Personal Statement

For the past five years I’ve resided in the epicenter of science and technology (San Francisco, CA) along with other young, trendy, professional millennials. In casual conversation, we identify with each other by educational attainment, prestige of job title, and future socio-economic trajectory. In formal conversation, we identify with each other through our passion for scientific exploration, the development of cutting-edge technologies, and our hope to improve public health span. These identities allow us to navigate our daily lives content with our success by societal standards while feeling a sense of community that is contributing to the betterment of humanity. However, these identities concurrently allow many to ignore the glaring “elephant in the room”, which is a lack of diverse racial representation with each conversation. Although negligible for others, these encounters accrue to become a realization that I am one of the remaining few professional African American males in San Francisco.

My status as a *privileged* African American male residing in San Francisco has protected me from various vulnerabilities. Access to quality health care, owning a car for personal transportation, and the ability to complete work from home are *privileges* many in my broader community lack. Increasingly more relevant, these same *privileges* are implicated as contributing to the disproportionate number of African American deaths during the ongoing Coronavirus Pandemic (Godoy & Wood, 2020). Notable social inequities like those listed above, motivate me to question how I can contribute to the improvement of social disparities and health outcomes within the African American community. I view your program as paramount to addressing all of these questions. My interest in your Community Health online MPH program is reflective of my desire to advance health equity within my community. I’m confident that your program will provide me with knowledge to actively participate in dialogue held by San Francisco Department of Public Health community leaders involved in Community Health Equity & Promotion, specifically the AAHI (African American Health Initiative).

Upon graduation, I immediately aspire to create youth targeted programs that would reform traditional schooling systems and increase representation of African American students in science and technology. My goal would be to work with community leaders and utilize existing programs to increase educational outreach. In action, I would leverage my expertise and involvement in research and development to promote African American youth engagement in internship programs. Subsequently, by bridging the gap between public and private sectors, I intend to create a pipeline in which underrepresented African American students could flow into research and development positions and begin a career at premiere private biotech companies. In addition, I aspire to pursue further post-graduate work in the fields of Metabolism and Immunology. I would select to focus my research on the social and behavioral factors unique among African Americans, which lead to a higher incidence of underlying health conditions such as diabetes, obesity, and autoimmunity. I see both educational outreach and research of unique social and behavioral factors as an unmet need that could improve health outcomes and health equity while decreasing health disparities within the African American community. As stated beautifully by [Dr. Alicia Fernandez](https://profiles.ucsf.edu/alicia.fernandez), a professor of medicine at the University of California San Francisco, “I believe it is incumbent on all of us to realize that the health of all of us depends on the health of each of us," (Godoy & Wood, 2020).