

# Unique Perspectives

Celebrating Diversity, Inclusion and Equity in the University of Missouri's School of Medicine | Volume 2, Issue 4

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### **Contributor's Notes:**

Brought to you by the School of Medicine Faculty and Staff Diversity and Inclusion Committees. To be disseminated 5 times per year.

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To find out more about what's going on in the University of Missouri School of Medicine's diversity and inclusion efforts, click [here](#).

## ***In the Spotlight:*** Courtney Barnes, MD



**Courtney Barnes** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Women's Health.

This month we are featuring Dr. Courtney Barnes and her incredible community collaboration with Erika Dickson, the Program Director and founder of the Mid-Missouri Black Doula Collective.

***What is your definition of diversity and how do you think diversity and inclusion relate to one another?***

**Barnes:** To me, diversity means that each group has a person at the table where decisions are being made. Inclusion means that the seat has decision-making power. We often see organizations who want to appear like they are doing the work of inclusion, but do not actually want to make the changes needed for true equality. In order to see real change, both diversity and inclusion must be present.

**Dickson:** Diversity is simply the presence of people with various identities (race, ethnicity, gender, sex, sexual orientation, ability, religion, socioeconomic class, age and appearance) in a particular space. It is about representation. Inclusion is about those folks feeling welcome in that space. I am going to throw one more in

there, one that I feel is most important of all. This one is, most times, the most difficult to measure and achieve...EQUITY. Equity deals with fair and equitable policies, practices and positions.

***Tell us about Birth in Color. When was it started, who it is for, and how does it improve inclusivity and accessibility to quality healthcare?***

**Barnes:** The Birth in Color Campaign started in 2020 when Hakima Payne, a fierce advocate for black and brown mothers, contacted me about training 10 women of color to be doulas in our community. She asked me to raise \$10,000 so that we could train 10 doulas in how to support women prenatally, while laboring, with breastfeeding, and with helping patients navigate the complex healthcare system. I partnered with My Fair Ellie, Tin Roof and Kona Ice to raise the funds. Along with my Facebook group, *Circle Me Dr B*, we were able to raise the money very quickly. Erica Dickson, a black Columbia entrepreneur, took applications for the class and put together a group of 10 black women. The ten doulas completed their training over the summer.

The role of a doula is to be with a laboring woman continuously. Having a doula is associated with a lower risk of having a c-

*(Spotlight continued on page 2...)*



**The Birth in Color group from left to right: Samantha Watkins, JaeDawn Cropp, Jasmine Keith, Patricia Hughes, Da-Malia Ramsey, Erika Dickson, Valen Devereaux, Briana Cato, Brittany Fatoma (not pictured, Taylor Gaines).**

## Activity Highlights

(Spotlight continued from page 1...)

**Thoughtful Thursdays~** On Thursday, October 21, MU Health Care's African Heritage Employee Resource Group presented, "Bringing Your Full Authentic Self to Work" via Zoom in the latest installation of the *Thoughtful Thursdays* series. The session began with a [TED Talk by Jodi-Ann Burey](#) and was followed by a panel discussion.



Pictured left to right: Norma Stephens, Aleena Yaktine, Nikki McGruder, Juwan Mahaney and Loren Prince.

Oftentimes, authenticity in the workplace from individuals of color or from underrepresented groups can be misunderstood or cause unintentional discomfort to others

simply because there is a lack of understanding. Unfortunately, this can lead to those who are misunderstood to be silent and conforming for the sake of keeping others at ease. All employees, regardless of their social identity, need to feel confident that they can be themselves and have a safe space within their workplace. Leadership needs to consistently encourage these conversations with intention, listening and responsiveness. Michael Jackson's song, "Man in the Mirror" is a perfect example- "if you want to make the world a better place, take a look at yourself and then make a change." We all have something valuable to contribute to bridge the gaps of misunderstanding. These actions can lead us to thrive together in a healthy and inclusive workplace. Click [here](#) to view the discussion.

**The Crisis in Afghanistan~** In response to the final withdrawal of US troops, allies and Afghan people from the "endless war" in Afghanistan, on Wednesday, September 1, "The Crisis in Afghanistan" was presented via Zoom by MU's International Programs. The panel included a MU alum and 12-year Afghanistan war veteran, a Middle East historian in the Department of History and from the Truman School of Government and Public Affairs, an assistant professor on US foreign policy and master's student who has lived and worked in Kabul. This important discussion included the history of the country and its leadership, their relationship with the US and the many people currently living there struggling to obtain their basic needs. The country has struggled for centuries from nearly continuous efforts to intervene by British, Soviet and US interests. Under these circumstances, Afghanistan has never had a chance to fully recover to the independent kingdom it once was. For more information on how to help Afghan students and others experiencing hardship click [here](#). To view the panel discussion, click [here](#).



MU master's student, Sulaiman Assadullah

section, lower risk of needing an epidural in labor and can be extremely helpful in managing postpartum mood issues and infant feeding. Black women in this country are significantly more likely to die in pregnancy than white mothers. Black women often report not feeling heard during the pregnancy care, not having their pain addressed and have higher c-section rates. Doula's have been shown to reduce the disparities between black and white mothers.

**Dickson:** The campaign portion of "Birth In Color" is what raised the funds for ten women of color to be trained as doulas, right here in Columbia, MO.

**What is centering in pregnancy and how does it improve pregnancy outcomes for women of color?**

**Barnes:** Centering Pregnancy is a group prenatal care model where a small group of mothers receive their prenatal care together. The visits are 2 hours long and the group meets 10 times over the course of the pregnancy. The first 30 minutes of each session entails mothers having one-on-one time with the provider, listening to the baby's heart rate, making sure the baby is growing well and addressing any individual issues. The last 90 minutes of the sessions are for group time. This allows for so much information and education to be given to patients. Topics such as labor, pain management, birth plans, car seat safety, SIDS prevention, infant feeding, parenting, child development and peri-partum mood concerns can be explored in great detail. Women who participate in Centering Pregnancy have lower rates of preterm birth, very low birth weight infants and postpartum depression. These women are also more likely to meet their breastfeeding goals. We have been doing Centering Pregnancy at Mizzou for several years now and it has been powerful to witness mothers supporting one another. Among women of color, Centering Pregnancy has been shown to reduce or eliminate several of the disparities seen among black mothers.

**How do you encourage others to honor the uniqueness of each individual?**

**Barnes:** I have been an OB for 16 years. The way that I practice constantly changes. I have learned that mothers can be trusted to tell you what is happening in their bodies. They can be trusted to know what their bodies and their babies need. To me, honoring uniqueness is simply becoming a better listener. We all come from different backgrounds, have different life experiences, our own dreams and our own fears. Rather than having one approach to all patients, I can listen to what the patient in front of me needs. I think by truly listening and valuing the person's story, we honor her uniqueness.

**Dickson:** In the simplest way... seek to understand.

**WIMMS~** The Women in Medicine and Medical Sciences (WIMMS) group presented, "How to Speak So That People Want to Listen" a TED Talk by Julian Treasure, for their *First Friday Empower Lunch* series on Friday, October 1 at noon via Zoom. Mr. Treasure discussed the "Seven Deadly Sins of Speaking" that include gossip and dogmatism, and his acronym, HAIL- Honesty, Authenticity, Integrity and Love, his four foundations for powerful speech. We must strive to be more effective communicators while continually being aware of how our words and the way we say them can impact others. Click [here](#) to view the TED Talk.



## A Look Back...



Dr. Jose Ricardo Martinez

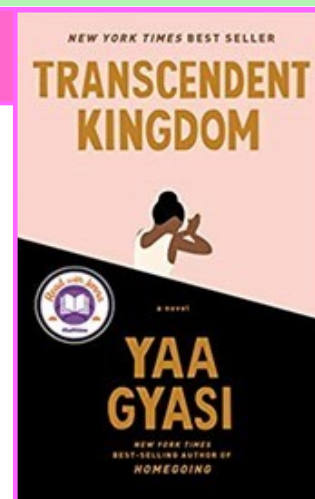
In honor of Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15–October 15) we take a look back at the life and contributions of Dr. Jose Ricardo Martinez. Dr. Martinez was born in San Miguel, El Salvador in 1935. He was a gifted student throughout his young academic career earning the highest marks of anyone in his graduating class and ultimately being named the country's "Prime Graduate". This distinction allowed him to come to the United States to pursue his studies, where he received an undergraduate degree from Johns Hopkins University in 1956 and a medical degree from Tulane University in 1960. After completing medical school, he returned to his home country of El Salvador and joined the medical school faculty. In 1973, after doing post-graduate work, Dr. Martinez moved his family to Columbia, Missouri to work with Dr. Giulio Barbero, the Chair of the Department of Pediatrics. During his more than 15 years at the University of Missouri, he worked with Dr. Barbero doing extensive research on cystic fibrosis. One such notable project studied special diets that ultimately helped improve the life expectancy of cystic fibrosis patients.

Dr. Jose Ricardo Martinez went on to take several research leadership positions and in 1998 became the Director of the Division of Extramural Research at the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research at NIH in Bethesda, Maryland. He retired in 2004 spending his time reconnecting with friends and family, finally residing in Cedar Park, Texas to be close to his grandchildren. Dr. Martinez died, June 23, 2016.

We acknowledge Dr. Jose Ricardo Martinez for his dedication and contributions to the field of medicine and his important work with the University of Missouri School of Medicine.

## Brain Food

This critically acclaimed novel landed on several "Best of 2020" reading lists. *Transcendent Kingdom* by Yaa Gyasi tells the story of 28-year-old Gifty, a neuroscience graduate student nearing completion of her Ph.D. at Stanford University. Although she has always excelled in the classroom and the laboratory, she struggles to integrate multiple parts of her life and herself – her American upbringing and Ghanaian family, her faith and scientific worldview. With her childhood faith destroyed by the death of her beloved older brother, Gifty turns to the field of neuroscience to understand how addictions like his occur. Her mother, the indomitable spirit that led their family to America, soon withdraws into grief and depression. But as the title suggests, Gifty must find a way to transcend the boundaries that separate her faith, her heritage, her country, her peers and her mother. This beautiful novel captures the struggle it is to be fully oneself in a biomedical professional environment that doesn't always recognize diverse experiences. *Transcendent Kingdom* is available at Daniel Boone Regional Library.



## Give Me 5!



**Amy Folkerts-Smith** is a Grant Writer in the Department of Ophthalmology. To get to know Amy better, we asked her these 5 questions:

### 1. If you could live anywhere or do anything where or what would that be?

I would live on the beach writing books as a best-selling author.

### 2. What is your favorite food or restaurant?

I might have an unhealthy obsession with pizza. The customization of toppings and crust possibilities are endless! Roasted broccoli with a balsamic fig glaze is one of my new favorites.

### 3. What is your favorite cultural/family tradition you celebrate every year?

Unfortunately, our family traditions have diminished over time due to distance but (almost) annually for Christmas, my mom and I make homemade fudge together. To this day I haven't been able to replicate it on my own, so I always anticipate getting half the pan sent home with me to enjoy. She even mailed me some one year I was unable to go home.

### 4. Tell us a Fun Fact about yourself

I have two! 1) I was once a wedding videographer in Hawaii. 2) I've been 6'2" since I was 13 years old. Note Daisy Duck on her tippy toes in our photo.

### 5. If you could make one change in the world what would it be?

I would want every human to feel empathy. Although agonizing at times, I think it's the most important and valuable ability anyone can possess. If we all had it, I know the world would be a better place.

## Calendar of Events~

### Upcoming events on campus and in the Columbia community

\*The Black Studies Virtual Fall Conference takes place on **October 28-29**. It's not too late to register for day two to view the Conference's Keynote address presented by Dr. DeAngela Burns-Wallace on Friday at 5pm. Click [here](#) to register.

\*WIMMS next *First Friday Empower Lunch* is, "Body Language", by Amy Cuddy on **November 5**, 12-1pm. To view the video, click [here](#). On **December 3** from 12-1pm WIMMS will feature, "What Does It Take to Change A Mind," by Lucinda Beaman. To view click [here](#). The Zoom link to join each group discussion following is [here](#).

\*The School of Medicine Office of Diversity and Inclusion is hosting the 1st Generation Reception, an event to honor 1st generation college students on **November 8**, 5-6pm in the Medical Sciences Building Atrium.

\*Mark your calendars and stay tuned in to your inbox for details on the upcoming *Thoughtful Thursdays* sessions hosted by MU Health Care and our Employee Resource Groups (ERG) on **November 18** and **December 16** from noon-1pm.

*Disclaimer: Event dates and times are subject to change. Thank you!*

In November, we recognize National Native American Heritage Month. Preserving and protecting this important culture is crucial to understanding the history of our country and the land it occupies. Controversy around the recent sale of "Picture Cave", about an hour west of St. Louis, made national headlines when an anonymous buyer purchased the cave and surrounding land from the Busch family. The Osage Nation had wished to purchase the area to protect the near 300 glyphs within the cave. It is one of the largest and most detailed depictions of Native American life in North America. MU is offering several virtual and in-person educational events throughout the month to get involved in. The flyer to the right provides details on how to participate. We invite everyone to join us as we learn and honor National Native American Heritage month.

## NATIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN MONTH



**"Apache Leap Advance Screening"**  
Director Christian Rozier  
Thursday, October 28, 6 p.m. | Jesse Hall Auditorium

**"Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives: A Reckoning"**  
Corinne Grey Cloud  
Wednesday, November 3, 4 p.m. | Memorial Union, N204  
Virtual Option- <https://umsystem.zoom.us/j/92023705765>



**"Liberating Sovereign Potential: Building Capacity for Native Nations in Education"**  
Dr. Alex Red Corn  
Thursday, November 4, 4 p.m. | MU Student Center, 2205 A&B  
Virtual Option- <https://umsystem.zoom.us/j/98161508895>



**"Geographic Indigenous Futures"**  
Deondre Smiles  
Monday, November 8, 4 p.m.  
Virtual Event - <https://umsystem.zoom.us/j/99307079468>



**"Beaded Workshop Hosted by Four Directions Indigenous Peoples and Allies"**  
Four Directions  
Thursday, November 11, 2 p.m. | MU Student Center, 2205 B

**"I Guess This Won't Be Heard For A Long Time...": Ancestors, Archives, and Intergenerational Knowledge Transmission"**  
Shelbi Nahwilet Meissner  
Friday, November 12, Noon | Virtual Event - <https://umsystem.zoom.us/j/98813146122>



**"Four Directions + Ragtag Film Society Show Me Series: Indigenous Short Films"**  
Four Directions at Ragtag Film Society  
Tuesday, November 16, 7 p.m. | Ragtag Cinema - 10 Hitt Street

**"Cherokee Nation's Story of Survival and Self-Determination"**  
Chuck Hoskin Jr  
Wednesday, November 17, 6:15 p.m. | University of Missouri Medical School, Lester Bryant Auditorium, M105  
Virtual Option - <https://umsystem.zoom.us/j/92872350164>



Sponsored by the College of Arts and Science, College of Education, Undergraduate Studies, Sociology department, Communication department, Geography department and English department

