

A Statement on the Complex Legacy of Dr. Albert Schweitzer

The Chicago Area Schweitzer Fellowship has long been inspired by the model of service set by Dr. Albert Schweitzer. His commitment to working in Gabon, West Africa and to a life lived for others remains foundational to our mission. With the passage of time and owing to our more culturally attuned and globally informed thinking, Dr. Schweitzer's work has faced scrutiny, world wide. As we have revisited Schweitzer's full legacy, including his explicitly racist writings about Africans, which he did not revise, we have found it essential to address these contradictions directly.

Renewed focus on Dr. Schweitzer's work internationally has prompted our Chicago Chapter of the Schweitzer Fellowship to revisit his work and our connection to his legacy. We undertook a deliberate process of listening and learning, hosting multiple sessions with Fellows, program alumni (Fellows for Life), community organizations, academic partners, and funders to gather feedback and perspectives. We also consulted with our Schweitzer Fellowship program partners at the national level. These conversations allowed us to thoughtfully revisit Dr. Schweitzer's legacy and examine how it aligns with our ongoing commitment to community engagement, social justice, advocacy, health professions' training, and health equity.

As a program committed to health equity, serving communities, and promoting anti-racist practices, we believe it's our responsibility to illuminate the complexities of Dr. Schweitzer's legacy. While we acknowledge the good he accomplished, we repudiate his racist statements and recognize that individuals and their histories are complex. Our Fellows and Fellows for Life carry forward a different kind of legacy: one that actively confronts injustice, centers the voices of those most impacted by health disparities, and seeks to do better because we now know better.

The Chicago Area Schweitzer Fellowship continues to embody its mission through intentional practice and purpose by:

- **Inclusive Selection:** We recruit and select Fellows who reflect the diversity of our city by bringing together individuals with diverse cultural and racial backgrounds, varied lived experiences, socioeconomic status, and academic disciplines.
- **Community Partnerships:** Our Fellows are prepared to engage communities with humility, entering as partners and allies, not as saviors, but as collaborators in creating change.
- **Sustainable Impact:** We train Fellows to approach community work thoughtfully, ensuring that their projects are sustainable and grounded in community assets and genuine relationships.
- **Equity-Focused Curriculum:** Our program centers health equity and diversity as core elements of learning and leadership development.

- **Lifelong Network:** Our alumni remain connected through a “Fellows for Life” network that continues to advance social justice, health equity, and community well-being.

We remain committed to service that centers equity, humility, partnership, and an evolving, justice-centered future. The work of our Fellows, both past and present, speaks volumes about our dedication to building a better legacy together.