



▲ Figure 1. Dr. Oriairo's daughter, Ofy, surrounded by books about her parents' professions.



▲ Figure 2. Dr. Oriairo and her husband, Victor, hiking in the Grand Canyon before the COVID-19 pandemic.



▲ Figure 3. Dr. Oriairo off-roading with her family in Marble Falls, Texas.



▲ Figure 4. Dr. Oriairo enjoying one of her favorite methods of self-care during the pandemic: outdoor yoga.



▲ Figure 5. Dr. Oriairo as an intern with a young mentee.

MENTORSHIP, DIVERSITY ADVOCACY, AND MOTHERHOOD



Much of my time spent outside of ophthalmic practice is dedicated to bolstering diversity within it.

BY AMENZE OSA ORIAIFO, MD

For many Nigerian Americans, myself included, the three career paths we are told will bring the most honor to our families are medicine, law, and engineering. At first, I rebelled against this notion of selecting a career based on my parents' approval, but my love of science and making personal connections with others ultimately led me to medicine.

WHEN PRESENCE BIRTHS POSSIBILITY

It wasn't until my second year of medical school at The Ohio State University College of Medicine that I discovered what an ophthalmologist does. I, of course, knew people had eye surgeries, but I wasn't sure who performed those procedures until then. Two of my professors were invaluable to my decision to pursue ophthalmology as a career. Paul A. Weber, MD, introduced me to ophthalmology, and Gloria P. Fleming, MD, mentored me and kept me here. She was the first Black

ophthalmologist I had ever met, and her presence birthed possibility in my mind.

I realize now that my own presence in ophthalmology can provide that same possibility for others. It's so much harder to believe that you can achieve something when you've never seen anyone like you achieve it. I therefore spend time outside of the office mentoring young trainees interested in medicine and ophthalmology and advocating for more racial diversity in the field via social media and other avenues.

My love for mentorship started while I was in medical school, when I created the "Makin' It to Med School 101" weekend course and clinical skills lab for pre-med students throughout the state of Ohio. We recently celebrated the course's 10th anniversary.

Producing the annual course allows me to share my love of medicine and ophthalmology with trainees and help the next generation of ophthalmologists formulate a game plan to attain their

goals. I also encourage them to remain open-minded about their options. My mentees are likely to hear me say that the road to medicine and ophthalmology will be difficult, but they will never hear me say it is impossible.

PROMOTING DIVERSITY

There is more diversity in ophthalmology than when I entered the field, but it is still lacking. I believe that new trainees should better represent the national population. Groups that are underrepresented in medicine are unfortunately even more underrepresented in the field of ophthalmology.

I work with the National Medical Association's ophthalmology section, and I use my social media accounts to introduce more Black, Latinx, and Native American students to the beautiful eye and the work we ophthalmologists do to preserve it. If I can reach these and other students

earlier in their training, they can better prepare themselves to join our field.

A SATISFYING WORK-LIFE FIT

I enjoy my life as a new mom, seeing the world through the eyes of my daughter, Ofure (pronounced off-hooray, Figure 1). It has been an incredible experience navigating medicine and motherhood. Unfortunately, because of COVID-19, my family hasn't been able to travel as much as we would like (despite getting a passport for Ofure when she was 2 months old), but my husband, Victor, and I have found other ways to explore our surroundings safely with Ofy.

We take hikes and go off-roading around the hilly Austin area (Figures 2 and 3), cook new recipes with our grocery deliveries, have Nigerian and CoComelon dance parties in our living room, and make the most of holidays and special occasions with Zoom and FaceTime. Throughout this past year, self-care has also been essential for me.

Outdoor yoga is one of my favorite methods of self-care (Figure 4).

There is no such thing as true work-life balance for anyone, but ophthalmology affords me a satisfying work-life fit and compromise. This field makes it easier to do what I love in all parts of my life.

YOU CAN'T BE WHAT YOU CAN'T SEE

The documentary *Miss Representation* premiered at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival. In the film, Marian Wright Edelman, founder and president emerita of the Children's Defense Fund, said, "You can't be what you can't see."¹ I believe this wholeheartedly. It is much more difficult to achieve a goal, as a woman, as a person of color, as anyone, without representation and mentorship. To those who find my passions unnecessary, I often pose this question: If you were randomly asked to draw or paint a picture of three ophthalmologists, would any of them look like me? I long for the day when a pause doesn't follow.

I could talk about my global ophthalmology electives to Ghana and Costa Rica or ziplining through the Monte Verde cloud forest. Or I could talk about my love of singing, drama club, and Broadway musicals or say that I sing to my patients in the clinic and the OR. Instead, I want to share topics that may not often appear on this platform. Outside of the office, I am a multifaceted woman, and I enjoy working to introduce the field of ophthalmology to youths and trainees so that their exposure comes well before their second year of medical school (Figure 5). ■

1. Newsom JS. *Miss Representation* [streaming]. Ross, CA: Girls' Club Entertainment; 2011.

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