

Health Promotion Practice presents...
Voices of Black Authors in HPP

Ramine Alexander, PhD, MPH

Introduction

Dr. Alexander is an Assistant Professor in Food and Nutritional Sciences at North Carolina A&T State University in the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences. As an intervention scientist, her research focuses on the use of Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approaches and the incorporation of the Strong Black Woman Scheme to improve lifestyle risk factors (i.e., diet and physical activity) that have a direct relevance to obesity and chronic disease in black women and children. The internalization of the SBW scheme has been used as a protective barrier to overcome gender and race-related obstacles, however, it can negatively impact mental and physical health. Hence, she is involved in studies that intertwine the CBPR approach and the SBW ideal to develop evidence-based interventions that have a holistic approach to improving obesity-related outcomes. Through CBRP approaches a primary goal of her work is to involve the voice of the community in the research process to promote intervention sustainability.



Where were you born?

Charlotte, NC

Where did you grow up?

Charlotte, NC

Where did you go to college?

Winston-Salem State University, BS-Exercise Science

Virginia Tech PhD- Human Nutrition, Foods, and Exercise; MPH Health Education

Ramine Alexander

Dr. Alexander has a passion for building health equity, conducting research on the determinants of health disparities through a racial equity lens, and using innovative approaches to communicate science to ensure people have the needed tools to make informed decisions regarding their personal health. As the co-advisor of the Food and Nutritional Sciences Club, Dr. Alexander is a faculty mentor and aids in building student leaders to fuel their passion for resolving issues affecting diet-related disparities. During her free time, she enjoys traveling, listening to music, exploring new restaurants, and spending time with family and friends.

What does being African American/Black mean to you?

Being Black has a host of meanings for me, so I cannot encompass that in one definition. However, I recognize that I come from trailblazers of legacy leaders who, against the odds sacrificed so that I can navigate this world while fully embracing who I am. I recognize the complexities we still face today; however, it feels good to be Black. I am proud, humbled, and full of gratitude.

How does that shape your scholarship and health promotion practice?

This shapes my scholarship and health promotion practice because I want to give back to the community in my research and in my role as a faculty member in the classroom.

Ramine Alexander

Any individual who has influenced or shaped your identity as an African American/Black person?

My parents, community, and church family were critical in shaping my identity as a Black person. They encouraged me to be proud of who I am. The values they instilled in me continue to help and motivate me in life.

Any African American/Black role model that inspired and guided you on your academic path?

Fannie Lou Hammer has been one of my biggest role models that has inspired and guided me on my academic path. She was a civil rights activist who understood the impact social determinants had on the health and wellbeing of Black people in the south. Using her personal dollars, she funded and founded the Freedom Farm Cooperative. One of the first grassroots movements to provide affordable housing, food, and economic freedom for families and farmers in rural Mississippi. She was also a political activist who fought tirelessly for Black people, especially black women to exercise their political muscle. I admire her tenacity, drive, and courage during a time when speaking up would cost you your life and the lives of those around you. As an intervention scientist with a passion for building health equity, and conducting research through a racial equity lens, I am inspired to keep her legacy alive in my research and in the classroom.

Ramine Alexander

2-3 Black authors you are reading now or who have shaped the way you think about things?

I really enjoy reading biographies and bibliographies. I am currently reading Elaine Welteroth's book, *More Than Enough*. It is a great reminder to continue to embrace who you are as we navigate the intersections of life. Another book I enjoyed reading was Yvonne Orji's book, *Bamboozled by Jesus*. She's an actress who has a background in public health. Her book was a great reminder that encouraged me to embrace the journey because we never know where the twist and turns in life will lead us.

How do you celebrate and honor your African American/Black heritage during the month of February?

I have two fabulous nieces (5 and 3 years old) so during the month of February, I enjoy our Facetime calls talking about Black history and what being Black means to them. Children have a way of communicating in wise and simplistic language so our conversations are always encouraging and funny.

How do you celebrate and honor your African American/Black heritage in your everyday life?

I honor Black heritage by being blessed to work with and support students from different walks of life. In my role as faculty, I not only teach but mentor, advise, and connect students to resources that can support their professional dreams. I am also serving on a scholarship board Kreative Solutions HCBU Scholarship

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Foundation (KR Scholars) a nonprofit organization that provides scholarships to students attending HBCUs.

Is there anything else you would like to share with aspiring African American students or new scholars? Any advice, words of encouragement, lessons learned?

My advice to anyone would be don't take yourself too seriously, but be patient with yourself and always embrace gratitude.

Laughter is good for the soul, so don't forget to laugh, and lean on your mentors and support system. Lastly, take a deep breath and persevere on this journey of life, because it will work out!

Never give up on your dreams.

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