



UCSF Department of Medicine ZUCKERBERG SAN FRANCISCO GENERAL

Learning From, Celebrating, and Nurturing Communities from Where They Came

This month, we reflect on the rich and diverse contributions of staff and faculty who share how their journeys help inspire their work and prepare them to meaningfully contribute to our missions at ZSFG, UCSF, and beyond.

Abraham Nelson
Celebrating and Nurturing Community

“A lot of people who are part of Black history are unsung heroes – they aren’t in the textbooks,” said Abraham Nelson, Executive Analyst for Neil R. Powe, MD, MPH, MBA, Chief of Medicine at ZSFG.

In his mother’s house is a biography about Black Panther Huey Newton, who was a family friend. The inscription reads, “All Power to the People! Love, Huey.” “My family’s always been adjacent to the movement, fighting for civil rights,” said Mr. Nelson. “The Black Panthers always preached about community, like with free lunch programs.”



He grew up in Hayward, raised by a single mother who taught him to treat others with respect. “She encouraged me to avoid tunnel vision and to



be open to multiple ways of thinking,” said Mr. Nelson. “I always want to be working, learning, and expanding my network.”

While earning a bachelor’s degree in business administration from San Francisco State University, he participated in the Willie L. Brown, Jr. Fellowship Program, which places students in internships within public agencies. “Ever since I had that first internship at the Controller’s Office, it opened my mind to being in public service,” said Mr. Nelson. “I really enjoy being in community, and I’m big on the ‘it-takes-a-village’ mindset.”

Although he considers himself an introvert, he spent a summer as a residential assistant for high school students participating in the School of the New York Times, a journalism academy in New York. “It helped me open up, and my boss saw I was good with the kids and communicated well, so he gave me the opportunity to become the operations manager the next year,” said Mr. Nelson. In that role, he managed a budget of more than \$1 million for students’ food vouchers, MetroCards, and supplies. “I was just 20 years old, but handling that responsibility gave me the foundation and confidence to hold a managerial role,” he said.





He then spent two years as a recruiting coordinator at Google, helping the candidate interview process run smoothly. While he gained valuable skills, Mr. Nelson missed the focus on community he had experienced in previous jobs. So when the ZSFG Department of Medicine recruited him, he was delighted. “Every day I go to work, I know what we’re doing is changing people’s lives for the better,” he said. “That’s very rewarding.”

When he joined ZSFG in 2023, the campus was emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic. “I helped with the transition back to in-person events and having a more in-person culture,” said Mr. Nelson. He coordinated a winter clothing drive, and helps plan faculty tea talks, staff appreciation, and awards ceremonies. He also manages Dr. Powe’s schedule and provides administrative and operational support, and uses his recruiting background to assist with the hiring process for new division chiefs.

Mr. Nelson draws on other life experiences when carrying out his varied duties. “I grew up not having much and learned how to make the most out of what I had,” he said. “I can take a limited amount of resources and turn them into something very meaningful.” For example, he helps plan creative and vibrant staff appreciation events on a shoestring, negotiating with vendors for affordable prices. Attending diverse schools throughout his education helped him learn

about many different cultures, which helps him communicate effectively with a wide range of people and plan thoughtful cultural celebrations. “It’s really important for people to be represented, appreciated, and known,” he said. “I’m really big on spotlighting cultural heritage and diversity.”

One of his long-term dreams is to create a financial literacy nonprofit to educate both adults and children in lower-income communities. “I want to equip people with the foundational skills to learn about things like an APY [annual percentage yield], or what it means to take out a loan,” said Mr. Nelson. “If they have that knowledge, it will be harder to be played by predatory lending companies.”

In his free time, Mr. Nelson enjoys watching movies, cheering on the Raiders, and traveling internationally.

For him, Black History Month is about looking at both the past and future. “In times of hardship and uncertainty, it’s important to remember what my ancestors, Black historical legends, and people in the community did, and how we can use that history in our everyday lives,” said Mr. Nelson. “I try to show my appreciation for everything that occurred before me by being an example of Black excellence every day.”

**Dr. Lurit Bepo
Paying It Forward**

Lurit Bepo, MD, MPH, was born in what is now South Sudan, and moved to Dallas with her family when she was six. “As an immigrant myself, I’ve always had this thread of thinking about immigrants and minority populations, and what access looks like for



them,” said Dr. Bepo, Assistant Professor in the UCSF Division of Hospital Medicine at ZSFG. “That’s part of why I work at the General, because those populations make up a large portion of the patients we serve.”

In addition to caring for hospitalized patients, she also directs the Richard Fine People’s Clinic Procedure Clinic and works with patients with substance use disorder. She is one of the addiction providers for the Heart Plus Clinic; it helps patients with heart disease caused by stimulants like cocaine or methamphetamine to reduce or stop their drug use.

Dr. Bepo is also passionate about medical education, and is part of the leadership team for the UCSF Program in Medical Education for the Urban Underserved (PRIME-US), a state-funded program that trains medical students how to care for vulnerable populations, including those who are unhoused, struggling with addiction or mental health issues, or incarcerated.

“I felt very ‘other’ when I first moved to the U.S., and my siblings and I were the first generation to navigate the system of higher education,” said Dr. Bepo. “A lot of our PRIME-US students are first gen or children of immigrants, and they are so impressive. I stood on the shoulders of people who came before me, and now I get to pay it forward.”

“This semester we are focusing on legislative policy and advocacy, and we’re teaching students the skills to write a policy brief, do a social media campaign, and write an op-ed,” continued Dr. Bepo. “We need to use our privilege as health care workers to move the needle on policy decisions that fundamentally impact patients. I love this work, and at this moment of history, we need more of that.”

While her path has not always been easy, Dr. Bepo looks back on some detours that proved to be serendipitous. As a college student, she was double-majoring in

biology and international studies when she hit a roadblock: her international studies program required study abroad, which she couldn't afford. "Then the happiest accident happened," she said. Many of her classes were cross-listed with anthropology, so she changed her second major to anthropology and discovered that the department also included public health courses. "Public health and global health fit really well with biology," she said.

She went on to earn both a Master of Public Health degree as well as a medical degree. After spending time in South Sudan shadowing doctors, she realized that the U.S. had many of the same health disparities and decided to shift her focus to domestic health policy. After completing the ZSFG Primary Care (SFPC) track of the UCSF Internal Medicine Residency Program and a year as chief resident, Dr. Bepo joined the ZSFG faculty and completed the National Clinician Scholars Program, a health policy fellowship. "I love policy work and being able to effectuate change at a big level," she said.

As the mother of two young children, Dr. Bepo is now navigating life as both a doctor and parent. "How do you do this meaningful work while also devoting yourself to family?" she said. "People who are very senior faculty have emphasized the non-linear nature of their careers, and making the best of the available options."

She received helpful advice from one of her mentors, Joanie Addington-White, MD, SFPC Director and Professor in the ZSFG Division of General Internal Medicine. "She said, 'Think about this time in your life as a season. It's okay to take a step back in this phase,'" recalled Dr. Bepo. To make more time for family, she recently shifted to a part-time schedule. "Since becoming a parent, I realized that probably the biggest impact I will have is through raising hardworking, curious, honest, compassionate people," she said. "Current

times really emphasize the importance of that."

When thinking about Black History Month, Dr. Bepo reflects on the many facets it encompasses. "Black history isn't just one thing – it's very broad and expansive," she said. In these challenging times, she believes it's more important than ever to live authentically. "I try to find time to pour back into myself," she said. "Playing 'pretend' with my kids and witnessing their innocence, getting out in nature, and connecting with friends all help me reconnect with joy, which allows me to come in with a fuller cup and find strength in hard times."

**Dr. Uchenna Nwosu
Extending the Opportunity**

Uchenna Nwosu, MD, MHS, grew up in Macon, Georgia, the son of Nigerian and Jamaican immigrants. His father was the first Black nephrologist in the Middle Georgia area, and as a child, Dr. Nwosu accompanied his father to the clinic, where he played next to the dialysis machines.



"I saw a lot of people who looked like me on dialysis, but I never heard about any of them getting a kidney transplant," said Dr. Nwosu, now Assistant Professor in the UCSF Division of Nephrology at ZSFG. "It wasn't until later that I understood the health disparities behind why so many Black folks develop end-stage renal disease." African Americans comprise 13% of the U.S. population but represent 36% of the patients with end-stage kidney failure. Dr Nwosu said, "My father worked seven days a week, taking care of patients no one else would see because they had poorly controlled diabetes,

high blood pressure, and a lot of [adverse] social determinants of health. It took more effort and a little creativity to manage these patients, but he was willing to help them get their medications or make two or three phone calls to make sure they followed up."

That experience inspired Dr. Nwosu in his own work. "Whether or not a patient looks like me, I want to be the person who's pushing for excellent care for them," he said. "I'm always thinking, 'What more can we do? What resources can we provide? If this was my mom or dad, how would I want their doctor to care for them?'"

He works hard to communicate in a way that patients can understand. "If a patient is just hearing that their kidney function is at five percent and they need to start dialysis, I deliver that news in pieces," said Dr. Nwosu. "I'll say, 'I know this is a lot to take in,' and take care of any urgent things. Then I'll call them a couple times before their next appointment to see how they're doing, and share a little more information about getting a temporary catheter, medications they'll need to take, or changing their diet. It's baby steps."

Dr. Nwosu didn't always know he would become a doctor. He studied sociology and government in college, worked briefly in politics, and even applied to culinary school as his medical school fallback plan. He still loves to cook and shares nutritional tips with patients. "I'm honest with patients and





ZSFG DOM at The People's Gala 2026 (from left to right): Joy Okoro (Experimental Medicine), Sara Suliman (Experimental Medicine), Katrina Peters (Psychiatry), Neil Powe, Nike Omomukuyo (Nephrology), Leonard Telesca, and Uchenna Nwosu (Nephrology)

tell them I've struggled with my own weight, and the success I've had is about the small changes," he said. "I ask them what they like to eat, and if they say gumbo, I'll suggest substituting eggplant or other vegetables for the Andouille sausage. Some people come back and say, 'I tried that, and it was pretty good – I couldn't even tell the sausage was missing.'"

As an internal medicine resident at Kaiser Permanente Oakland, he learned a lot about communication from attendings with deep knowledge of palliative care. "If a patient has difficulty accepting a diagnosis, I ask myself what I can do to gain their trust," said Dr. Nwosu. "Oftentimes I ask, 'Hey, is there something from the past that happened to you that's making you think this way?' Ninety-five percent of the time, they say, 'Yeah, I was told such-and-such, but it didn't happen.' Usually, it just takes listening and asking the right question to pull out the underlying issue. After we clear that up, then we can talk about the medical aspects of care."

He appreciates the collegial environment of ZSFG, whether he's partnering with

social workers to arrange meal delivery for food-insecure patients or glean tips from rheumatology colleagues about how to obtain medications for patients who can't afford them. "I love the faculty, staff, and patients at the General," said Dr. Nwosu. "This is where my people are. When I came here as a fellow, I felt the warmth. We're all in it together to achieve the best outcomes and provide excellent care for our patients."

Dr. Nwosu is also passionate about medical education, and serves as site director for the UCSF nephrology fellowship program. "I'm standing on the shoulders of giants, and I feel obligated to extend that same opportunity to the next generation of trainees," he said. "I not only teach about clinical medicine, but also share tidbits about health disparities and urge them to be their patients' advocate. As nephrologists, we see patients three times a week in a dialysis clinic, and witness them during their best and worst times. We get to be their champion through their entire journey."

-Elizabeth Chur

Editors: Neil Powe, Leonard Telesca, Ali Cunningham

SPOTLIGHT

- **Peter Hunt, MD**, has been appointed as the interim Division Chief of the Division of Experimental Medicine.
- **Andreas Mitchell, MD, MPP**, Division of General Internal Medicine, has been appointed as the ZSFG Medical Director for Performance Excellence and Improvement
- **Gato Gourley**, has expanded his role as Division Manager for both the Division of Health and Society at ZSFG and the Division of Clinical Informatics and Digital Transformation at UCSF Health
- **Angela Suen, MD**, Division of Pulmonary, Critical Care, Allergy, and Sleep Medicine, has been awarded the 2026 American Society for Clinical Investigation Emerging-Generation Award
- **Audrey Xu**, has recently been hired as the new Quality Improvement Analyst for the DOM at ZSFG.
- **Ana Velazquez Mañana, MD, MSc**, Division of Hematology and Oncology, was recently elected to the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) Nominating Committee.
- **Binh An Phan, MD**, Division of Cardiology, received the 2026 Gifted Teacher Award from the American College of Cardiology.
- Applications are open for the **IMPACT Last Mile Grant Supplements**. The IMPACT Last Mile Grant Supplements are intended to support the dissemination of completed research to policymakers in the governmental and non-governmental sectors. The application is due March 2nd.
- Nominations are open for the **2026 Krevans & Medical Faculty Awards**. The awards will be presented to the recipients at our annual celebration on Tuesday, May 19, 2025.

[2026 Krevans Award Nomination Form](#)
[2026 ZSFG Medicine Faculty Awards](#)