

DR. PATRICIA BATH (1942-2019)

DOCTOR, INVENTOR, EDUCATOR



Enabling the blind to see is the greatest joy of Dr. Patricia Bath, eye surgeon, professor of ophthalmology, laser scientist, inventor, and founder of the American Institute for the Prevention of Blindness. She has been a trailblazer for women and African Americans in the medical profession, being the first to attain many of the highest academic honors and appointments in her field.

In 1981, Bath began working on her most well-known invention: the Laserphaco Probe (1986). Harnessing laser technology, the device created a less painful and more precise treatment of cataracts. She received a patent for the device in 1988, becoming the first African American female doctor to receive a patent for a medical purpose. (She also holds patents in Japan, Canada and Europe.) With her Laserphaco Probe, Bath was able to help restore the sight of individuals who had been blind for more than 30 years.

Dr. Bath was the daughter of a Trinidad immigrant father and a mother descended from African slaves and Cherokee Indians, both of whom encouraged education and prioritized learning for their children. Patricia graduated from Harlem High School in two years, obtained a BS from Hunter College, an MD from Howard University, and trained in Ophthalmology at Columbia University.

In 1974, Dr. Bath was the first woman faculty member in the Department of Ophthalmology at UCLA's Jules Stein Eye Institute. By 1983, she was chair of the ophthalmology residency training program at Drew-UCLA, the first woman in the USA to hold such a position.

She pioneered the worldwide discipline of "community ophthalmology" in 1976 as a new discipline in medicine promoting eye health and blindness prevention through programs utilizing methodologies of public health, community medicine and ophthalmology to bring necessary eye care to under-served populations.

In 1993, Bath retired from UCLA Medical Center. Since then, she has been an advocate of telemedicine, the use of electronic communication to provide medical services to remote areas where health care is limited.

<http://www.biography.com/people/patricia-bath-21038525>

http://www.nlm.nih.gov/changingthefaceofmedicine/physicians/biography_26.html

<http://www.laserfest.org/lasers/pioneers/bath.cfm>

<http://invention.smithsonian.org/centerpieces/ilives/bath/bath.html>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patricia_Bath