

Northwestern Department of Surgery

D.E.I. Committee Newsletter

June 2022

MUCH TO CELEBRATE

The late spring and early summer bring much to celebrate. In 1991, The Bush (H.W.) Administration passed a public law officially recognizing the month of May as Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month. June welcomes warmer Chicago temperatures and officially celebrates Caribbean American Heritage, LGBTQ+ Pride, and also Juneteenth.

Juneteenth:

Juneteenth is a federal holiday commemorating the emancipation of enslaved African Americans. Historical Perspective: Although the Emancipation Proclamation was made effective in 1863, it could not be fully implemented/enforced in many places across the US. On June 19, 1865, Union Army general Gordon Granger proclaimed freedom for enslaved people in Texas, two years after the Emancipation Proclamation. The day came to be known as "Juneteenth", and now broadly celebrates African American culture. Celebrations include community service, singing, reading of the emancipation proclamation, and highlighting notable African American works from luminaries like Maya Angelou.



Above:

The Maya Angelou quarter: the first U.S. coin honoring an African American woman.

Did you hear? Northwestern Medicine is opening a new location in Bronzeville!

Rhiannon Weathers (Program Asst., Department of Surgery) reflects:

I am glad to see NM serve in Bronzeville, where remaining pockets of addiction, food insecurity and chronic illness issues will have a chance to be addressed. This neighborhood deserves that investment; there are many working hard to take care of their families in the community.



Juneteenth Links (Click!):

[Historical Legacy of Juneteenth](#)

[History of Juneteenth](#)

Below:

Dr. Raheem Bell, with his daughter Naomi, wife Arielle, and dog, Amani.

Caribbean American Heritage:

The DEI Committee caught up with newly minted PGY-2, Dr. Raheem Bell, for a discussion on Caribbean American Heritage.

Dr. Bell, how has your heritage shaped your success and the person you are today? What brings you joy about your heritage and culture?

Jamaica was my first home, a place that has been a lifeline for me as an immigrant in the United States, a place with its own complex past and current history. As a Jamaican, my roots are ones of pride, perseverance, and unity. We take pride in our work and relationships, though it is in a collective sense rather than a boastful one. In our eyes, each person and their contribution- no matter how big or small- has worth that is to be respected. We also take pride in our history and world figures, who led our people to independence. During some of my lowest moments, I have turned to Bob Marley's music, letting myself feel the calm in his voice and drawing on his profound messaging of peace and perseverance. His words remind me of the bigger picture of life, and the community that is always with me. There's a relaxed nature that comes with being a community of island people, but our calm is coupled with our contrasting spirited expressions and our historic and continued demand for equality for all people, regardless of status, gender, race, etc.

On barriers and overcoming them: My presence at this level is one of rarity, and though I appreciate celebrating my heritage and culture, this rarity is not something I wish for. This "unicorn effect" brings a sense of heightened attention and responsibility in complicated ways. We should question why I and others from diverse backgrounds appear as unicorns and we should recognize the weight which comes from this identity.



Caribbean American Heritage (cont):

Does your family have any traditions that are especially important to you? Does having children change the way you think about your heritage and culture?

Growing up in Jamaica, one of family's my most memorable traditions was our celebration of Christmas and New Year's. Every Christmas, our town would have a huge festival that would go all day and well into the night; everyone from the community would partake. On New Year's Day, my immediate and extended family would cook several traditional dishes including jerk chicken and our traditional rum cake. We would travel to a place in Jamaica called Duns River Falls, a serene oasis where one can walk through gently tumbling waterfalls. Our family would arrive early, our hands full of food to share and enjoy, and would spend the day together into the night. It was the tradition I most looked forward to growing up. Now, as I raise my own daughter, I think of the traditions and times of togetherness that have meant so much to me in my upbringing. It's very important to me that my daughter learn her historical and cultural roots. I wish for her to meet her extended family still in the rural areas in my home country, to learn our language, and to experience our traditions. I would love for her to know the history of her people and the strength, pride, and collective identity that comes with being Jamaican. As she navigates an ever-changing world, I hope that she can appreciate and find beauty in the complexity of her Jamaican, Irish, and Scottish identity. I wish for her to feel comfort and pride in her Black skin and its roots and to be fearless in her passions, knowing that there is a community forever seeing her worth.



Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage:

The DEI Committee caught up with Plastic Surgery Attending, Dr. Sumanas Jordan, for a discussion on AAPI Heritage.

How has your heritage shaped your success and the person you are today? What brings you joy about your heritage and culture?

While not intentional, I suppose that Buddhist philosophies have shaped my path. I am where I am, doing what I do, from living in the present and following the people who need help in this moment.

What barriers have you faced along the way related to your heritage or otherwise? How did you overcome them?

Being a small Asian woman, I do not fit the stereotype of a surgeon or a leader. Now that I'm older, I see how it affected my parents and their careers, and how they encouraged me to ignore the stereotypes. I have long felt that I have been lucky to not have been impacted by bias and discrimination, but perhaps I have been lucky to not have realized it along the way.

Dr. Jordan, would you discuss the Gender Pathways program, especially since it is Pride month!

I am proud of the NM community's embrace of the Gender Pathways Program. I could not have imagined the overwhelming support from our staff and faculty for our LGBTQ+ patients. Our mission is to support the health of transgender & gender diverse individuals across the lifespan. We are well on our way to becoming the premier regional destination for the highest quality, evidence-based healthcare driven by integrity and respect for the individual.

In addition to patient care, the GPP is an open resource for NM faculty and staff who want to learn more about transgender and gender diverse populations. A great first step is to normalize introductions with pronouns and to ask and document our patients' name, pronouns and gender identity in the charts.

Dr. Sumanas Jordan, MD, PhD:

Assistant Professor of Surgery (Plastic Surgery), and family (lower image).

Dr. Jordan, any favorite movies, Netflix binges, hobbies or interests?

"Besides my children, my joy is in my garden. I am particularly fond of growing old garden roses that can survive a Chicago winter. "

PRIDE Resources (Click!):

[Feinberg LGBTQ Out List](#)

[Feinberg LGBTQ Ally List](#)

[NM Gender Pathways Program](#)