



Hello, my name is Bernard K. Essiful and I am currently a Doctoral Candidate in the Howard Occupational Therapy program. I was born and raised in Ghana, West Africa. I am one of two children from two Ghana parents. My personal interests consist of art, fitness, and building humane connections. While in Ghana I attended a private school with diverse individuals which exposed me to different cultures at an early age. My personal exposure to diversity in Ghana was far different. I existed within different tribes, ethnicities, and foreigners which personally affected me in a far more welcoming manner. In a sense, I gain knowledge from my peers of different backgrounds, from how to communicate, to how to socialize, and also be accepting of others' morals and ethics. In 2006, I left my native country of Ghana to join my family in the USA. Though it was a scary transformation for me, I was quite frankly excited for what the future held. Moving from one continent to another, learning a new language, and assimilating into a different culture was a fascinating challenge for me. One interesting thing that struck my attention when moving to the US was how diverse it was compared to what I was used to back home. For the first time in my life, I witnessed great multitudes of cultural, religious, and sexual backgrounds. I also came to find out that the average minority felt they were not welcomed into certain organizations. I put it upon myself to promote inclusion in everything I associate myself with as I personally felt the effects of not being accepted in some of these

organizations. I became a catalyst to embrace diversity and full participation amongst my community.

While in college, I approached matters that will help promote diversity. As a student ambassador, I used my platform to spread educational opportunities at college fairs to the youths who I knew did not have any aspiration to enter college. As a mentor for my University's summer program, I enforce the necessity of embracing each other's culture and learning from one another. Throughout my personal experience while in college, I placed myself around a diverse society that taught me how to understand and accept people different from all walks of life as it is very important in the world we live in today. Furthermore, I managed to encounter new concepts, values, and behaviors that helped me to manage more complex situations, which has also helped me to actively think and develop more intellectual and academic skills.

Living in a diverse society has helped me to be more fulfilling in social relationships, understanding and considering the ideas and perspectives of others. Which in turn has helped me in managing my professional life as I now manage to speak new languages to bring proper customer service to my patients. Diversity within my profession continues to expose me to cultures and backgrounds and teaches me to work with others, as it increases my creativity which is very vital as an occupational therapist. I have learned to execute strategies with other people who have different points of view and solutions to problems, allowing me to have a greater chance of a workable solution to problems. I have also gained a broader skill sense and growth working across cultures as it has been an enriching experience, allowing me to learn about perspectives and traditions from around the world. I have been able to bond over similarities and differences while abandoning prejudices and worldviews. My diverse set of colleagues in my profession has exposed me to new approaches to work and developing international networks.