

Dr. Sophia B. Jones; It's Time to Give her her Long Deserved and Overdue Recognition

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Think about the challenges of being a woman in the STEM field today. Now imagine being a *woman of color* in STEM, but over 150 years ago. Dr. Sophia B Jones was her name; from becoming her university's first black female medical graduate to her years of devotion to bringing better health opportunities to the black community; this incredible Ontario native is indeed a woman who deserves her recognition. The following paragraphs will outline her early life and education, strong work within the black community, and legacy.

Jones's story starts in Chatham, Ontario where she was born on May 16th, 1857 to parents James Munroe and Emily Frances Jones; activists and members of the Canadian abolitionist movement. Throughout her childhood, she displayed immense interest in public health and the medical field. Initially, she'd wanted to pursue her medical education at the University of Toronto. However, frustrated with the lack of medical training programs for women and refused full training for black females, she sought out the University of Michigan medical school. It was there that she completed her training as a physician, making her the institution's first black woman ever to do so.

Dr. Jones did an incredible number of work within the black community. Jones became a faculty member at Spelman; a private black Atlanta women's college. Additionally, she established a nurse training program before she would go on to practice across the country as a physician, devoting her life to providing Blacks with quality healthcare. In 1913, she published a journal titled, "Fifty Years of Negro Public Health," in which she outlined the health experiences of black Americans. She also went on to bring light on intergenerational trauma from slavery and its impacts on health within the community. Jones rightfully rejected a popular false belief that the health of black Americans *worsened* following emancipation. Most importantly, she called for the provision of equitable and equal access to healthcare and health education.

Jones died September of 1932 in California, where she'd settled after years of practicing, but her legacy lives on. The University of Michigan established a lecture series; the "Sophie Jones Lectureship on Infectious Diseases," in her honor. In addition, the university established the "Fitzbutler Jones Alumni Society," which recognizes the achievements of Black medical students. It works to provide aspiring black students in the medical field with financial support as well as opportunities for professional development through mentorships and assistance with scholarship funds.

Self-evidently, Dr. Jones's actions display why she's a woman who rightfully deserves her recognition. Her story sheds light on an even bigger issue; Canada's failure to celebrate accomplished Black women. While in the US, the first black females to become doctors,

inventors, scientists, etc are documented, in Canada they simply are not; making it vital that we dig deeper into our history. These legacies hold much beyond just names written on plaques. They have the power to provide young black Canadians with heroes and luminaries; especially in fields like STEM where it's crucially needed.

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