

# PORTRAYAL & PERCEPTION

## AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN & BOYS

Episode 7

### Journey to Medicine

As the **health care industry** grows, only 3% of the physicians in the United States are African American.

African Americans face unique challenges to succeeding as professionals in the health care industry, including educational setbacks and financial constraints. In this WQED award winning episode, **African American doctors and medical students** describe their journey and the mentors who helped and guided them along the way. Additionally, educators and medical societies work to provide opportunities and guidance to ensure the next generation of African American males receive additional educational resources and also feel the inspiration to become health care professionals themselves.



#### FOR TEACHERS

These guides are intended for use in sociology, information technology, media literacy, and social studies classes. Questions are geared for high school students, grades 9-12.

#### ABOUT THIS GUIDE

*Portrayal & Perception: African American Men & Boys* is a series of community-based television programs produced by WQED Multimedia showcasing positive media profiles of successful African American men. Sponsored by The Heinz Endowments, this series strives to inspire discussion, elevate portrayal, and clarify perceptions of African American men and boys in the community. This guide provides further information, discussion questions, and resources for students or groups to explore the topics highlighted in each episode.

*That's what is so beautiful about medicine; it's truly lifelong learning. —Dwight Heron, M.D.*

# Biography



## Chenits Pettigrew, Ph.D.

**Neighborhood:** Hill District

**Occupation:** Assistant Dean for Student Affairs and Director of Diversity Programs

**Current Organization:** University of Pittsburgh

### What new projects are you working on?

Upgrading the diversity seminar and a reciprocal analysis project on medical student retention.

### How has the show impacted your life since airing?

People have contacted me more directly in relationship to the process of getting people through the educational pipeline to medicine from various points in their educational careers. That probably may not have been the case had people not looked at the episode.

### Who was your greatest mentor and how did he affect your life?

In terms of Pittsburgh, there were many dedicated Pittsburgh Public Schools teachers and administrators who really did facilitate me through my own experience and took an interest in me. It's difficult to name one, but there are a few that really do stand out in my mind.

### What do you think are the greatest challenges and opportunities African American men face in the world today?

The biggest challenge is having role models in their lives that motivate them to activate the genius within. I think that's really one of the bigger challenges that we have. I was fortunate enough to have people all around me for a variety of different reasons; they were in the schools, they were in the community centers, but all those professional men were around and I could see them, they were more tangible. I'm not really sure if those things are quite the same today. I think having access to role models and having interactions with those folks made a difference for me. And I think that's one thing I see as one of the voids that exists today.

### What responsibility do you think African American male leaders have to the next generation?

As an educator, I've dedicated my entire career to being a bridge mender. I think that I have a responsibility to do everything that I can, in the situations that I find myself in, to make an impact and to make institutions and opportunities accessible.

**I see myself as a bridge mender, a conductor, a facilitator, all of those things.** I've spent my entire career committed to the next generations. I've actually seen students of mine whose children now have graduated from medical school. So it's interesting to see all of those things go around. We are not in a position to feel there isn't work left to be done, and I will continue to do it for as long as I can.



*You have to be prepared for rigorous course work. If you don't begin to engage that course work early in your academic career, then the opportunity to do medical school is going to be limited.*  
—Chenits Pettigrew, Ph.D.

# Discussion Questions

*I've gotten to where I am today because of working hard and striving for excellence. Any obstacles in your way, you can get past that. – Shameeke Taylor*

## CREATE YOUR OWN MEDIA!

Teachers, help your students create their own media. Download the [Media Guide](#) and [Common Resources](#).

1. Medical student Shameeke Taylor had several strong women supporting him throughout his educational journey. Who has supported you in your life? Did their gender matter?
2. Gateway Medical Society finds the educational gap between Black and white children grows between 6th and 12th grades. Why do you think there is an educational gap in middle and high school but not in elementary school?
3. Medicine is described as a career that allows you to make a difference by changing someone else's life. What other careers have the same positive effects, and which most interest you as career choices?
4. Dr. Heron specializes in non-traditional cancer treatment and feels a personal connection to cancer patients. Have you ever known someone suffering from a debilitating illness? Describe that experience.
5. This episode traces the history of African American men in the medical field in Pittsburgh. Briefly research the history of African American doctors in America and their contributions to the medical field.
6. Create and present an oral presentation on a science-related topic like the students of Journey to Medicine did.

## FEATURED ORGANIZATIONS

**University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine:**  
[www.medschool.pitt.edu](http://www.medschool.pitt.edu)

**Gateway Medical Society - Journey to Medicine:** [www.gatewaymedicalsociety.org](http://www.gatewaymedicalsociety.org)



# Resources

**Office of Minority Health:** Division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services dedicated to improving the health of racial and ethnic minority populations — [www.minorityhealth.hhs.gov](http://www.minorityhealth.hhs.gov)

**Black Mental Health Alliance:** Nonprofit organization that provides training, consultation, support groups, resource referral, public information, and educational resources regarding mental health and mental illness issues — [www.blackmentalhealth.com](http://www.blackmentalhealth.com)

**Student National Medical Association (SNMA):** Oldest and largest student-run organization focusing on the needs and concerns of medical students of color — [www.snma.org](http://www.snma.org)

**National Black Nurses Association, Inc.:** Membership-based organization of African American nurses with a variety of resources for nursing students and professionals — [www.nbna.org](http://www.nbna.org)

**Black Caucus of Health Workers:** Association of health care workers affiliated with the American Public Health Association advocating for improved quality of African American healthcare [www.blackcaucus1968.blogspot.com](http://www.blackcaucus1968.blogspot.com)

**Society of Black Academic Surgeons:** Association of African American surgeons organized to stimulate, mentor, and inspire young surgeons and medical students — [www.sbas.net](http://www.sbas.net)

**American Black Chiropractic Association:** Association dedicated to integrating and improving outcomes for persons of color entering the profession of chiropractic doctor — [www.abcachiro.com](http://www.abcachiro.com)

**Association of Black Cardiologists, Inc.:** Nonprofit organization with an international membership of health professionals, community health advocates, corporate members, and institutional members, dedicated to eliminating disparities related to cardiovascular disease in all people of color [www.abcadio.org](http://www.abcadio.org)

**National Medical Association:** Collective voice of African American physicians and the leading force for parity and justice in medicine and the elimination of disparities in health care — [www.nmanet.org](http://www.nmanet.org)

**National Dental Association:** Global association of African American dentists and oral health care professionals who strive to improve the delivery of oral health care in underserved communities and the educational opportunities of minorities in the oral health field — [www.ndaonline.org](http://www.ndaonline.org)

## MEDIA

**Partners of the Heart:** *American Experience* documentary that focuses on the development of the treatment for “blue baby” in the 1940s, which was assisted by Vivien Thomas, M.D., an African American man who went on to train two generations of the country’s premier heart surgeons [www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/partners/index.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/partners/index.html)



iQ: smartmedia is an educational initiative of  
WQED Multimedia.  
4802 Fifth Avenue • Pittsburgh, PA 15213  
[wqed.org/edu](http://wqed.org/edu)



THE HEINZ ENDOWMENTS  
HOWARD HEINZ ENDOWMENT • VIRA I. HEINZ ENDOWMENT

©2014 WQED Multimedia  
All Rights Reserved.