

Transcript, Dalia Mitchell

Dalia Mitchell:

So, I didn't study Dr. King's work other than kind of in general classes in school, but I always really liked quotes when I was a kid. And so this was one of those quotes that always kind of stuck with me for a long time. And so I have like, kind of a few quotes from different people that I really liked that really resonate with me, that I kind of use as motivation in a lot of the things that I do, and this quote from Dr. Martin Luther King definitely kind of falls in line with that. Like, "If you can't do great things, do small things in a great way." My ideal would be to be able to and do really great things like get rid of health inequality. That's kind of the ultimate lofty goal that I would love to work toward. And obviously at this point in my career, I can't do those kinds of things. I can't single-handedly eradicate health inequities. But this quote really shows that like even the small things make an impact. And so if you can't eradicate health inequality, you can start a small program to work with one population of underserved kids and get them access to something that would be helpful for them. And so that quote is really meaningful to me. And it definitely, I think, shows the ideology behind Dr. King's dream and Dr. King's own lofty goals and the things that he was trying to do and how it can all start from something small. So I grew up working with kids with special needs a lot, and very extensively. And so growing up, I was always a little bit interested in learning a little bit more about autism, learning a little bit more about what kids with special needs are dealing with. And so I started service when I was 10 years old. I started volunteering with organizations for kids with special needs. And I did that throughout high school and college. And through all of those experiences, I've heard a lot of stories of parents saying, "You know, it took me four years to get a diagnosis for my kid; it took so long to find a doctor who could just give them the diagnosis that they needed, to be able to access the resources that would help them thrive." And so that really kind of had a profound impact on me from a young age, was kind of hearing all those stories. And at the time there was nothing I could actually do, but it definitely motivated me to try to find ways to make health care more accessible for underserved pediatric-patient populations. And because I kind of saw the effects of people not having that access to care and how much it impacts their life, how much it impacts their family's life, and so coming into medical school, my big focus was trying to find opportunities to learn more about what other underserved populations of kids are facing. And so I did a program in

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undergrad. I started a service where we did art therapy with kids who have Down syndrome, and it was a really impactful experience. And when I came to medical school, I wanted to do something similar, but I had read a lot of papers about the benefits of art therapy, and art therapy can be particularly beneficial for kids who've experienced trauma. And almost every kid, unfortunately, in juvenile detention has experienced substantial trauma. And so I was able to start a partner program between UT Southwestern and the Dallas Juvenile Detention Center, where we train groups of health professions and medical students to do therapeutic art activities with kids.