



INVENTOR & DOCTOR PATRICIA BATH

In 1942, Patricia Bath was born in Harlem, New York to two hardworking parents, Gladys and Rupert. Rupert was the city's first Black motorman who spent his days operating subway trains. Gladys worked as a home-maker until her children were grown, when she took jobs housekeeping for others. Rupert and Gladys encouraged their children to read often and try hard in school. They dreamed their children would have opportunities that weren't available to them.

As a young child, Patricia loved science. She found it easy to follow her parents' advice because she enjoyed studying and learning. She did so well in high school that she graduated when she was just 16 years old! She won grants that paid for her to research topics in medicine. As a teenager, she hunted for answers to questions about cancer, stress, and nutrition. She worked alongside doctors and started to wonder, "should I become a doctor too?"

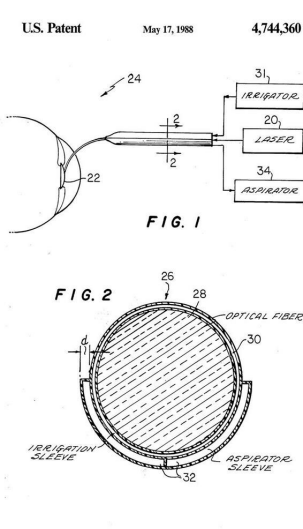


Patricia decided to go to medical school so she could continue her research and learn how to treat patients. She studied ophthalmology, the branch of medicine that deals with eyes and sight. Restoring sight to the blind was Patricia's dream!

Most ophthalmologists at the time were white men, and Patricia had to work extra hard to prove her talent. She earned many “firsts” in her career. She was the first Black ophthalmology resident at New York University medical school. When she graduated, she was the first female ophthalmologist to join the staff at UCLA. As a skilled doctor and researcher, she rose to the top of her field. She was invited to lead hospitals in Africa and Europe.



In 1981, she had an idea that revolutionized surgery in America. She traveled to Berlin to learn more about how German doctors were using lasers in surgery. This exploration turned Patricia into an inventor. She created a way to use lasers to treat cataracts, a common issue that causes people’s vision to get cloudy as they age. Her invention, called the Laserphaco Probe, received a patent, making Patricia the first Black woman to hold a patent for medical technology.



Patricia says the best moment of her career was using the Laserphaco Probe to help a woman who had been blind for 30 years! Today, doctors across the world use Patricia’s technology to help people. Her work has already saved or restored the vision of over one million people!