

AMWA's Linda Brodsky Memorial Journal

Volume 1, July 2014

Rimeshia Thomas

University of Washington
School of Medicine

A leader who is honest and empathetic: these are some of the characteristics often used to describe an excellent doctor. These are also the qualities I would use to define an exceptional mentor. These virtues are just the tip of the proverbial iceberg when it comes to my mentor Dr. Jocelyn Freeman Garrick. Standing at only five feet tall, Dr. Garrick commands the attention of anyone in her vicinity by radiating intelligence, professionalism, and compassion. It is with the utmost respect that I say I aspire to be the type of doctor she has become.

I first had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Garrick in 2007 when she came to speak at an event held on the University of California, Berkeley's campus. As a first year, I possessed little clarity as to what my future career entailed. The idea of health was appealing, but I still had no understanding of where I belonged in that realm. Hearing Dr. Garrick speak about her life enabled me to envision myself as a physician. At that time, I knew she was the type of role model I needed in my life, but was unsure of how to approach her. As a result, the opportunity passed me by. It was not until years later that I was able to connect with her, and it was those interactions that catapulted me towards my dream of becoming a doctor.

Upon graduating the University of California, Berkeley, I was at a crossroads. I was not ready to tackle the challenge of medical school yet I doubted my decision to take time off. In my state of confusion, I reached out to Dr. Garrick. She responded immediately and encouraged me to apply to various clinical programs that she knew of in the Bay Area. With her encouragement, I participated in the Mentoring in Medicine Clinical Exposure Program (MIM). This program allowed me to experience different fields such as Emergency, Pediatrics, and Orthopedic Sur-

gery. I assisted staff with procedures such as EKGs, ultrasounds, and other hands on skills, in addition to participating in public health workshops and journal clubs at the hospital. I gained insight into different fields of the health profession and an understanding of administrative challenges that county hospitals face. All these aspects confirmed my desire to be a physician who serves underrepresented communities, because I saw how great the need was for doctors who reflect and relate to the population they serve.

As the founder and president of MIM, Dr. Garrick impressed upon all of the program participants the gravity of embarking on a career in medicine and the need for hard work and perseverance. She constantly supported and advised me on multiple professional and personal issues – even offering at one point to assist me with the financial burden of applying for medical school. Through her, I realized the importance of mentorship and the need to give back to others, making me extremely passionate about mentorship.

What knowledge do I have to offer? How can others learn from my mistakes? These are just some of the questions I ask myself now that I am a medical student at the University of Washington, School of Medicine. I want to offer other students of color the support that was given to me. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once stated, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'what are you doing for others?'" and this is essentially how I view mentorship. I continually aim to assist and support others. After all, isn't that what was done so selflessly for me?

“Through Dr. Garrick, I realized the importance of mentorship and the need to give back to others.”

