



**Metropolitan Water
Reclamation District
of Greater Chicago**



2022 MWRD

AFRICAN AMERICAN

HISTORY MONTH

Leonidas Harris Berry, MD

Leonidas Harris Berry, MD, was born on July 20, 1902, in Woodsdale, OH. Dr. Berry earned a bachelor's degree from Wilberforce University, a bachelor's degree from the University of Chicago, an M.D. degree from the Rush Medical College of the University, and an M.S. degree in Pathology from the University of Illinois Medical School.

A renowned gastroenterologist, Dr. Berry faced racism in the workplace. He was the first black doctor on staff at Michael Reese Hospital in Chicago, Illinois, in 1946, but he had to fight for an attending position there for years. He was finally named to the attending staff in 1963 and remained a senior attending physician for the rest of his medical career.

Dr. Berry retired from the Cook County Hospital in Chicago, IL in 1975 as chief of endoscopy and senior attending physician.

Dr. Berry was also a teacher, writer, and active in community public service. He also invented a gastroscopic instrument. In the 1950s, Dr. Berry chaired a Chicago commission that worked to make hospitals more inclusive for black physicians and to increase facilities in underserved parts of the city. But his dedication to equity reached far beyond the clinical setting: he was active in a civil rights group called the United Front that provided protection, monetary support, and other assistance to black residents of Cairo, Illinois who had been victims of racist attacks. In 1970, he helped organize the Flying Black Medics, a group of practitioners who flew from Chicago to Cairo to bring medical care and health education to members of the remote community.

