

Mark Twain has often been cited as saying, "The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why." I've found this trope to be slightly incomplete because it confines the realization of purpose to a twenty-four-hour period. In my experience, the complete cognizance of purpose is more similar to a slow boil: a process that takes place over a long period of time, cultivated by curiosity and experience, resulting in insatiable passion. The passion I have for medicine is not the product of a spark of divine inspiration or a particular event; rather, it has developed over the course of my life and has been catalyzed by inquiry, introspection and encounters with medicine. My curious nature in combination with my love for the biological sciences, desire to form impactful relationships, and passion for serving others has driven me towards a career in medicine.

In the summer of 2014, I had the opportunity of participating in the Minority Introduction to the Health Sciences (MITHS) program at ██████████. MITHS served as a significant milestone in my journey towards medicine because it enabled me to interact with medical professionals, get a preview of medical school, and observe medicine in action. While I don't remember every physiology lecture I attended or every question I asked the panel of doctors who spoke to us, I vividly recall every detail of my first experience in the OR. The jovial mood set by laughing and taking pictures in our comically large surgical scrubs quickly turned solemn once we entered the operating room. While observing a hysterectomy performed by the da Vinci surgical system, my attention cycled from the monitor, the surgeon sitting in the corner of the room, the large da Vinci apparatus, to the numerous other personnel in the room. Prior to this encounter I did not know how much of a team effort surgery was. The concise communication and medical jargon made me feel like I was in a TV show, but the sedated patient lying on the table swiftly brought me back to reality. Later in the day we were allowed into a vacant operating room to manipulate the da Vinci robot. Those watching me place the plastic sticks into their Styrofoam holder were not aware of the open-heart surgery going on in my head. This surreal experience added kindling to my growing interest in medicine.

While MITHS gave me exposure to the scientific and academic side of medicine, my shadowing experiences revealed to me the beauty of the patient-physician relationship. During my time shadowing Dr. ██████████, a family practice physician, I was able to observe a quintessentially healthy patient-physician interaction. Dr. ██████████ and his patient were good friends who went to the same church and shared a common interest in golfing. Throughout the appointment the two engaged in casual, but endearing conversation covering the topics of boating, loneliness, and putting strategies. Near the end of the physical, Dr. ██████████' role switched from friend to physician when made aware that his patient had not fulfilled his promise to quit smoking. Dr. ██████████ delivered a short monologue ending with the simple but poignant phrase, "you need to quit this because we're playing for keeps". This interaction accentuated the fluidity of the patient-physician relationship, showed the visceral connection that it provides, and helped consolidate my plans to pursue medicine. I very much look forward to establishing these dynamic relationships with my patients.

Racial and ethnic disparities are significant in many professional fields and, despite significant advancements in recent years, medicine is not an exception. African-Americans, especially Black males, continue to be underrepresented. I believe that getting more young African Americans interested in medicine and qualified for medical school is paramount in order to reverse the adverse health trends that plague the African-American population. This conviction sparked my desire to be a part of the solution and led me to be a counselor for the MITHS program. The road to medicine can be an uphill battle, especially for young Black men and women. As a MITHS counselor, I was able to be a supporter for their success and a mentor throughout their arduous path to medicine. My position in club office has also allowed me to help others explore their passions. As vice president of ██████████ Biomedical Association, a biological sciences club for premedical students, I spearheaded the

inception of the OBMA Peer Mentorship Program. This allowed our club to utilize the knowledge of our upperclassmen to guide underclassmen in their pursuit of collegiate success and acceptance into professional school. The world needs more passionate doctors. I plan on being one of them and I am committed to helping others realize their goals in medicine as well.

Passion is unique to every individual. I am glad that my passion has found a permanent residence in the medical field. The amalgamation of the biological sciences, interpersonal connectivity, and a service oriented atmosphere makes a career in medicine the ultimate intersection of my passions and aptitude. I eagerly anticipate being a physician, thriving on the opportunity to serve, heal, and connect with others.