

## Why are black children with autism rarely diagnosed?

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.**

For most of the 20th century, black people were invisible to the medical establishment — not just because they were autistic, but because they were autistic and black. Not one of the 11 children that Kanner described in his landmark 1943 paper — the one that put autism on the map of American psychiatry — was black, even though many of the patients seen at Johns Hopkins were low-income people of color.

Nine of Kanner's original patients came from Anglo-Saxon stock and two were Jewish. Noting the preponderance of academics and professionals — including professors, lawyers, chemists, and psychiatrists — among his patients' parents and relatives, Kanner became convinced that these children's condition was related, in some way, to their will to achieve and their elevated socio-economic status.

Dorothy Groomer, the mother of a young African-American man named Steven, explained to the makers of the 2002 documentary *Refrigerator Mothers* that “a whole team of doctors” from the University of Illinois refused to diagnose her son with autism, though he displayed all of the classic signs. “They said, ‘No — it may be an emotional disturbance, but it was not autism.’ We did not fit the classic mold for autism, which is white, upper middle class, and very, very bright.”

**Read full, original post:** [The Invisibility of Black Autism](#)