

# Thriving at the Intersections

*Being a Black Woman in Medicine*



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# Undergraduate Experience

“It was clear what the officer was trying to imply: A Black female Physician? Impossible.”

*-In my white coat, I am more Black than ever*



May 2013

Background

Early  
Lessons

Undergrad at  
Mac

Poetry &  
Advocacy

1<sup>st</sup>  
Year

BSAP

2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Year

# First Year Medicine: One of 259

- 1 of 259 medical students
- Lack of Black professors/ tutors
  - Lack of diversity in medical material
- Fears:
  - Proving myself: pursuit of perfectionism
- Experiences with racism
  - Unsafe spaces in the classroom and beyond
  - Lack of solidarity



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# First Year Medicine: BMSA & Mentors



Black Medical Students Association 2016-2017



Dr. Lisa Robinson  
(U of T alumna 1991- N of 2)

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Year

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2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Year

# Black Student Application Program

*Creating Safe Spaces for Applicants & Students*

## What is it?

- An effort to increase the number of **Black applicants** to the University of Toronto, Faculty of Medicine

## What does it entail?

- **THE SAME ENTRY CRITERIA: GPA, MCAT, ESSAYS, EXTRACURRICULARS**

Creating safe online spaces: ex. Pre-med forums and beyond

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First  
Year

BSAP

Second Year

# Black Student Application Program

- My role: Public BSAP Ambassador
  - Initial hesitancy and warnings
  - “Institutions do not like people that challenge the status quo”
  - Pushing past the negative backlash online



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# Second Year Medicine: Thriving & Surviving

IN MY WHITE COAT, I AM MORE BLACK THAN EVER - FLARE MAGAZINE BHM2018



## Speaking up and speaking out:

- The importance of shared narrative
- Sparking discourse surrounding diversity in medicine
- Dealing with racist vitriol online and how the faculty supported me

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# Second Year Medicine: Thriving & Surviving

## Further platforms for advocacy



## Speaking up and speaking out:

- Women's College Hospital International Women's Day Keynote Address
- Public speaking engagements
- CBC Radio
- AJ + video
- CP24 Toronto News
- International Conferences on diversity

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# Third Year Medicine: Thriving & Surviving

## Analyzing Safe Spaces on the Wards/Clinic & Coping strategies



Advocacy in Clerkship: *Is it sustainable?*

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# Recommendations for Safe & Inclusive Spaces

1. Validate the experiences of underrepresented students, especially those at the margins.
2. De-stigmatize conversations about racial disparities and issues of diversity in academic environments
3. Understand that privilege begets privilege; it is incumbent upon us to leverage opportunities for those who have limited access to resources and social capital
4. Look around the table and ask yourself who isn't represented and more importantly- why?
5. Be cognizant of the various permutations of safe spaces: online, in the classroom, on the wards etc.

**THANK YOU!!**