

Getting to Know Your CNPH Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council Members

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Sharing My Experience with Racism: My Journey to DEI

My Botswana Experience

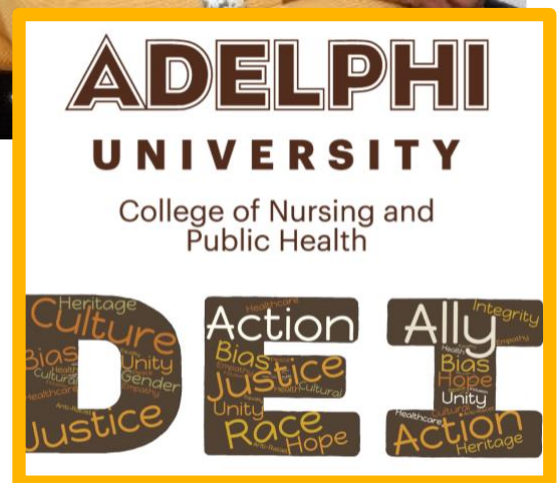
I was born and raised in Botswana, Africa, where everyone is black and is of the same ethnic origin. Botswana culture is rooted in tribes rather than in races, and is guided by the rule of Tribal Chiefs. Since its independence from England in 1965, a movement of racial groups from other continents has been experienced and they have assimilated into the culture. On this note, Botswana has enjoyed racial harmony to date. I want to point out that my late husband was a white USA national, born and raised in Pennsylvania. He had lived in Botswana on and off as an economic advisor from Williams College, Massachusetts and he never experienced any racial overtones in Botswana as there are no racial or segregation policies in that country. The only thing he was uncomfortable with was that he wanted to be addressed by his first name but that did not happen, as it was not cultural and is considered disrespectful. No older person is addressed by their first name in Botswana.

My Experience in the United States

My point of entry into the United States in 1982 was Williamstown, Massachusetts. I had recently graduated from the University of Botswana with a Bachelor of Education in Nursing. Williamstown is predominantly white and I was well received. Throughout my entire stay in Massachusetts, including in Boston where I gained my PhD and worked as an assistant professor, I never experienced racism. At Russell Sage where I attained my MSN, I wrote a paper on “Cultural Diversities In Health and Illness” and presented it to my class and eventually to health care providers in Botswana. Since my arrival in New York in 2009, I have lived in Forest Hills, Queens, which is predominantly white. Since that time, I have not experienced racism or racial tensions. The title of “People of Color” which I heard during the diversity meetings at Adelphi, was new to me.

My Upbringing and How it has Influenced my Appreciation of the Adelphi DEI Initiative at CNPH

Botswana is guided by the Principle of BOTHO (Ubuntu in Swahili and Zulu). This BOTHO is described as “**a process of earning respect by first giving it.**” This has been my guiding principle which I brought with me to Adelphi. I have extended this respect to all in the school. My first approach on day one of my classes is to introduce myself and then ask each student to introduce themselves and their backgrounds. I then finish the exercise by emphasizing that the class has realized that they are not the same.



CNPH DEI Council Member, Dr. Ditsapelo M. McFarland

We come from different cultures and backgrounds and we bring different accents, so, let us respect these differences and grow together.” As noted earlier, my experience with racism and ethnicity in the USA is very limited. The CNPH DEI Council has provided a platform for me, as well as for everyone else, to understand concepts of Racism, Equity, Inclusivity, and Antiracism and to learn more as we develop together.

Lastly, I want to extend my appreciation to my Dean, Dr. Elaine Smith for giving me the opportunity to initially chair the CNPH Diversity Council. I also want to acknowledge Professor Charles Cal for his passion in taking the CNPH DEI initiatives forward. My appreciation also goes to the members of the CNPH DEI Council for their commitment to the various initiatives.

