Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a vital figure of the modern era and a pivotal figure in the Civil Rights Movement. His sermons, lectures, and dialogues stirred the concern and sparked the conscience of a generation, and his influence continues to be paramount even today. This year, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day falls on Monday, January 18, 2021. Observed each year on the third Monday in January as "a day on, not a day off," MLK Day is the only federal holiday designated as a national day of service to encourage all Americans to volunteer to improve their communities.

Dr. King’s words have inspired supporters of the Black Lives Matter movement, and his quotes still ring true - linking the protests of the past to today’s movement to end police brutality and systemic injustice in America.

WAYS YOU CAN GET INVOLVED:

- Various Duke programs host identity and cultural trainings each semester. It’s important to keep educating yourself, because no matter how much you think you know, there’s always more to learn!
- White Coats for Black Lives (WC4BL) has a chapter within Duke School of Medicine, hosting monthly Racial Justice Action Hours as well as other events to take action for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).
- The Facebook group SPTs in Solidarity was created by Duke DPT Second Years Maddie Tavino, Eve Guymon, and Kelly Boyle to bring SPTs together in support of DEI. This offers a platform to share events, foster discussions, increase cultural awareness, and promote anti-racism.
"Being a part of a marginalized group does not mean you should be the only one speaking out. Yes, I may care more because I am part of the queer community, but I feel that all patients should be met with the same inclusive mindset. Having experienced homophobic encounters from healthcare professionals, bosses, family, etc., I can’t emphasize enough how much one word can make or break an experience, a person, or someone’s self identity and confidence. Normalizing gender identifying pronouns on immediate encounters opens the doors to discuss sexual orientation and patient care, gender preferences, and every color of the LGBTQIA+ rainbow. I will never forget a neuro encounter in the outpatient setting with a PT resident that by all accounts looked entirely male. After further discussion I noticed he kept looking at my pronoun pin with the trans flag on it and suddenly his immediate feelings of safety and kinship were clear; he was a trans man that felt safe. Safe with me - a stranger in a program he had no real affiliation with.

"Pronouns matter. You never know which patient interaction is going to make or break someone."

"As was highlighted in a previous DiversiTea issue, there exists a paradox in physical therapy in how we approach disability within our practice. It is both something PT students are taught needs to be 'fixed' and something that should be celebrated as diversity. How do we consolidate the two? It is not enough to help people with disabilities adapt to a building, a city, a world that did not take them into consideration when creating the infrastructure of the spaces in which we all live. Rather, we as future PTs must advocate for others to recognize and validate the lived experiences of people with disabilities and make these spaces accommodative in a manner that allows them to succeed without resistance.

"I believe this shifting perspective of advocacy also rings true for all marginalized groups. The more privileged must take action to dismantle the societal structures that place people at an automatic disadvantage and hinder their opportunities for growth and then recreate them in a way that is more equitable and inclusive. Some may argue that this creates unfair preferential treatment for certain groups, and that such action would solely benefit the people in those groups. But in fact, without the barriers that currently exist, once-marginalized people would be able to reach their fullest potential and contribute to their families, communities, cities, and nation with greater, uninhibited, and unique vigor.

"So I ask, how could that not benefit all of us?"
"I never considered physical therapy as a career through high school and most of college. I realized that one reason for this was probably that I had never seen a PT that looked like me before. When I thought of a PT, I really pictured someone white, someone super athletic, someone very fit. I didn’t really fit any of those stereotypes and I still don’t. It discouraged me a little and made me feel that PT wasn’t a career choice for me. Regardless, in my last year of undergrad I knew I loved the profession, and decided to go for it anyway. It wasn’t until much later when I got into PT school that I finally saw some diversity. Not as much as I had hoped, not going to lie, but some was better than none.

"Long story short, I want to be an advocate and let people know that anyone can be a PT. You don’t need to be an athlete or a gymnast or a runner, and you don’t have to be any certain race or ethnicity. All you need is a love of science and a desire to improve people’s lives. I started my blog and Instagram for this reason precisely. I remembered how hard it was for me as a pre-PT to find resources on social media to turn to and relate to. I hope students can see that PTs can be anyone, and I hope that soon everyone can remove a certain stereotypical idea of a physical therapist from their minds."

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**Medicare Physician Fee Schedule**

The final Medicare Physician Fee Schedule for 2021 is calling for an estimated 9% decrease in payment for codes tied to Part B PT services. The cut will do monumental damage - and it won’t be limited to Medicare. Care for military veterans will suffer, as PTs who provide community care will be forced into the same unsustainable reimbursement rates. The same is true for PTs in TRICARE. The cuts will make it impossible for many PTs to continue to provide care, creating PT deserts in communities across the country. The fee schedule is final for 2021, but legislation in Congress could stop implementation of the 9% cut.

Ask Congress to support H.R. 8702!

**Education and Workforce**

PT is recognized as an essential health care service, yet PTs and PTAs are often excluded from state and federal programs that would incentivize individuals from pursuing careers in the field through student loan debt relief or assistance in defraying the cost of education.

**Telehealth**

The COVID-19 pandemic made it clear: the use of telehealth by PTs and PTAs is not only appropriate, but effective in delivering quality care and expanding patient access to that care.

*Telehealth in physical therapy shouldn’t be an emergency-only option.*
Selective Mutism (SM) is a childhood anxiety disorder characterized by a child or adolescent’s inability to speak in one or more social settings (e.g., at school, in public places, with adults) despite being able to speak comfortably in other settings (e.g., at home with family). Those with SM may also be unable to make eye contact, nod their heads, point or make other nonverbal forms of communication when in a social situation that provokes anxiety. It is often mistaken for shyness, which can result in children having a delayed diagnosis, or even being misdiagnosed or undiagnosed. SM affects approximately 1 out of every 150 children between ages 4-7, usually starting during childhood and, if left untreated, can persist into adulthood.

It is important to increase public awareness, education, and understanding of SM. Classmates can be educated and encouraged to help a child with SM by including them, not demanding them to speak, not making a big deal about it if they do hear the child speaking, and not speaking for the child. Parents and professionals should remove all pressures and expectations for the child to speak, as letting the child know that they understand can be the beginning of helping a child overcome their symptoms.
Oluremi Onifade, PT, DPT, M.Ed, CCVT, CCI
Co-Founder of the National Association of Black Physical Therapists (NABPT)

Dr. Oluremi Onifade was born in Kenya to Kenyan and Nigerian parents and moved to the US when she was a toddler. Dr. Onifade was a catalyst in building a bridge program with Spelman College and Auburn University to attract students pursuing careers in allied health. Dr. Onifade earned her DPT at Emory University in 2013. In 2016, she and Dr. DeAndrea Bullock co-founded the National Association of Black Physical Therapists (NABPT) to address the emotions and feelings of the lone minorities embarking on a journey to become PTs and PTAAs. The NABPT reviews current strategies and proposes novel approaches to increasing and supporting underrepresented minorities (URM) in PT such as admissions practices, recruitment and retention of URM PT students and faculty, supporting URM PT students while in the program, increasing exposure of the profession in underrepresented communities, and efforts to increase representation in governance.

Alan Lee, PT, DPT, CSW, GCS, PhD
Telehealth Trailblazing Duke DPT Alumnus

Dr. Alan Lee received his DPT from Duke University in 1994. He is the Telehealth Lead of the Frontiers in Rehabilitation Science and Technology (FiRST) Council and serves as the current Vice President of the HPA Technology SIG in the APTA. Dr. Lee has developed telehealth resources for the APTA and the American Telemedicine Association, among others, and was the Chair of the Digital Physical Therapy Task Force of the World Confederation of Physical Therapy and the International Network of Physical Therapy Regulatory Authorities. Dr. Lee has effectively pushed for a formal widespread adoption of telehealth to increase patient access to care as well as expand the physical therapy market, a need that has been made ever more apparent from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Brendan Sullivan, PT, DPT, OCS, MTC, MSCS, CSCS
Promoting the Profession of Physical Therapy While Combatting the Opioid Epidemic

Dr. Brendan Sullivan earned his DPT in 1997 from Utica College of Syracuse University. He serves on the Workers Compensation Research Institute (WCRI) New York Advisory Committee and the Occupational & Environmental Health Clinic’s (OEHC) Albany Advisory Committee. Dr. Sullivan is Co-Chair of NYPTA’s Opioid Alternative Special Committee, through which he advocated for the PT profession at a New York State Senate Hearing on strategies for reducing overdoses, improving individual and community health, and addressing the harmful consequences of drug use. These efforts fall in line with the APTA’s #ChoosePT campaign’s goal to educate the public on PT as an effective nonopioid and nondrug option in the treatment of chronic pain.
LASTING IMPACTS: HOMEGROWN HEROES

Here are anecdotes from some people within the Duke DPT community who have been advocates, and how that experience left a lasting impact on them or someone else.

Second Year Marcus Taylor
A Multi-Level Leader in Advancing DEI Initiatives

"Naturally, I’m introverted and would prefer to sit in the back of the classroom; but I’ve learned how powerful my voice can be as long as I’m speaking up about something that I’m passionate about. If you have to challenge norms and step on toes to make someone else’s experience better, then it is always worth it."

"Advocacy at Duke:

• Co-author of the Duke DPT Call-to-Action - Identified issues and offered a list of recommended improvements that were composed in a letter and eventually served as a framework for changes within the program. Hosted monthly meetings with program leadership for updates in DEI initiatives.
• Health Professions Anti-Racism Steering Committee - Created subcommittees to identify issues and propose recommendations to create an anti-racist culture across Duke Health.
• Dean’s Student Advisory Council on Diversity & Inclusion - Worked directly with Dean Klotman and other executive board members to enhance communication between the Duke SOM and the students it serves.
• Duke DPT Diversity and Inclusion Committee - Advocated for longstanding community engagement opportunities to repair the relationship between Duke and Durham.
• C/o 2022 Diversity Group - Organized and presented updates to classmates who were interested in staying up-to-date with program advancements in regards to DEI initiatives.
• C/o 2022 Class Officer - Served as an advocate to enhance communication of student needs with faculty.
• Advocated for financial reimbursement for students involved with DEI work."

Second Year Lauren Alexander
Advocating for Visibility and Inclusion Across the Board

"Advocacy has taken a few different forms for me. I have served as a Pride leader at Duke helping to organize trainings for students and faculty that will impact patient care for the LGBTQ+ community. I have served as DPT representation with the Duke Interprofessional Education and Care (IPEC) Center Student Advisory Committee to help advocate for our profession among other medical and science schools at Duke. I am an Area Ambassador for Physical Therapy Moves Me, which is a new APTA initiative to help support programs such as SDP to increase, promote, and support diversity in the field of physical therapy. With the support of classmates and professors, I served as a student representative on the Duke DPT Racial Inequity Task Force. This task force is charged to create action items for change to address the inequity present in the DPT program as well as within the physical therapy profession. Finally, I am furthering my efforts and passion for advocacy for the profession and our patient population as I join the Future Clinician Leaders College this February. I aim to not only advocate for our profession among peers across NC (MD students, PA students, Nursing, PT, OT, etc.), but I also hope to increase the urgency and importance of social determinants of health, racial inequity, transphobia, and much more in the same way my classmates and professors have advocated at Duke. Let’s see if we can get a CDHD course in every NC medical school!"
"Being a descendent of survivors of the Armenian Genocide, which is commemorated on April 24th annually, it is in my nature to fight for injustice and unprovoked hatred towards a group of people. Over a century ago the Ottoman Empire committed a systematic execution of the Armenian people, simply because we exist. Today we fight for our stolen lands and lives lost because the present-day Turkish government and powerhouse countries such as the United States refuse to recognize the first genocide of the 20th century. Their silence further perpetuates violence, as Hitler used the genocide as a blueprint for the Holocaust and even referenced it during one of his speeches. One hundred and six years later, silence from the international community and organizations such as NATO and UNESCO allowed the bombing of a PPE factory in Armenia by Azerbaijan in the midst of a pandemic. On September 26, 2020, a full-scale war erupted as Armenians in Artsakh (internationally known as Nagorno-Karabakh) were attacked by Azeri forces, backed up by Syrian mercenaries sent by Turkey. During this time, Armenian diasporans worldwide protested and raised funds to help our soldiers and afflicted families. Our cries and pleas for help and recognition were once again turned away, leading to the signature of a 'peace treaty' on November 11, 2020 giving away a majority of our lands. After weeks of suffering and a loss of historical lands, Armenian prisoners of war are still being held captive by Azerbaijan, further inflicting pain on families. Our fight continues until our people can find peace in their own home.

"My experience has left a lasting impact on me, my immediate surroundings, and hopefully others who are unfamiliar with Armenia and its history. I now have a deeper understanding of the role that media plays in these situations, as false propaganda was being spread by our more powerful oppressors in efforts to hide our truth. Although our ultimate goal of recognition has yet to be achieved, I witnessed what the love for community can accomplish. People channeled their creative side to create and sell art to send proceeds to Armenia. Businesses donated their funds to Armenia. My friends and I hosted a Farmer’s Market to send proceeds to Armenia. We took it upon ourselves to save what’s left of our country. Collectively, Armenians posted multiple times daily on social media to spread awareness. Although the aforementioned events pained us, there was a strong sense of nationalism that brought us together. Outside of the Armenian community, I will not forget the feeling of unity when classmates or non-Armenian followers asked about or advocated for our cause. For the first time I felt heard, and I hope that their energy carries on with injustices committed worldwide."
LASTING IMPACTS: HOMEGROWN HEROES

Here are anecdotes from some people within the Duke DPT community who have been advocates, and how that experience left a lasting impact on them or someone else.

Second Year Gabby Lauderdale
Paying it Forward and Increasing Accessibility to Duke DPT

"Coming to Duke, I knew that I wanted to be involved in any way that I could. For me, the Summer Discovery Program (SDP) changed my life. I wouldn't be on my way to becoming a physical therapist without it. Being involved in SDP was something that I knew I was going to do. The rise of the Black Lives Matter Movement and the social injustices across the country over the summer made me reflect on my own community, specifically SDP. The program does an amazing job of making minorities feel like we have a place in this profession. However, Duke is a very prestigious school and is sometimes not an option financially to the amazing participants of SDP. Advocating for the program and its participants with faculty about how to bridge this gap was so rewarding. The collaboration with my fellow classmate, Pia Salcedo, and many faculty members who listened to our ideas is the reason why the Duke DPT Summer Discovery Program Scholarship went from being just a thought to a reality. Being just one student, I did not think that my words would change anything. However, the experience of creating a scholarship for a fellow SDP participant has shown me that that is not the case. Anyone and everyone can and should be an advocate and make a difference."

Second Year Mimi Smith
Advocating for the Continued Success of the Duke DPT Community In Spite of COVID-19

"As the President of Duke DPT’s Class of 2022, I best advocate by bridging the gap of communication between the faculty and students. I listen to and gain an appreciation for the needs of my fellow classmates to best guide the faculty on how those needs can be met - whether that is offering advice, helping develop solutions to issues that arise, or volunteering my own time. One of my main efforts this past year was advocating for and actively organizing in-person lab or study experiences for both my class and the class below. Many have been frustrated with the transition to online school due to the pandemic, and it has not only been crucial to the development of our hands-on skills as future clinicians, but has also strengthened the sense of community. For me, advocating is not only speaking on behalf of those I help lead, but also being actively involved to make a change."
LASTING IMPACTS: HOMEGROWN HEROES

Here are anecdotes from some people within the Duke DPT community who have been advocates, and how that experience left a lasting impact on them or someone else.

Second Year Stefanie Stoller
Pushing for the Increased Visibility of Oncology PT

"Advocacy is a skill that I am not confident in. For years I have felt that advocacy requires vulnerability and someone outspoken and brave. Throughout the past two years as a student in the Duke DPT program, I have learned that advocacy, like most other aspects of physical therapy, is not black and white. An advocate does not need to be the most vocal and educated individual in the room, and advocacy does not need to exist in the form of grand gestures. What I have learned throughout this program is that passion can mask the intimidation of advocacy.

"My passion for the integration of physical activity into cancer treatment was sparked in my undergraduate research, however this interest has aimlessly molded into advocacy over the years. Through the creation of the Oncology SIG and participating in interprofessional programs at Duke, my enthusiasm has become a platform for advocacy. Even if I am able to spark an interest in one classmate through a SIG meeting or challenge just one oncologist’s thoughts regarding physical therapy prescription for their patients, that is a successful advocacy effort for me.

"I see passion spark advocacy in so many of my classmates, even in moments when they do not recognize themselves as advocates. Whether it be Monica Khechumian raising a voice for Armenian soldiers, Hannah Mead’s education on mental health resources at Duke, Mimi Smith coordinating with faculty for increased lab hours, John Solokas creating an Instagram platform for health and fitness sharing, Lauren Alexander organizing Pride training, or Erin McClanahan’s continued representation for athletic trainers, our classmates participate in advocacy each and every day, whether they perceive it or not. It is the small but significant voices spoken by each of my classmates’ passions that instills confidence in myself to turn passion into a form of advocacy."

YOU

YOU can be an advocate for whatever cause you think is important, in any way you can - however loudly or "quietly," publicly or privately, large- or small-scale.

You have the opportunity to be a champion for change for yourself and everyone around you.