

## **WebMD Announces 2020 Health Heroes**

### ***God's Love We Deliver, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Advocates in Violence Prevention, Environmental Justice, Immigrant Mental Health, and Black Maternal Mortality Recognized for Their Work in Social Justice***

**New York, New York, February 25, 2020** – WebMD today announced the winners of the 2020 WebMD Health Hero Awards, which this year celebrate the accomplishments and contributions of researchers, advocates, and organizations confronting health issues considered to be among society's most challenging.

For the first time, the Awards, now in their 13<sup>th</sup> year, will focus on social justice efforts, including work to curb violence, promote environmental justice, improve access to care, reduce maternal health disparities, and improve medical care to the underserved.

WebMD's editorial team, composed of board-certified health care professionals and award-winning journalists, selects the recipients. The winners will be featured in a special edition of the March/April issue of *WebMD Magazine*, and many will be recognized at the annual Love Rocks NYC benefit concert for God's Love We Deliver on March 12.

"As a society, we are facing tremendous health challenges that can often seem insurmountable," said Arefa Cassoobhoy, MD, MPH, WebMD Senior Medical Director and Health Heroes Selection Committee member. "Given the health issues we face, both in the U.S. and globally, WebMD believes it is important to highlight social justice efforts. Our extraordinary group of Health Heroes show that change is happening, and there is progress to ensure that all communities have access to the health and well-being that they deserve."

#### **The WebMD 2020 Health Heroes are:**

**Game Changer: God's Love We Deliver**, *providing medically tailored meals and nutrition counseling services for people living with severe and chronic illnesses.*

Since 1985, God's Love We Deliver has responded to the urgent need for life-sustaining meals for New Yorkers living with serious illnesses. Today, they provide more than 2 million medically tailored, chef-prepared meals to their clients in the New York metropolitan area living with severe and chronic illnesses, such as HIV and AIDS, cancer, cardiovascular disease, Alzheimer's disease, and other conditions. With the help of more than 17,000 annual volunteers, God's Love cooks 8,000 meals from scratch in the organization's SoHo kitchen each weekday and delivers them with love to clients' homes. Each meal is designed to fit a client's specific medical conditions, allergies, medications, ability to chew and swallow, and dietary restrictions. God's Love also provides food for clients' children and caregivers because illness affects the whole family. The meals are designed not only to provide sustenance, but also to live up to the

organization's belief that "food is love and food is medicine." This May, as God's Love celebrates its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it will deliver its 25 millionth meal.

**Lifetime Achievement: The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation**, *for its work in tackling extreme poverty, health inequalities, and improving access to education.*

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. Since its founding in 2000, the foundation has donated more than \$50 billion in grants to extend and improve the lives of some of the poorest people in the world.

Its efforts include investing in the development and delivery of vaccines to prevent diseases that cause severe diarrhea and pneumonia, which are preventable and treatable, yet kill an estimated 1.5 million children around the world each year. The foundation also works to provide countries with the tools and innovations they need to reduce the burden of deadly diseases like malaria, HIV and AIDS, and polio. In the United States, the foundation seeks to ensure that all people – especially those with the fewest resources – have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life.

**Trailblazer: Robert Bullard, PhD**, *Professor of Urban Planning and Environmental Policy, Texas Southern University, and Co-founder, Historically Black College and University Climate Change Consortium*

Dr. Robert D. Bullard has earned the title "father of environmental justice" for his more than 40 years of teaching, studying, writing about, and pushing for policy changes to reduce the burden of pollution on low-income and people of color communities. He has authored 18 books that address a range of issues like environmental racism, climate change, transportation, disasters, sustainability, community reinvestment, and resilience – all viewed through a health, justice, and equity lens.

Dr. Bullard's groundbreaking work of the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s exposed a disturbing pattern of environmental injustice across the U.S., and throughout the world. The environmental health effects are well-documented in his work and a growing body of environmental justice literature. People who live, work, play, and attend school near hazardous waste sites, coal-fired power plants, lead smelters, refineries, chemical plants, highways, and in polluted cities, for example, are more susceptible to cardiovascular disease, heart disease, stroke, asthma, cancer, and diabetes. Recent evidence also reveals air pollution is linked to premature births, hypertension, dementia, and lower academic performance in students who

attend schools near freeways. Low-income and people of color neighborhoods are hit hardest by disease-causing pollution.

In 2011, Bullard, along with environmental justice scholar Dr. Beverly Wright, co-founded the Historically Black College and University (HBCU) Climate Change Consortium, which works to train a new generation of leaders and raise awareness about the disproportionate impact of disasters and climate change on marginalized and vulnerable communities. Bullard views the quest for environmental and climate justice as a struggle for civil rights and human rights.

**Innovator: Gary Slutkin, MD, *founder and CEO, Cure Violence Global***

While politicians argue over whether violence is driven by issues of guns or mental health, Dr. Slutkin asks another question entirely: What if we treat violence as a preventable epidemic disease?

Cure Violence Global, the organization he founded in 2000, prevents violence and its spread in the same way public health efforts prevent outbreaks of infectious diseases, with solutions no different from what cities do when faced with other epidemics, like measles or Ebola.

In New York; Baltimore; Oakland; Juarez, Mexico; Basra, Iraq; and other cities, Cure Violence has trained “violence interrupters,” trusted members of the community to identify simmering individuals and intervene before they commit a violent act, and thereby stop the spread and the epidemic. Multiple independent studies show reductions in violence where the program works, from 40% to 70%, and sometimes to zero: A 63% drop in shootings in New York City, 45% less violence in Trinidad and Tobago, and a 67% decline in shootings and killings in the first neighborhood tried in Chicago.

Dr. Slutkin points to data that show that within two to four years after implementing this approach, with enough funding and the right training, cities can see as much as a 70% drop in shootings and killings.

**Educator: Liliana Campos, *Doctoral Candidate in clinical psychology, immigrant mental health advocate, community organizer***

Living as an undocumented immigrant for more than two decades, Liliana Campos, who crossed the border with her family from Mexico at the age of 7, lived in the shadows with no resources to help her cope with the strain of existing in immigration legal limbo. While studying psychology as an undergraduate at California State University, Long Beach, in 2005, she began to think about the impact that undocumented status was having on the health of young

immigrants and became a health educator for student Dreamers. Now a doctoral candidate in clinical psychology, Ms. Campos has focused her research, study, and community organizing on the mental health concerns of the immigrant population.

Ms. Campos has had lawful permanent resident (LPR) status since receiving a U Visa a few years ago. Being able to share her personal story has given her a special connection with the people she helps, fostering trust with health care providers, and supporting them in recognizing and validating their mental health concerns, such as depression.

As a member of the California Psychological Association Immigration Task Force, Ms. Campos, along with a team of committed licensed psychologists, helps train immigration attorneys, social workers, and mental health professionals who work with immigrants and refugees. She also works as a mental health advocate for Immigrants Rising, an organization that empowers young undocumented immigrants to achieve their educational and career goals. For many of the people she works with, her interaction marks the first time anyone has addressed their fears and anxieties.

**Advocate: Angela Doyinsola Aina, MPH, *Interim Executive Director, Black Mamas Matter Alliance (BMMA)***

The U.S. has the highest maternal mortality rate in the developed world, and black women bear a disproportionate share of those deaths. They are three times more likely to die during pregnancy than white women, regardless of their education or income level.

Recognizing the need for a national organization focused on black maternal health, the Black Mamas Matter Alliance began as a collaboration between the Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR) and the SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective. In 2014, the CRR released a report chronicling a pattern of racial discrimination in the delivery of reproductive health care. Two years later, a group of health care experts and activists developed a Black Mamas Matter Toolkit of resources for maternal health, and the organization was born.

One area of the organization's focus is advocating for culturally congruent team-based care throughout pregnancy and during labor, which in the black community has historically come from midwives. In its three-year existence, Black Mamas Matter Alliance has been instrumental in advocating for a birth/reproductive justice and human rights approach in addressing adverse maternal health outcomes. The group has also helped to push for legislative changes like the Preventing Maternal Deaths Act of 2018, which provides states with the necessary resources to collect data on maternal deaths. As founders of the Black Maternal Health Week national

campaign, the organization continues to drive the cultural shift around the narrative of negative stereotypes of black motherhood and uplifts the historical and current contributions of black women's scholarship and maternity care work across the nation.

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