

# NATIONAL HEALTH EQUITY | GRAND ROUNDS

## Linda Villarosa

Contributor, *The New York Times Magazine*

Speaker, Creating Accountability Through Data: From Racism and Neglect to Transparency and Repair



Linda Villarosa's contribution to *The New York Times'* Pulitzer Prize-winning 1619 Project highlights race-based physiological myths that have endured in medical practice since slavery. The idea that Black people have a superhuman tolerance for pain began during slavery as a way to justify the institution and to continue torturing Black bodies, and the idea has endured to this day. As recently as 2016, nearly half of medical students and residents still held at least one fallacious slavery-era assumption that Black bodies are fundamentally different from white bodies, including the idea that Black people have physically thicker skin, different nerve endings, or blood that coagulates differently. An expanded version of her essay was included in the book *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story*.

As a longtime writer and editor for *The New York Times*, Villarosa has explored many of these issues in reported pieces over the years. She has written about staggeringly high death rates from HIV/AIDS in Black gay and bisexual communities; the disproportionate toll COVID-19 has taken on Black communities in America; and the environmental justice movement in Philadelphia. A 2021 essay focused on the difference in life expectancy in predominantly Black and white Chicago neighborhoods—depending on the zip codes the gap can be as much as 30 years difference.

A member of the Association of LGBTQ Journalists (NLGJA) Hall of Fame, Villarosa has been recognized with numerous awards from organizations including The American Medical Writers' Association, The Arthur Ashe Institute, Lincoln University, the New York Association of Black Journalists, the National Women's Political Caucus, and the Callen-Lorde Community Health Center. In 2017, her *New York Times Magazine* cover story "America's Hidden HIV Epidemic" was honored with an Excellence in Journalism Award from NLGJA. Her 2018 cover story on infant and maternal mortality in Black mothers and babies was a finalist for the National Magazine Award.

Villarosa is the editor of *Body & Soul: The Black Women's Guide to Physical Health and Emotional Well-Being*. Her novel, *Passing for Black*, was nominated for a Lambda Literary Award.

She is a graduate of the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at the City University of New York where she is a professor and journalist in residence. She also teaches journalism, English and Black Studies at the City College of New York.