

[The National Black Nurses Association \(NBNA\): Professional development leadership and supporting minority inclusion in health research.](#)

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Millicent Gorham PhD (Hon), MBA, FAAN, is the Executive Director of the National Black Nurses Association (NBNA), a long-time "Movement is Life" collaborator, and a champion of the health benefits of physical activity. Here she discusses how the NBNA is leading many facets of minority representation and participation in healthcare. With Rose Gonzalez PhD, MPS, RN.

Dr. Gonzalez: Hello, you are listening to the Health Disparities Podcast from Movement Is Life, conversations about health disparities with people who are working to eliminate them. I'm Dr. Rose Gonzalez and today I'm discussing health disparities in the nursing profession and arena with Dr. Millicent Gorham, the Executive Director of the National Black Nurses Association. Thank you, Millicent, for joining me today.

Dr. Gorham: Thank you, my pleasure.

Dr. Gonzalez: So, you have such an incredible background and a wealth of experience. Just tell me a little bit about yourself, where you're from, what you do and some of your experience because I think it's just incredible the work that you've done.

Dr. Gorham: Well, thank you so much. I am a native Washingtonian. I've been with the National Black Nurses Association for 25 years, started in October 5 1995. And so, it's been a joy working with the nurses and meeting and knowing whole new cadre of nurses from around the country, quite frankly, outside of the country, as well. My previous experience has been as a Hill staffer with Congressman Lewis Stokes. I ran the Congressional Black Caucus health brain trust for four years, which brought into Washington four times a year, 600 health advocates who got a chance to go up to Capitol Hill and talk to their members of Congress about healthcare issues. From there, I worked with the American Optometric Association as a lobbyist for them for nine years. And then with the National Rural Health Association, I was there for four years. I was their only lobbyist, until we started to work on the Clinton healthcare plan, you remember that very well and we hired one of our board members. So, she had the House side, I had the Senate side and that's how we got more healthcare for rural Americans. So, I've been around for a lot of years and involved in a number of different kinds of healthcare advocacy programs.

Dr. Gonzalez: That's amazing and I think what the listeners don't know is that you and I have known each other since the '90s. I know you started in '95, I started in '94, here in DC and actually participated in one of Millicent's, lobby days with NBNA and learn of the work that she was doing in

advocacy. But the other kind of tidbit that I just realized is, you work for the optometric and I worked with the board of optometry in New York State.

Dr. Gorham: Oh, my goodness. How amazing.

Dr. Gonzalez: I can't believe that we shared that in common I'm like blown away right now. So, anyway, I know that you represent NBNA or the National Black Nurses Association on the Movement Is Life steering committee, and you've been pivotal in their work. So, tell me a little bit more about NBNA and some of the work that you do to help Movement Is Life and work on health disparities.

Dr. Gorham: Great, thank you. The National Black Nurses Association has been around since 1971. We've had 12 presidents during that time and glad to say that Dr. Eric J. Williams is our current president. He is our first male president and the 12th President of the National Black Nurses Association; we represent 350,000 African American Nurses around the country. We have 114 chapters in 35 states and hope to bring on five new chapters this year. The Movement Is Life Caucus has been wonderful for the National Black Nurses Association and very proud that we've been a part of this for eight years, now, almost since its inception. So, we were very instrumental in the continuing education

program that movement is life has on its website or that NBNA also has a link to the website. So, any nurse can go to our website, or the Movement Is Life Caucus's website and takes the continuing education class and get two hours of CPE. So, we're instrumental in that we've worked on focus groups with that at our annual conference and also in the community along with the National Association of Hispanic nurses, as well. So, we're very happy about putting that project together. The Movement Is Life Caucus has been at our annual conference and members of the Caucus has spoken at our annual conference, letting the nurses know how important it is about movement and how impactful movement is in relationship to the chronic diseases that they may have but more importantly, the chronic diseases their patients have. Those chronic diseases like cardiovascular disease and diabetes and hypertension and cancer, movement has a tremendous impact, and brain health, movement has on that as well. And so, we've been very fortunate that the caucus members have come as a matter of fact, Dr. Carla Harwell has a following at the NBNA conference. She's had a breakfast at 6:30 in the morning where the nurses are clamoring to get there and she has her squad, that's what we're going to call them, her cheering squad is there at 6:30 in the morning. So, we appreciate giving that kind of information out to our members' and also, we've been a part of the Medicare town hall meetings that The Movement Is Life Caucus has been putting on in Chicago and in Los Angeles. And so, our

chapter members have been instrumental in getting people to those town hall meetings. So, we want to thank the Movement Is Life Caucus for being an integral part of NBNA.

Dr. Gonzalez: And, you know, movement is live has been partnered with NBNA and, you know, NBNA has been instrumental, like you've said in helping us to reach out to communities of color, and to reach out to nurses and get them involved and, to learn about Movement and to share our messaging, you know?

Dr. Gorham: Absolutely. And one of the beauties of that was also this year, we were able to get our past president, Dr. C. Alicia Georges, who is also the president of AARP, who also came to speak at the November 2018 Conference.

Dr. Gonzalez: That's right. And she really, really got to the audience. She's a powerful speaker and she had some pearls of wisdom that she shared with the group and we hope that we can continue our work with Dr. Georges in the future. So, your partnership with her helps Movement Is Life to get into other arenas, too.

Dr. Gorham: Especially with 39 million members.

Dr. Gonzalez: Yes.

Dr. Gorham: That's a big audience to get in front of and a big audience to get some more champions around the MIL Caucus messaging.

Dr. Gonzalez: And I would say that the Black Nurses Association, under your leadership has really fostered the development of African American Nurses and black nurses and many of your members are in top leadership positions, running systems. And I think people don't understand their power, you know, even Dr. Georges, the President, of the volunteer at AARP incredible positions that they're in. So, talk to me a little bit about how your organization helps to nurture and provide that network for them.

Dr. Gorham: You know, the beauty of the National Black Nurses Association is that we do have top leaders, nurse leaders, all over the country who are Chief Nursing Officers and senior VPs of patient healthcare services and some large healthcare systems all over the country. We have Deans of schools of nursing all over this country who are fostering these brand-new nurses and nursing students and getting them out into the community and helping them to better understand how they can make their impact, a nurse's impact on communities. So, one of the things that we put together within NBNA is a mentorship program, and

that mentorship program has three-pronged approach. It reaches out to those young nurses who are coming out of nursing school within the first five years of their practice a pairing them with seasoned nurses will be able to help impact their ability to practice and get them to go back to school to get that master's degree. And then, the second layer is for those middle nurses, those nurses who are pushing up that career ladder, who want to be able to get more certifications, who want to get on advisory committees, like the Movement Is Life Caucus and be able to make that kind of impact. And then, the third layer, those nurses who are in that C suite. We want to make sure that they can know about the funding that they need to get in order to get the services out to the community. And, also, to get them on advisory committees and corporate boards, so that they can sit at the table and help these corporations make those kinds of decisions.

Dr. Gonzalez: Yeah, because if you're not at the table, you're on the menu. That's what we say, that is what we say. And I applaud the work that NBNA has done and, you know, just coming from a personal perspective, as a young woman, person of color, Latina going into school, you frequently are the only one.

Dr. Gorham: It's kind of like being on Capitol Hill.

Dr. Gonzalez: Exactly.

Dr. Gorham: And as a lobbyist being the only one, and at the hearings being the only one, and then having to make sure that you step up to the plate to advocate for the underrepresented, very vulnerable populations.

Dr. Gonzalez: And where people sometimes don't want to listen or hear, they want to shut down, and so it takes a great deal of stamina and fortitude and persistence, you know, and I applaud your work with the brain health trust, working with that, because that continues today, really illuminating some of those...

Dr. Gorham: April eighth and ninth here in Washington DC.

Dr. Gonzalez: Wow. And that illuminates all the disparities that are occurring in our communities of color. And so, it's still an uphill battle. We try to make it and it almost seems like one step forward, two steps back, but we never give up.

Dr. Gorham: We never give up. We can't afford to give up because there's so many people who are counting on us to lend our voices where they're voiceless people who may not know where to go or what to say that we're they're advocates for them. And that's been the beauty of the



Movement Is Life Caucus that we've been able to go to Capitol Hill, we got a bill out there by Congressman John Lewis of Georgia. How wonderful is that? Absolutely, absolutely. And I think this year, the Movement Is Live Caucus is going to be speaking at the National Minority Quality Forum, which is also a part of the Congressional Black Caucus Health Brain Trust, as well. I will be there. I will throw up my two shouts out for the Movement Is Life Caucus, as I talk about the NIH, All of Us research program that the National Black Nurses Association has been a part of.

Dr. Gonzalez: Oh, you do want to tell us a little bit about that?

Dr. Gorham: Oh, sure, absolutely. We've been very supportive of this program for the last year, actually, two years, I believe, but the last year, we've had 13 of our chapters to be a part of the All of Us research program. And what we've done is to have the chapters to go talk to nurses, talk to nursing students and other healthcare providers, talk to the community about the program, the program is seeking to get one million enrollees around the country, people who are living in the United States, people of all shapes, sizes, color, nationality, whatever, to enroll into the program, half of which they're anticipating will be people of color. And the intent is to get the data from these people, what kinds of diseases that they might have, or might not have to get their body fluids. So, a

little bit of saliva and blood, and be able to have a database so that medical researchers and nurse researchers will be able to go to those databases. It's all anonymous, they're really holding to privacy and confidentiality. And so, that makes it a big help in terms of trust, particularly in communities of color. And so, those researchers will be able to go to that database and begin to look at new novel treatments and modalities that may be able to save some lives.

Dr. Gonzalez: That's incredible. That's exciting.

Dr. Gorham: That's very exciting, very cutting edge information and we're really excited about it. The next phase of this is, we have a group of four nursing organizations that are now going to go out to their colleagues to get the nurses to enroll in the program. And so, that's very exciting for all of us and what that portends for this database and getting some new treatment modalities.

Dr. Gonzalez: Wow. This is incredible work. I mean every time I hear you, you're doing something even bigger and more exciting, I don't even know how you make it through a day. I really don't. So, I think your work is as I've said numerous times incredible, fantastic and now I'm really cutting edge.

Dr. Gorham: So, can you imagine if we can get all of the listeners from this podcast who can go out there and get enrolled and also find out more about osteoarthritis and different kinds of modalities that the Movement Is Life Caucus has been talking about and helping them to think about, well, what about your physical activity? And what about changing your eating habits? And what about getting some rest? And what about making sure that you're getting your family all involved in these kinds of activities that will help all of us have longer lives and better quality of lives and that's what the Movement Is Life Caucus is all about.

Dr. Gonzalez: I think you know, the thought of us dealing with the Vicious Cycle, right, the osteoarthritis joint pain and activity, moving on to more inactivity, the obesity than the comorbid conditions of diabetes, which plagues both the Latino and the African American communities. Diabetes, coronary artery disease, as well as depression that's rarely spoken about but it really does. Once you get isolated and you're a mobile and inactive that depression keeps going and that's what we're working together. And this will be a help to try to help us identify what are the diseases out there and how we better improve treatment for these diseases for our communities of color. So, if you were to leave our listeners with some healthcare, pearls of wisdom, with your knowledge and experience and working with the health brain trust and now with

NIH, pearls of wisdom, related to healthcare and healthcare disparities, what would they be?

Dr. Gorham: My pearl of wisdom would be for every young person who's already a size four, stay a size four. I want you to take your mama, your daddy, your auntie, your grandparents, your best friend, the dog, and take a walk around the block or two or three, to get them to the pool for water aerobics. Literally it's going to save everybody's life and some time because at the end of the day, when we really think about it, if we're not careful, it's going to prolong the kinds of diseases that we're seeing now. And we want to stop those diseases right now with the younger generation. That's why I'm saying about that child that's size four. Okay, I'll be realistic, a size 10 or that guy that's out there with that 32-inch waist, you know, continue to play basketball or if you don't want to play basketball anymore, just get out there and walk and hike, become active. It's going to be the best part of your life.

Dr. Gonzalez: Those are great pearls of wisdom Millicent, this is Movement Is Life, so thank you so much for joining us today.

Dr. Gorham: Thank you.

Dr. Gonzalez: And for being on this Movement Is Life Health Disparities Podcast. And I want our listeners to please check out our website at [movementislifecaucus.com](http://movementislifecaucus.com) and join us in moving the needle towards health equity in the musculoskeletal arena. Thank you so much Millicent.

Dr. Gorham: Thank you so much, Rose. I appreciate it.

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