



CELEBRATING SOPHE'S AFRICAN AMERICAN PRESIDENTS

Black History Month
February 2022

Thomas E. Roberson, MSPH



- First African American SOPHE President – 1963
- Worked for US Health Education & Welfare (now HHS)
- Twice WHO appointed envoy to Middle Congo & Liberia, Africa to address fighting tropical diseases and training local public health officers in modern methods & techniques
- SOPHE Trustee – 1958; chaired, Professional Education Committee
- SOPHE Board 1958 Minutes – *“ T. Roberson 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 1924-2015



- 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

