

# AMWA's Linda Brodsky Memorial Journal

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The path to becoming a physician has been challenging, however, it would have been impossible without the support system that I have gained over the years. When I first decided to embark on this journey in high school, I based my decision to enter the medical field on my desire to serve communities that do not have access to health care. I always felt the need to serve others. However, at that point in my life, I did not truly know the steps that would lead me to becoming a physician, I simply considered the end result and the impact that I could make on individuals.

My parents immigrated from Haiti and though they taught my siblings and I the importance of education, I was the only one who took their advice to heart. I began college in the Fall of 2005 at the University of Connecticut and quickly realized that college was completely different than high school. I struggled with the basic sciences despite my efforts and my advisor at the time made it clear to me that with my grades I would never be a physician. However, I remained steadfast in my dream to become a physician and managed to get through my first year. At the beginning of my second year Dr. Ruth Washington was appointed as my advisor in the Molecular and Cell Biology Department. I recall our first meeting where she asked me, "Who is your mentor?" I was taken aback by her question because no one had ever asked me that and I could not think of one person that held that role. No one in my community had ever gone to college, let alone medical school. I replied embarrassingly, "I don't have one" and Dr. Washington said to me, "Well, we're going to get you one." While she may have not realized it, at that very moment she became my mentor.

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Throughout my time at University of Connecticut, Dr. Washington had been a support system not only to me, but other minority students. At that time, Dr. Washington was the only female African American Associate Professor in the MCB department. She went beyond her role as an advisor and truly strived to promote diversity in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Dr. Washington in conjunction with the University of Connecticut School of Medicine initiated the Pre-College Academic Enrichment Program that focused on targeting college bound minority high school students to consider a career in the sciences. The summer research program enabled minority students to gain experience in research, network with the school of medicine, and prepare for the rigorous science curriculum of medical school. As a result of Dr. Washington's efforts several minority students are graduating from the University of Connecticut every year and pursuing a career in medicine. The experiences I gained through working with Dr. Washington directly helped me get to medical school. I know there are many students who are just like me, who come from a disadvantaged background looking for someone to give them guidance and encouragement. Like Dr. Washington, one day I strive to be a mentor with the hopes of encouraging minority students to become physicians.

