1940 period only 4% of Negroes made over \$1,000 a year. It costs nearly a thousand dollars a year to attend a first-rate medical school. In 1935 he found that over 75% of Negro families of four made a total income of less than \$900 a year -- the sum established by the WPA as a minimum on which four people could live. (But they did live!) In the small villages of the South the average income for a family of four was found to be less than \$330 a year. In the small cities the average was below \$632 a year; and in New York City, the best income city in the country, the average for a family of four was below \$980 a year. These facts, I believe, are sufficient to validate poverty as the first cause of lowered enrollment in the medical schools. The second great cause, and the one which is most active at the present time, is the widespread policy of exclusion which is so universal, even in New England, that the total number of graduates from all the 75 accredited white medical schools of the nation rarely exceeds eight or ten per year; and the opportunities for continued training in the various medical specialties in all of the clinical facilities associated with these great centers of medical teaching is rarely extended to more than a half dozen Negro postgraduate students in any given year although there are nearly 9,000 such places for such training. Even at Harvard, whose liberal attitude is well established, I can recall no instance of a Negro intern in any of the teaching hospitals associated with the college.

This scholarship which you propose, therefore, answers the two dominant needs. It provides income sorely needed and creates an opportunity for the training of one more man in some institution other than Howard University College of Medicine in Washington, D.C. or Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee, both of which are overcrowded and overworked in attempting to work out a way of meeting this great need for thoroughly trained Negro physicians.

That you have chosen to create this scholarship in my name is a great honor. I hope that the men who will be thus aided will prove themselves worthy of such aid, and that both they and I will repay you in the best way we can which is to be living up to the highest principles of good physicianship.

Drew, Charles. Speech for the Temple Israel Brotherhood, Boston, Massachusetts, March 21, 1946. Scholarship, Named in Honor of Dr. Drew, Presented to Student Eligible to Study Medicine at Tufts, Boston University, or Harvard. Charles R. Drew Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University. Washington, D.C.  
<http://profiles.nlm.nih.gov/ps/retrieve/ResourceMetadata/BGBBJR>