

Personal Statement

Introduction

“Why?” is a question that has had more influence on my life than any other question. The question was not always welcomed, growing up in rural Virginia it can be seen as rude. Regardless, I never stopped asking. As I approached my teenage years I began seeking answers to every “Why?” As I experienced life more and began to notice patterns in society, my “Why?” focused on politics. I developed a love for psychology and sociology because they helped me gain understanding of why society functions the way that it does. They sparked a desire in me to further explore and to critically think. This shifted my attention to philosophy. Wanting to know the answers to abstract questions challenged me to look outside of what I knew, in order to unlock a perspective that I never had. There were pros and cons to this, while it challenged me to think outside the box, it gave me an understanding of why the box may be there in the first place. I learned that there is safety in boundaries as long as boundaries do not become prisons of stagnation. There have been irreplaceable lessons I have received with every “Why?” asked. “Why?” is a question that has helped bring me where I am today. I even foresee “Why?” being a vital question in my future career.

Body

I am currently an undergraduate research assistant for Dr. Denise McKinney here at ODU. Despite being a true researcher at heart, in high school I never considered including research in my higher education. Partially because I did not know research was an option in undergrad, but also because I did not make the connection that what I did on a daily basis was actually research. It was not in a formal research setting but I had the curiosity, mind and desire to know the truth, like every genuine researcher has. I am a McNair scholar. McNair is a program for students with a passion for research and a desire to go to graduate school. McNair students must either be first generation and/or low income students, and the program is designed to increase the number of students in those categories to go to graduate school. Being a part of McNair is truly a blessing for me. The support from the program truly surpassed my expectations and I look forward to excelling and making the most of the opportunity.

I plan on pursuing a masters degree before later pursuing an MD with a specialty in gynecology and obstetrics. Matter of fact, research has not only led me to working with outstanding professors and the McNair program but it also led me to my career path. As a teenager I developed a deep interest in researching African American history. After a while I researched current issues in black community and learned how modern day racism functions. That led me to specifically studying discrepancies in American healthcare towards black americans. Then things became even more niche - as research does. I combined my interest in maternal and fetal health with my interest in research and I began to study maternal and fetal health outcomes in the black community. The results were devastating; I found that black women were 2-3x more likely to experience maternal mortality compared to women of other races. This is due to an abundance of reasons however, the most common explanation typically boils down to not being taken seriously during moments of urgency.

After continuing that research I found that the issue of not being heard is not only an issue for black women, while there is a higher likelihood that black women will experience being

disregarded due to medical prejudice, it is common for all women to feel unheard and misunderstood in the delivery room. This has sparked conversations about greater autonomy and consideration for women in the delivery room. As a future doctor I am making it my business to take notes now so that no patient has to experience this under my care.

Conclusion

I have a great road ahead of me and while it is lengthy I intend to make the most out of it. I am so appreciative that every experience I have had so far in life prepares me perfectly for future experiences. My journey has proven to me that my steps are ordered and that God looks out for me in every way. I know that the day is near where my new title will be Dr. Bennett, not truly because of undergrad, graduate or medical school, but truly because I have the heart of a caregiver with a desire to be the difference.