A. MYRNA NURSE

5. A NEW BLACK GIRLS' CLUB: MENTORING DOCTORAL AND ABD CANDIDATES IN ACADEMIA

INTRODUCTION

Dr Patricia Morris Carey, speaking at the Association of Black Women in Higher Education Annual Fall Conference in October 2012 held at New York University reminded her audience that parents have served as their mentors. Parents have shown by their lives how today we must not retreat from attaining success. Parents have been the ones who inculcated into their children how by example they too can transfer the baton of truth, moral and ethical values, and sound advice to those following in their footsteps.[1] While I was not present at what must have been an inspiring event, I can only imagine its electrifying effect on the audience and be reminded of my own late mother, Mrs Editha Kirton (née Raeburn).

My mother taught kindergarten for thirty-six years in the country of Trinidad and Tobago before retiring to the US in 1977. Upon her passing in 2003, my eldest sister[2] who lived there reported that she received many unexpected words of condolences from mom's former students who celebrated her positive influence in their lives. My mother did not regard that her role ended with teaching her pupils their ABCs and 123s. Mom was on a mission to save their souls and the community of Point Cumana Government School by being an example of Christ-like love. So thorough was her determination, whenever I visited to assist her in the classroom—the site of my own training—I always felt a twinge of jealousy of those kindergarteners who richly benefited from her love and generosity.

For example, my mother's salary stretched to provide a pupil who came to school hungry with breakfast from our own table or decent clothing that we had outgrown. And, while she yelled at us, the fruits of her womb, I marvelled at how gently she corrected her pupils both with soft and but firm words and painless swats from the paddle. What a the difference! The parents also knew that Mrs. Kirton's passion was genuine. They lined up outside her classroom at the end of the school year with gifts from their gardens, kitchens, or whatever "Thank you" token they could afford from the stores. My mother simply recycled the tokens back into the community and hoped that no one was offended at the realization that she saw beyond their sacrificial gestures to the actual needs of the community.

My mother was one of the many non-white women teachers at her school who became my role model. Back then during the 1960s, I had some appreciation for all these strong, non-white women who similarly to my mother had challenged British

A. Vongalis-Macrow (Ed.), Career Moves: Mentoring for Women Advancing Their Career and Leadership in Academia, 47–59.

colonialism in the Caribbean that said black girls were fit for only servant-hood (and everyone knew what masters and mistresses in the privacy of their homes did with and to girls and young women), so well described in Jamaica Kincaid's "Girl."[3] Black women teachers of the pre- and post-Independence years in the Caribbean lived by example their courage to stare into the eye of the tigers of racial, gender, class discrimination, and color-stratification, and by sheer force of will make those tigers retreat. I can still recall from elementary school high-colored Mrs. Roach (Fourth Standard), brown-skinned Mrs. Archibald (Fifth Standard), high-colored Mrs. Honoré (my mother's friend who taught Fifth Standard), and from secondary school Indian Mrs. Solomon (Spanish, Forms I and II), high-colored Mrs. Baptiste (French, Forms I and II), Indian Mrs. Joseph (Geography, Forms III, IV, and V), dark-skinned Miss Thomas (Latin, Forms II and III), light-skinned Miss Mason (Music and Choir), and brown-skinned Miss Valèré (secondary school's Head Mistress).[4]

I attended and completed all of my college education in the US and am grateful for what the country of my adopted citizenship continues to offer me. The best that I can do is give back to society, especially to black women who remain at the bottom of the US's socio-economic ladder. In my college,[5] I teach our newly founded Women's and Gender Studies Minor program's introductory course and use Lynn Weber's *Understanding Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality* as one of the texts. From it, I accentuate to my diverse students of females and males that I am focused upon "lifting as we climb," which includes helping to change single black women from accumulating a mere five dollars on average in wealth, as reported in 2010.[6] Students have always gasped or shaken their heads in disbelief upon learning of this. Then when I ask them to try to calculate how much of the collective wealth of Oprah, Condoleezza Rice, Nicki Minaj, Beyoncé, Halle Berry, Venus and Serena Williams, to name some celebrities, to shift the bar toward the median for white women, $46,000, they are flummoxed.

I suggest to them that education still remains an excellent starting point. Of course, they know that the earning potential for academics is way below any aspiring graduate's point of appreciation—the conundrum of our capitalistic society. Nonetheless, they understand that education still remains a viable option, despite the Diluvian threat of student-loan debts. All the while, I pretend to forget the path being taken by the doctoral and ABD candidates who are not oblivious to the hardships of their chosen path but remain driven by their love of teaching.

I continue to be excited but humbled to be viewed as an example to the doctoral and ABD candidates with whom I interact. At Delaware State University, the state of Delaware's only historically black college and university (HBCU), I interviewed three of the seven who are adjuncts in the Department of English and Foreign Languages, my department. All three are on track to complete their work on schedule. Renay Ford and Ramona Beverly—my mentees—are adhering to a schedule that would allow them to complete their courses then dissertation within the allotted time set by their institution, named below. Dierdre Powell (not one of my mentees) is expecting to complete her

dissertation and defense during the fall semester 2013. They all lend their unique voices to describe how the challenges toward attaining their respective goals can be daunting but now defeating. Renay concretizes her perspective in the metaphor of the building's structure and relies on the African American vernacular to clarify the infrastructural role that mentoring plays. Ramona's story reminds us that we Americans owe a debt that cannot be repaid to the indigenous peoples of this land who must be drawn in greater numbers to higher education. Dierdre limns how adjuncts work on an average of seventy to eighty hours an week as they juggle full-time *and* part-time teaching loads at multiple campuses with graduate course-work. She points out that all adjuncts are burdened with the demand for financial security that affords them benefits, in particular health care. If they were without the support of a working spouse whose health insurance can cover them, like mine did, they would have to rely on free health care and show up at clinics and wait in lines alongside their students. One student during the Summer Session I 2013 informed me of being so shocked to see her instructor at the free health care clinic that she was speechless. Is it any wonder that students find so unappealing work in academia? Dierdre thinks that a union for adjuncts should exist on all college campuses, as a matter of human rights. Who can disagree with her?

I am including the story of one of my lifelong friends, Sandra Grosvenor, from my birth country who completed her PhD in Health Services last year, 2012, at age fifty-something. She persevered because upon my earning my PhD in 1999 I became her beacon of hope, as I became her role model and informal mentor. Sandra speaks of and to the urgency for Africans in the Diaspora to resist superstition or fear of medical experimentation and seek the health care of the medical profession as one's basic and fundamental human right.

I have chosen to have each woman speak for herself, merely reformatting our respective interviews into the narrative mode but being careful not to alter her voice. It was important to all of us, as we spoke, that no one forgets the challenges—and hardships—of completing one's doctoral studies.

RENAY'S VIGNETTE

Renay Ford is currently pursuing her doctoral studies at Wilmington University (Delaware) in Leadership and Education. She completed her BA in English in 2000 and her Master's in Education Curriculum and Instruction in 2004. She is in her forties; has been married for fifteen years; and, has two children, one boy (ten years old) and one girl (five years old). Renay's studies focus on the transition of home-schooled children to the college classroom.

Renay's vignette (personal interview, March 8, 2013) begins with her sharing the value of having a mentor and being mentored as integral to her progress and ultimate success.

For me, the core value of having a mentor is having that second pair of eyes to be able to guide me on this road. I've been out of school for nine years, and I don't

believe that my eyes are as fresh and will see those hidden or unknown pitfalls. So, having a mentor who's experienced the things that I'll experience—has been seasoned in those areas that I expect to become seasoned in—is a benefit. Mentors know the routes their mentees should take and really help to guide them.

Mentors also help to establish really good relationships while helping to build the confidence of the ones whom they are mentoring. It's someone you would obviously trust and able to talk to or give advice on a paper, and things of that nature. But at the same time, a mentor is more than that.

A mentor gives encouragement as well. For me, a mentor is my being encouraged throughout the next years when things might become a little bit more stressful and turbulent. So, I'm really hoping that my mentor, you, will be there the entire time to encourage me and give me that insight that I don't have, so at the same time I can become a mentor to someone else one day.

It's awesome just to have a woman-mentor because sometimes the odds are tremendously stacked against African Americans and African women, as well. But to have a woman to be a mentor, to know just as much as any man of any other race or color is absolutely awesome. It's phenomenal because it allows me or anyone else to see that we don't have to settle for anything. We can do just as much as any man can do. And, having an African American woman do this at the same time, that resiliency in African American women is just absolutely phenomenal. You know, among us African American women, some of us have dual roles. Some of us are mothers, some of us are wives, and being able to balance these roles while at the same time still being strong and nurturing is absolutely phenomenal.

It's for all these reasons that I really wish to emphasize that mentoring really means a lot to me. I couldn't do this by myself. Even with all the different degrees and the amount of intelligence that I have, there is no way I could pursue the doctorate without a mentor. And, there is no way I could do it if I did not have a strong African American woman helping me. Someone, again, who is just able to that extra set or pair of eyes and lead the path and really say, "You can do it, despite what happened, despite the challenge." Someone who's reminding me that I can do it, that these hurdles might seem tremendously high and overwhelming at times, but they can be jumped. You will just come right in there and go with me, all the way. That's what I think about when I think about mentoring.

It's a wonderful sacrifice because you don't get paid for it, not monetarily, but in the end you see the person whom you helped tremendously. That's you. It's not just that person who's graduating. But that's you, what you've invested in that person, you get to see as your investment. When that person is ultimately doing whatever he or she is doing, that's a part of your investment. You took the time to establish so many great things in that person. You see it coming back to you three- and four-fold times. That's absolutely awesome.

Within the broader context, the metaphor that I use regarding mentorship is the building. Mentors are an integral part of the infrastructure, helping with internal

things that no one can see. But they're really helping with the infrastructure of the natural building that people see. Otherwise, you don't have that foundation when that building is a little bit wobbly and it looks like it's not going to stand. Then that mentor comes and re-establishes that infrastructure that will make that great building within the person absolutely stand and not crumble. So, for me mentoring is the building of excellence, which is why I appreciate and love what is happening between you and me.

What I'm talking about here is what I've taken from a part of the African American vernacular. I take from this image of an infrastructure, this building metaphor, the style in which our community is organized and functioning. I see within the community itself different buildings. But each building begins with the foundation that is laid, then the walls, and the infrastructure and so on, all the way to its completion. That to me is mentorship. Then when I talk about the African American vernacular, I see among us no other style that others can mimic. No one can fully imitate what has come from Africa and Africans. We have an infrastructure that is so inborn, and it can never be mimicked or absolutely broken. So, I'm borrowing from our vernacular, the rich language of African people, to connect mentoring to the building's infrastructure. Am I making sense?

We look at the diversity among Africans and African Americans, we see their tall stature, how they very strong, sometimes faltering but regaining their posture. When I teach African American Literature, I emphasize this metaphor to my students. Some of them get it. I absolutely enjoy the most teaching my literature courses. I can return to these works of classical African American literature and find so much richness that I can impart to my students. I know that our common syllabus[7] says that we must start at a particular historical moment. However, how can anyone teach about the enslavement of Africans without going back further into the history of Africa to appreciate the source of this inborn strength and stature that has produced that first pioneer of greatness who didn't have mentor?

So, I go all the way back to Africa and talk about the tribes and kingdoms and pull from them that picture of that big building and say, "Wow! Look at how they built kingdoms during that time. Look at all the avenues of wealth and gold and sources of farming that they had that they had during that time that many people don't know about, nor do they want to take the opportunity to learn that Africans contributed to the world so much!" Dr David Livingston, when living in Africa, wrote that Africa was the closest thing to God that he'd ever seen. He was referring to African people but people said he was talking about the landscape and its natural beauty. I disagree. He saw the beauty in African people, their warmth and hospitality that spoke to him of God. My students can't believe that because some of what they see in today's society is telling no one of God.

All of this is what I have in mind when I talk about a person as an individual building, and the mentor as a playing a strong role in the mentee's life in all these various ways. And especially, how mentoring plays this positive role in the life of the African American woman who could always use that support, that reminder of her

inner strength and greatness. Roads, buildings, Europe meeting Africa, somehow are all related to mentoring because of the positive moments of human interactions with each other. That's what I also see in literature and how I teach it.

While my love and passion is teaching, I don't want to limit myself. So, if after completing the doctorate the opportunity to become the chair of an English department arises, I won't hesitate to accept it. Such is the opportunity to be a role model to others, and to be a mentor, too. However, being an administrator is not my first goal; teaching is. I can be a strong teacher-mentor, I think.

RAMONA'S INTERPOLATION

Ramona Beverly is currently pursuing her doctoral studies at Wilmington University (Delaware) in Education Leadership in Higher Education. Both her bachelor's and master's degrees are in English. She is in her forties. Her studies focus on black and minority women in higher education.

Ramona's confident statement (personal interview, March 8, 2013) reiterates the value of mentoring not only African Americans but the indigenous peoples of this land.

I think mentoring is extremely important at all levels. As a doctoral student, it is extremely important to see how the experiences of being a doctoral student are, of course, different from those of the bachelor's and master's degrees. At this level, your adult responsibilities just seem to loom so much larger, especially if you're a single woman, like me. You have to pay all your bills by yourself: rent or mortgage, utilities, car, health, and so on. You live pay-check to pay-check and hope to make enough money to not accumulate too much debt, which doesn't ever go away. Sometimes it can be so overwhelming. You know what I mean? So to have someone to talk to about that journey to the doctorate, I think it's very essential.

It means a lot because to go into a doctoral program or any graduate program and not have someone to talk to about it is not easy. I think it just makes it a lot easier when you have someone there for you. As a role model for things that hopefully I'll be able to do one day, a few things similar to things that you do. You're an excellent mentor, an excellent role model, doing so many things within the department that it's good to have that exposure to. I see all that you're doing and hope that one day I can do similar things. But I think all that is a part of the process. As a woman, to have another African American woman as a mentor, I think that just adds to the whole experience.

After I finish I want to be able to perhaps achieve some gains, if possible, in the department here at Delaware State. If not, then maybe I can get a fellowship or do some writing about those aspects of Delaware history that not much has been written about that you and I have spoken of in the past.

We've spoken of my mixed ancestry. My mother and my grandmother were Native Americans. My mother was half Native American. The two Indian tribes in

Delaware are the Lenape Tribe (Kent County, Delaware) and the Nanticokes (Sussex County, Delaware). My grandmother was a member of the Lenapes of Cheswold, Delaware. Located in New Jersey are the Lenni Lenapes. All of these tribes are related (like cousins). I do have those roots. However, I think of myself as basically having African American roots and a little Native American.

My focus is primarily in the African American community, but I can see myself also trying to connect with the Native American people, since the area that my grandmother came from is here in the Delaware area. I have not gone back [among them]. I have a cousin who is very active with them, so I would probably be able to connect with my cousin. That would be the lead way into doing something for them because they are a community that in many ways are underserved, as are African Americans.

The Lenapes have a lot of activities going on. Sometimes they bring in speakers who come to help maintain that connection with the people. Back in the fall [2012], my cousin contacted me to invite me to an event being held at a public library in Dover. They [the Lenapes] had organized for a speaker come in and give his history of the tribes here in Delaware, the one in Cheswold as well as the one in Sussex County. It was very informative. I'm glad that I attended.

I think that it continues to be important especially to remain connected. May they be African American or some sort of Native American. The hands can continue to reach down and help and lift up, and so on. That's so very important. We have to find various ways to do this, be it through one's sorority through which a lot of community service could be done, a lot work with younger girls. We have to figure out a way to bring more Native Americans to higher education. Especially the girls.

One of the things that I see, and everyone knows, is that everybody has different activities going on but some of these things point to a common human nature and common human experiences. Some of these past things are too sad to talk about regarding Native Americans, African Americans, and women. I would prefer to focus on the different activities that could lead to mentoring in the Dover area in a strong, positive way. I would like, if time permitted, to get more involved in organizations, or developing organizations, that would do a lot with and for younger women. They really need all the support they could get. But definitely, I would hope that when I finish my doctorate program that I would be able to be of help to somebody who would help the next person, and the next, and so on.

DIERDRE'S PERSPECTIVE

Dierdre Powell is on track to complete her PhD in American Literature the fall semester of 2013 at Morgan State University (Maryland). She completed her bachelor's degree in Political Science in 1998 at Michigan State University and minored in Music and her Master's in English at Marymount University (Arlington, Virginia). Her doctoral focus is, "Speculative Fiction across the African Diaspora," with an emphasis on relatively unknown women writers.

Dierdre's perspective (personal interview, (personal interviews, March 8, 2013 and April 22, 2013) begins with her switch from Political Science to English.

After completing my bachelor's degree at Michigan State University, I started my master's degree, but there were no mentors there. Everyone was basically doing whatever it took to succeed. I transferred to Marymount University and switched to English because by that time I realized that I was not as interested in data analysis, regression theories, and all these things related to statistics. By the time I got to Morgan State to do my doctorate, I found that I had always enjoyed writing and giving my opinion and perspective and at the same time loved reading. At the time thought that I could incorporate them into writing. At Morgan, I found that I had already taken enough core courses to qualify for an English degree and only had to complete all the remaining basic ones, which was what I did for a couple of years.

My dissertation's focus is on American women writers of speculative fiction across the African Diaspora. I'm focusing on those who are relatively unknown and on whom not much has been published, writers who blend spirituality with science and whose fiction focus on characters that speak to how Blacks strove to help their own people while simultaneously helping each become better than what they were. They survived slavery and oppression. Now what?

In regard to mentoring, Morgan State has many graduates who also teach; therefore, the structure allows a strong interaction with the faculty along the lines of faculty-student and faculty-peer relationships. This is good. Mentoring then becomes somewhat formal *and* informal.

Having more time, more TA positions would serve ABDs well. At Morgan State, I was considered a lecturer; but as a lecturer you don't really have benefits. You have to teach a regular work schedule, still complete your graduate work, which is also working on your dissertation. If ABDs could be given more relief time that allows them to be a TA but not have to teach a full course load, that would be helpful. Being paired off with someone throughout your entire academic career would be beneficial, also.

A regular work load entails teaching four courses, taking one's own courses or working on one's dissertation. Less teaching or not having to teach at all at the ABD level would be a welcomed relief. At Morgan State, some faculty comment that they admire the ABDs who teach and work on their dissertation at the same time because they couldn't do that when they were ABDs. They express admiration for the ABDs who are doing such. More than admiration is what we need.

I'm teaching full time at Anne Arundel Community College where I receive benefits and don't have to teach during the summer. I'm also part time at DelState to further supplement my income because teaching at one institution is simply not enough to cover living expenses and benefits. I'm also working on completing the writing of the dissertation. All my research is finished, so it's just the writing to complete.

In order to manage such and teaching load and writing, I have to remain incredibly organized and self-motivated, be careful not to over-extend myself. Saying no is no longer a problem for me.

I have a network of support that includes a group of friends, supportive faculty, dissertation committee who all provide feedback, advice, and so on. Without this network, things would be much more difficult. So, I'm in pretty good shape to meet my October deadline to complete all requirements for the dissertation and graduate in December. Hooding will be in May.

I really wish to emphasize that insufficient financial support is the biggest drawback for ABDs who without benefits cannot afford to become ill. Just think about what it means to become ill, have no benefits, have no way to sufficiently recover and complete the goal. That is the sad reality of some ABDs that so many people remain unaware of or unsympathetic to. This must change. If, as you suggest, forming more unions across the nation for adjuncts is the way to effect change, then I would support such an impetus.

SANDRA'S STORY

Sandra Grosvenor completed her PhD in Health Services in 2012. She earned her Bachelor's in Science in Health Arts in 2000 and her Master's in Science in Health Services Administration in 2004. Her doctoral studies, completed in 2012 (Walden University), focused on the state of communal health care and the need for Blacks to become proactive in preventative health care.

Sandra's story (personal interviews, December 20, 2012 and March 15, 2013) sheds light on the influence of her late mother in shaping the choice of her career path, where her story begins, and the rich possibilities and rewards of online learning that shapes her ongoing mentoring influence, nationally and internationally.

My doctoral studies examined the state of health care in the community. The common thread of interest connecting me to my community was my own mother's death when I was only eight years old, without anyone saying what caused her death at age forty-eight. My grandmother, great-aunt, and all the other adults at that time dealt with her passing in different ways. However, when it came to me and my siblings, nothing. We were left with wondering so many things. We'd heard whispered words of obeah, you know, the common answer to anything that we West Indians couldn't explain or understand. So sad is this crippling ignorance that blames everything on obeah or voodoo. You try to talk to some of them about cholesterol levels, especially those of the older generation, and they respond, "What is that?"

It was years later that one of my brothers, who is himself a nurse, and I pieced together what we remembered about her last months and attribute her death to Sickle Cell. His and my combined recollections and knowledge of the medical world allowed us to recognize the similarities in her joint pain, complaints, blood

transfusions, and other symptoms to Sickle Cell. Once we were fairly confident that our mother died of this disease, we all tested for the trait and, thankfully, none of us is carrying it. That's on my maternal side. On my father's side there is hypertension, common among those of the African Diaspora. These were my primary motivations for pursuing a career in this field.

I wanted to help prevent others from having an early death. I wanted to, and still do, become a catalyst and advocate for black communities for better health care. Either through mistrust or reliance on doing things the same old way, blacks fail to be aggressive in getting adequate health care treatments. They wait until it's too late to arrest the progression of a disease that is treatable. So, I sought Nursing as the best career to accomplish these goals.

Encouraging positive health behaviors is beneficial and necessary toward empowering individuals, families, and neighborhoods and led to what I called "Health Outreach Under the Tree" (HOUT).[8] This outreach project started in 2005, when I observed that groups of African Americans met daily on street corners and under trees throughout Pinellas County [St. Petersburg, Florida]. This daily gathering is a known custom in African American communities and other minority groups. This community gathering is a time of sharing everyday life situations, the news, play card games, and the like.

One day, I approached a group of men playing dominoes under the shade of a tree and asked them if I could take a moment to screen their blood pressure. I first introduced myself to them as their neighborhood nurse. There was no hesitation. They all readily allowed me to screen them. What I found was that some of them had very high blood pressure (B/P) readings greater than 140/90. This began an open dialogue with the group in no uncertain terms. As a matter of fact, the participants were very thankful that I had stopped by and cared enough to ask them if I may screen their B/P. I began doing this every week. Now, once week a nurse goes out to the streets of south Pinellas County, seeking out men and women of African American descent, to share health information, screen for high B/P.

At that first screening, when I emphasized the importance of regular B/P testings and one-one-one health counselling, some were sceptical at first because even though they didn't mind knowing their B/P results they didn't see the value of health counselling. As more nurses became involved in going among their neighbors and offering testing and counselling, we had to break through the walls of resistance by the sceptics and often got help from neighbors who persuaded the sceptics to see that it wouldn't hurt but help. Testing linked to counselling has allowed several participants to become connected to a medical home, or a physician with whom they could begin to establish an ongoing health care program. Through these weekly outreach visits throughout the community, many more residents have received valuable health information and have shared the information with other family members and neighbors. An organic network of communication and mentorship, I suppose, was established.

HOUT has spread throughout south Pinellas County. People caught on to the importance of having their B/P checked regularly, among other things such as their

cholesterol and blood glucose, then following up with a physician whenever it was recommended by their neighborhood registered nurse (RN). Because there is such a high incidence of heart disease among African Americans, this outreach project grew to explore and understand what this community's lived experiences were. HOUT then led to The Health Belief Model (HBM), which has been the guide for the project as more territory were covered and people reached.

I suppose it was a quiet revolution driven by the passion to help save as many people as possible from living with pain and suffering, especially with treatable diseases. Something good came out of my mother's passing, I suppose.

Walden University's PhD program has built into it formal mentoring, which is critical to the success of its online programs. I was assigned a faculty mentor at the very beginning—a white, male professor in his eighties who was a god-sent. He is a brilliant scholar who organized his online mentees quite efficiently. None of us would have completed our respective degrees without the wisdom and guidance garnered from his thirty-year teaching experience. He assisted us, provided encouragement when motivation flagged, showed us how to work smarter and not harder by being better efficient with our time, and offered insight and paths to success. By example, he taught and executed successful lessons that invariably showed us how to avoid pitfalls, what worked and what didn't, and most important, he listened to us: the key quality to excellent mentoring.

Informal mentoring and life-long friendships have helped, too. I've looked to other black women who have attained their goals to remind myself that if they could do it so can I. You and I have been friends since growing up in Trinidad, and what you accomplished often inspired to do the same.

I remember when I began to find my voice. It was when I went to register for my first semester at Medgar Evers College (Brooklyn, New York). First, I had to find the Bursar's Office, something I did with much grit and determination, then when I found it having to stand in the long line waiting my turn and ignoring the voice that said I didn't belong. I recall having to swallow my fear and intimidation and ask questions in the classroom. I had to speak up for myself, on my own behalf, because no one else would do it for me. When I felt that maybe I wasn't cut out for this, the image of a success black woman would come to mind and remind me that if they did then so could I.

Now, I am a mentor to five medical students: one in Osteopathy and studying in South Africa; two are in Zimbabwe; and, two African Americans in Anaesthetics. I'm so excited about black women's success. No, all women's success.

CONCLUSION

While these four stories offer glimpses on how mentoring can be structurally formal or organically informal, many successful women—black and white—offer rich perspectives on the value of mentoring. For example, the authors of *The Little Black Book of Success* conclude their books with the vital call to give back, which they see

as paying rent "for living on this earth!" (Brown, Haygood, McLean, 2010, p. 134). They gently cajole their black readers to break the cultural code of myopic "me-ism" and recognize those areas of need and offer help by "reaching back and bringing others along," which is also a part of the black communal tradition (p. 135). Sheryl Sandberg is similarly candid about the benefits of mentoring in her observation that "[w]hen done right, everybody flourishes" (Kindle, location 1026). My own list of women who positively influenced and helped me throughout my college career is a long one that began at Brooklyn College (CUNY, Brooklyn, New York) in 1985 and concluded at Temple University (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) in 1999.

Next to my mother, I am blessed with some wonderful aunts and cousins, maternally and paternally. The Raeburn family network spans the globe, literally, with Facebook helping to reconnect the black and white Raeburns. However, the Grenadian Raeburns did not need social networking to remind us of our obligation to each other and our world. In Canada, Gemma Raeburn-Baynes was presented the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal November 11, 2012 "for her great community work and contribution to Canada … for the betterment of people and youth," work that she performed indefatigably for decades, despite her heart condition (personal email, November 13, 2012, 5:45 PM). In the Canadian daily, *The Suburban*, her activities are described as a major scholarship for "disenfranchised youth to study culinary arts … and several multicultural programs at the Bank of Montreal to help visible-minority youth" that have earned the Conference Board of Canada's esteem and praise (Frank, 2013, p. 9).

One of my cousins on my father's side, Mrs Joy Thompson (née Miller), who along with her husband serves the Philadelphia community in ways too vast to describe here. I'm so grateful that while completing my doctoral studies they opened their home and allowed me to crash there on those nights I was simply too exhausted to commute back home to Delaware. Joy and her husband (pastor and wife team) listened to my concerns and doubts, and encouraged me to stay the course, and prayed for me to do so.

Mentoring can be executed in various ways.

NOTES

[1] Gwen Roundtree Evans, "Lessons in Mentoring." *ABWHE National Newsletter* (2013), Winter Edition: 1–6.

[2] My sister, Mary Burrows (née Kirton) lost her seven-year, grueling battle with breast cancer on July 6, 2013. Even as I prepare this chapter I am almost preparing to travel to Trinidad for her funeral.

[3] Jamaica Kincaid, "Girl," *At the Bottom of the River* (New York: Plume, 1992): 3–5.

[4] I attended Eastern Girls School (elementary school) and St. François Girls' College (secondary school). Color-stratification helped to define our society's social order. Thus, as the names intimate, some were clearly of mixed ancestry and gained their social mobility based upon both intelligence and family pedigree. Also, high-coloreds were distinguished from the light-skinned in that some high-coloreds could almost pass for white while the light-skinned clearly could not.

[5] The College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences.

[6] Tim Grant, "Study Finds Median Wealth for Single Black Women at $5," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 9 Mar. 2010.

[7] The English department has designed common syllabi for not only the literature courses but the English Composition ones as well. Renay is referring to how she exercises academic freedom in her departure from the common syllabus to make her teaching experience a richer one for her students.

[8] Sandra has kindly granted me permission to use the portion of the very first draft of her dissertation written in 2010 that describes how she initiated this health care movement in her Florida community to supplement our interview.

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