

Celebrating SOPHE's African American Presidents



February 2024

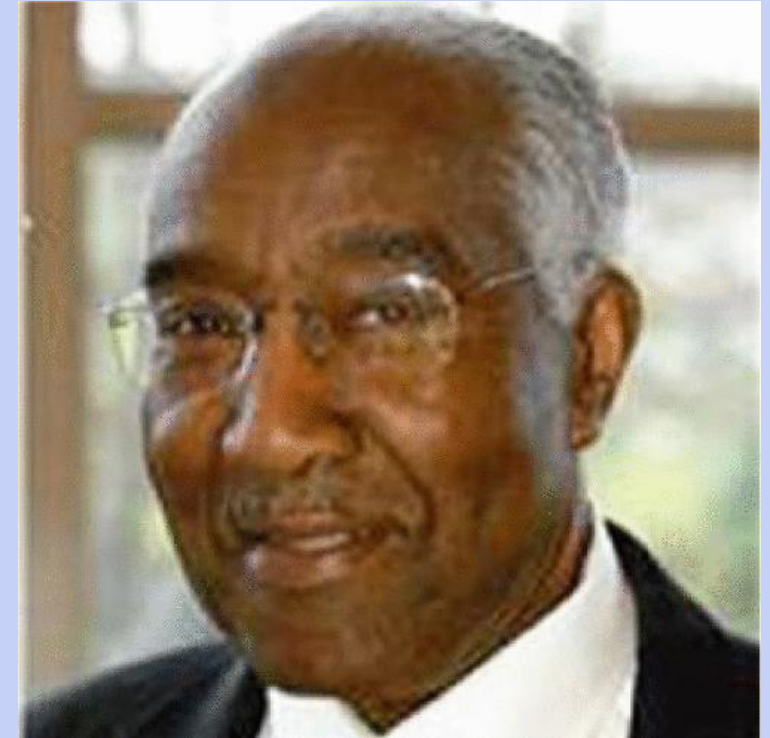
Thomas E. Robertson, MSPH

- First African American SOPHE president – 1963
- Worked for US Health Education & Welfare (now HHS)
- 2x WHO appointed envoy to Middle Congo & Liberia, Africa to address fighting tropical disease and training local public health officers in modern methods & techniques
- SOPHE Trustee – 1958; Chaired, Professional Education Committee
- SOPHE Board 1958 Minutes – T. Robertson indicated that we need to *think in terms of employment as well as recruitment. Professionally-prepared Negroes have difficulty being placed. The employment of minority groups in general is a problem. It was agreed that SOPHE should join with other national groups during the coming years to find placement for health educators of minority groups.*”



William Darity

- SOPHE President – 1969
- He earned his baccalaureate degree from Shaw University, his MSPH degree from North Carolina Central University, and his DrPH from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where in 1964 he was the first African American to earn a doctorate at the university
- After working in antipoverty programs in North Carolina, in 1965 Dr. Darity accepted a faculty appointment at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, where he conducted research on smoking and cancer in Blacks.
- In 1973, he became the founding dean of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst School of Health Sciences
- World Health Organization (WHO) for 10 years as a WHO regional advisor to 17 countries



Marcia Pinkett-Heller, MPH

- SOPHE President – 1979
- First African American Female SOPHE President
- Chair, Health Sciences, NJ City University
- Focused on professional preparation and struggling membership
- Research to improve minority children with asthma
- Helped bring MLK, Jr. Statue to Bergen, NJ in 2016



Collins Airhihenbuwa, PhD

- SOPHE President – 2004
- Professor and Director, Global Research Against Non-communicable Disease (GRAND) Initiative Georgia State University School of PH
- Developed cultural model (PEN-3) that is used in several countries to develop programs and interventions to address health inequity.
- SOPHE's first Research Agenda to Eliminate Health Disparities



Adenike Bitto, MD, MPH, DrPH, MCHES, FRSPH

- SOPHE President – 2017
- Former professor, East Stroudsburg University
- Fellow, Royal Society of Public Health
- Chaired, Emergency Preparedness CoP
- Focused on interdisciplinary collaboration among response teams
- New Strategic Plan 2017 – 2020 adopted



Deborah Fortune, PhD, FAAHE

- SOPHE President – 2021
- Professor, North Carolina Central University
- Former AAHE staff
- *Interests* - HIV & sexual health among African American college women, professional preparation in health education, youth violence prevention, and faculty & youth mentoring
- Established SOPHE HBCU Advisory Council



Leonard Jack, Jr., PhD, MSc

- SOPHE President – 2024
- Editor in Chief – CDC's *Preventing Chronic Disease* journal
- CDC Distinguished Research Consultant
- Emeritus Editor in Chief – *Health Promotion Practice*
- Professor, Department of Community Health and Preventive Medicine, Morehouse School of Medicine
- Former Endowed Chair, Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center and Xavier University of Louisiana (respectively)
- Former Director, Division of Community Health, CDC; Former Lead, Applied Behavioral Research, Epidemiology, Surveillance, and Systems Team; and Former Chief, Community Intervention Section, Division of Diabetes Translation, CDC

