



**Metropolitan Water
Reclamation District
of Greater Chicago**



2022 MWRD

AFRICAN AMERICAN

HISTORY MONTH

Patricia Era Bath, MD

Patricia Era Bath, MD, was born November 4, 1942, in New York City, NY. Dr. Bath earned a bachelor's degree from Hunter College and her medical degree from Howard University. Interning in New York City in the 1960s she became the first African American to complete an ophthalmology residency. During her residency Dr. Bath noticed that rates of blindness and visual impairment were much higher at the Harlem Hospital's eye clinic, which served many black patients, than at the eye clinic at Columbia University, which mostly served whites. She then initiated a study that found twice the rate of blindness among African Americans compared with whites. Throughout the rest of her career, Dr. Bath explored inequities in vision care. Dr. Bath believed that "eyesight is a basic human right." She created the discipline of community ophthalmology, which approaches vision care from the perspectives of community medicine and public health.



Dr. Bath had many other accomplishments during her lifetime, including co-founding the American Institute for the Prevention of Blindness in 1976, which supports programs that protect, preserve, and restore eyesight. Dr. Bath was also the first woman appointed chair of ophthalmology at a U.S. medical school, at the University of California, Los Angeles David Geffen School of Medicine in 1983. And she was the first black female physician to receive a medical patent in 1988 for the Laserphaco Probe, a device used in cataract surgery.