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*Dr. Watkins left an indelible impact on medical education and health care equity at our institution, and we are proud to continue his legacy.*



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## A Tribute to Dr. Watkins

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Dr. Watkins, who preferred to be called Levi, was a trailblazer and visionary.

Levi was a world-renowned cardiac surgeon and his career included a number of monumental firsts: In 1966, he was the first African-American medical student admitted to Vanderbilt University. In 1978, he was the first black chief resident in cardiac surgery at The Johns Hopkins Hospital. In 1980, here at Johns Hopkins, he performed the world's first implantation of an automatic heart defibrillator in a human, a procedure that since has been performed more than one million times and has saved tens of thousands of lives. In 1991, he became the first African-American at Johns Hopkins promoted to full professor of cardiac surgery. That same year, he was named the first African-American Associate Dean in the School of Medicine and established the nation's first postdoctoral association – of which more than 50 such organizations now exist across the country - helping to revolutionize the culture of postdoctoral education in the United States.

In addition to his profession as a cardiac surgeon, Levi was a relentless advocate for fairness and diversity. After joining the School of Medicine's admissions committee in 1979, he launched a one-man drive to recruit minority applicants. He wrote letters to qualified candidates and urged them to apply to Johns Hopkins, then held annual welcoming and networking receptions for those who had applied and were accepted. By 1983, minority representation in the school had soared by 400 percent.

Because of his efforts, Levi was admired for his commitment to inclusion and equity among not only medical students, trainees and faculty but also employees and patients within Johns Hopkins Medicine and the greater Baltimore community. His untimely death in 2015 left Johns Hopkins with an indelible impact on medical education and health care equity. Today, we are proud continue his legacy and efforts, along with a reception held in his honor each fall to welcome new minority trainees and faculty.