

## **DNPs of Color Origin Story**

Danielle McCamey, *DNP, CRNP, ACNP-BC, FCCP*, is passionate about bringing diversity and inclusion to the nursing community. As a professional who attended her Doctoral Nursing Program at a predominantly white institution where she was the only Black woman, being without peers with whom she identified, Danielle felt a lack of support. Danielle was well aware of Communities of Color lacking community and networks. She immediately recognized the power of networking and the need to impact Communities of Color by increasing diversity in Doctoral Nursing Programs and elevating nurses of color who hold a Doctorate degree. Furthermore, awareness that patients' trust in the healthcare system is elevated by seeing practitioners of color with whom they can relate to, motivating them to take care of themselves and adhere to their treatment plans, she became a trailblazer for other women of color. Danielle's mantra is, "Don't let your circumstances define you rather refine and redefine them."

Healthcare inequities among Communities of Color is well documented. Statistics prove Black and Brown persons do not receive the same standards of care as their white counterparts, oftentimes resulting in unnecessary deaths, untreated and undiagnosed cancers, and insufficient care for birthing women. The implicit bias amongst providers not belonging to Communities of Color not only negatively impacts patient care and outcomes, but results in preventable traumas. As such, DNPs of Color was born out of Danielle's passion to change the landscape of the medical community, eliminating underrepresentation in clinical practice, academia, and leadership, inspiring and empowering a more diverse and inclusive nursing population. The organization of frontline workers began in 2009 as a Facebook group focused on supporting these communities and has grown internationally; their DOCs Institute now has over 2,000 members.

Through advocacy, DNPs of Color strengthens the voices of communities, provides psychological support to nursing professionals feeling isolated via mentorship programs, and expands networks for persons of color holding or working to pursue a Doctor of Nursing so they are fully represented with the medical community. Through DNPs three-tier approach, they further work as a catalyst for change, addressing the gross exclusion, discrimination, and marginalization experienced by persons of color working in the nursing arena.

The 2018/2019 report analyzing enrollment statistics in graduate nursing programs, issued by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, reveals persons from Black and Brown communities represent only 34.6% of students. Specifically, the disproportionate breakdown for enrollment in graduate nursing programs consists of 4, 523 Whites, 380 Hispanics or Latinos, 420 Asians, 50 Native Americans or Alaskan Natives, 28 Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders, and 120 from two or more additional culture groups. However, because of the work DNPs of Color is doing, the 2021 data published by Campaign for Action shows an increase to 50,000 individuals from Communities of Color receiving their Doctor of Nursing from accredited programs over the past decade.

Culturally, Black persons, as well as persons from other communities of color, take on the responsibility of representing their entire communities. This pressure is precipitated by their being required by white society to switch and assimilate to their surroundings, downplay their Blackness, and ignore their authentic selves. Counteracting expectations of assimilation, DNPs of Color validates students of color in Doctoral Nursing Programs across the globe.

As with COVID-19, global pandemics call attention to the insidious nature and permeation of racism in the healthcare industry. DNPs of Color and organizations with the same mission foster psychological safety by providing a safe haven for providers bearing the burden of witnessing the devastation ensued by the disproportionate effect of pandemics and racism on Communities of Color.

DNPs of Color is positively impacting society by working to eliminate healthcare inequities, increase diversity and inclusion, and create opportunities for engagement in clinical practice, academic, leadership and research, bridging the gap in their educational programs. They (1) create opportunities, (2) inspire nurses, (3) empower and uplift professionals, and transform the nursing practice.

## **DNPs of Color Persuasive Narrative for Annual Conference**

DNPs of Color launch in 2020, in response to the lack of community for nurses of color that had or were in pursuit of their Doctorate in Nursing Degree. Today, DNPs of Color has nearly 1,500 members nationwide. DNPs of Color serves as a safe space and source of support, encouragement, inspiration, and validation. Members have garnered mentorships and fostered numerous professional connections and networking opportunities.

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In addition to the multiple educational programs DNPs of Color offers, focusing on professional development and community mentoring opportunities, they launch their first Annual Conference in 2001 which had over 200 registrants and 50 sponsors. Since last year, DNPs of Color has grown exponentially and now has key partnerships with multiple nursing organizations which has established the organization as of credibility.

This October, DNPs of Color will hold their second Annual Conference. In part, the conference will highlight their partnership with JONAS which established a Pathways to Publication Program. The program was born out of the realization that, due to a lack of support, confidence, and schools, 60% of people of color had not published their dissertations within one year of completing their Nursing Doctorate Programs. The conference will also provide updates on the DOCs Institute responsible for implementing a Post-DNP Research Fellowship, Post-DNP Faculty of Color Fellowship, Post-DNP Clinician & Leadership Fellowship, and Journal of DNPs of Color.

The 2022 conference theme is “Changing the Game and Forging New Paths,” building on last year's theme “DOCs at The Table” promoting diversity and transforming nursing practice. Society has recognized the current state of the world and healthcare, and how diversity impacts the outcomes for the way we work, how we practice, and how we care for our patients and families.

“Changing the Game” is focused on ways DOCs can find innovative and transformative ways to impact nursing practice. “Forging New Paths” is the acknowledgement of the importance of evolution.