

Fatou Sahor – Martin Luther King Scholarship Winner

My community service at UTSW began with my application to be a free clinic manager at Union Gospel Mission Free Clinics to serve the homeless population of Dallas. While I would have been happy to help in any way, I challenged myself by applying to be President. I was ecstatic when I was chosen because I was able to do meaningful work serving the most vulnerable. I was in charge of managing the operations at Calvert Place and Center of Hope. My duties included organizing staff meetings, facilitating efficient outflow and inflow of patients, scheduling twelve student managers, and overseeing research and community projects. At the same time, I was also elected to be social and community service chair of the Student National Medical Association. My goals were to encourage a sense of community among the black community by planning social events, talking with prospective minority students about life as a medical student, and organizing aspects of a Black History Month event aimed at educating students on how to advocate for anti-racism.

Throughout my years of service, I have realized that there is a gap between what people need to address their health needs and what is available to them based on income and insurance status. One way to create meaningful, systemic change is to get involved at the federal level. This is why I decided to take part in the Archer Fellowship, where I volunteered virtually for the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation (CBCF) in Washington D.C. Our goal was to inform policy and the public on a multitude of issues related to black lives. I was able to help found the CBCF National Social Justice Initiative by proposing partnerships with possible stakeholders and initiating a policy map of health care laws in prisons across the U.S. Moreover, after six months of research, I submitted a policy proposal aimed at reducing maternal mortality at the national level to the office of U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden of the Senate Finance Committee.

Additionally, I helped organize the formation of the Anti-Racism Action Subcommittee in Student Government in response to my drive to create change after witnessing the effect of the Black Lives Matter movement. Through my MPH studies in social inequality, I have learned that an effective way to initiate change is to listen to the people most affected by the issues. I used this framework while creating the Subcommittee. The goal of the Subcommittee is to create a platform where the UTSW community can gather and advocate for marginalized people of our community. We have had two forums where students have come with actionable ideas to increase the diversity of the medical school and clarify university rules to promote a safer psychosocial climate. We have published our meeting minutes to the university to promote transparency and accountability.

Every time I engage in community service, it inspires me to do better and to be more confident in my abilities and what I can contribute to society by helping others. Because of this, my work at UTSW has only just begun.