

National Association of EMS Educators
250 Mt. Lebanon Boulevard Suite 209
Pittsburgh, PA 15234

P: (412) 343-4775
F: (412) 343-4770



NAEMSE Salutes Freedom House Ambulance Service

In honor of Black History Month, the National Association of EMS Educators (NAEMSE) salutes Freedom House Ambulance Service. Freedom House began with a team of all-Black male paramedics in Pittsburgh in the 1960s, becoming the model for EMS care and training in the United States. These all-Black Freedom House paramedics were the nation's first paramedics, with some accounts crediting them as the world's first paramedics. They were passionate caregivers trained to provide more advanced care than basic first aid, which was customary in the pre-hospital setting during that time. Freedom House was created to provide exceptional care, which combated the racism-driven discriminatory practices and inequities in emergency healthcare services to a predominately Black community in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. A noteworthy accomplishment of Freedom House was its mortality rate of less than 2%. In comparison, despite advances in medicine and technology, current data reveals an EMS ground transportation mortality rate of around 12 to 14%.

Unfortunately, still today, there is clear and convincing evidence that racism in emergency medical services is negatively impacting communities across the country within all phases of EMS care (utilization, assessment, diagnosis, treatment, transport, and outcomes) provided for racial minorities that Freedom House sought to remedy in the 1960s and 70s. We acknowledge that there is still work to be done to ensure that all patients receive the highest quality of care. NAEMSE is committed to being a force for change to foster equity and address systemic racism and inequities in EMS. Achieving socially equitable healthcare services requires a brave, reflective, and collaborative pursuit. We appreciate the efforts of the EMS professionals who champion equity and take active and purposeful anti-racist actions in the classroom and the field. We invite all members to join the NAEMSE DEIB Committee to help advance our endeavor for equity in EMS education and care.

Please email kayla.remai@naemse.org to express interest in joining the DEIB Committee or with any DEIB Committee-related questions.

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NAEMSE DEIB Committee