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ART OF MEDICINE

A Clinical Encounter in Historical Context

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Abstract

This drawing considers the importance of understanding history's role in contextualizing many patients' present-day health care experiences.

Figure. *Bandage and Bondage*



Media

Procreate®.

Perhaps the patient in this drawing recognizes her own place in a historical narrative. A well-intentioned nurse might have no idea about how constriction for blood pressure measurement could trigger **transgenerational fear** in an African American patient whose pulse beats in her arm like a drum, taking her back 200 years when Africans in bondage were medically abused.

James Marion Sims (1813-1883) is credited with being the “Father of American Gynecology,”¹ although his victims—Anarcha, Betsey, Lucy, and more—have been largely

unacknowledged.² At right, this drawing echoes *J. Marion Sims: Gynecologic Surgeon*, a 1952 painting by Robert Thom,³ reminding viewers about forgotten “Mothers of Gynecology.”⁴ Sims is also credited with inventing the modern-day speculum,¹ which has not been significantly improved since the 1840s,⁵ as many women today can attest. Although racially diversifying practitioners won’t solve **structural inequity** alone,⁶ a historically conscious clinician might empathize with patients of color.

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