

# Humans of CDI

## Karen Osborne Greene

Administrative Director for Research, Center for Diversity and inclusion



### **What is your role at MGH? Please describe your journey to getting here.**

As the Administrative Director for Research for CDI, I provide administrative leadership and support of CDI's expansion to the research workforce. This means working with centers and departments across the institution and Harvard to ensure diversity among our researchers. I have the privilege of working with a hardworking and dedicated team at CDI including Elena Olson, Joe Betancourt, Julie Price, Cesar Castro and CDI's team of faculty and administrators who are wonderful!

Of course my journey did not start here. At 15, my first job was at my hometown's bakery, then over the next few years a local gift shop and summer ice cream stand. I believe my management style began to evolve at the early age of 15 at the bakery.

I had 2 direct managers at the bakery. One manager tended to take advantage of her position versus interacting with me as if I were human and part of the team as the other manager did. After those experiences, I knew I wanted to be in a supervising role of my own when I got older and second, I would be a manager who listened and treated all others with the same dignity I desired regardless of their

role, ability, title and definitely race and ethnicity.

My first job out of high school was with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF) which funded Head Start programs across New England via federal assistance awards. This piqued my interest in having a career that involved helping others. After college, I worked for the state, the Massachusetts Cable Commission, currently Department of Telecommunications and Energy. While I learned quite a bit in this role as an administrator/rate analyst and managing consumer cable complaints, I desired to work again with grant awards as I did at DHHS/ACF. This desire led me to Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center where I was the Research Administrator in their Department of Surgery and then about 5 years later and over the next 19 years, Mass General as Sr. Administrative Manager for Research in Hematology Oncology/Cancer Center, Administrative Director for Research in Surgery and later working for ECOR as I do now as well as CDI.

Like many of us, my story includes successes and hidden opportunities, a.k.a. failures. It's all a part of life's journey. I don't recall ever being the only woman in a room, meetings, zoom, etc. but yes, the only African American or UIM.

### **How does it make you feel to be a pioneer at this institution?**

Pioneer? That is quite the term. When I think of "Pioneers" in the area of diversity, equity and inclusion at MGH, I think of faculty like Drs. Win Williams, Sherri-Ann Burnett-Bowie and Elena Olson, who with the support of Mass General and its leadership, created programs like SRTP, PSDA, CTDA almost 20 years ago to help recruit and retain Underrepresented in Medicine (UIM) and created a pipeline and role models for our younger UIM and students interested in healthcare and research when other institutions were not doing this. They are pioneers to me.

Volunteering at organizations like Cradles to Crayons, Rosie's Place, Timilty Middle School's previous Pen Pals program, my church, local non-profits helping to ensure the well-being of others, supporting careers in research, bringing people together across race, ethnicity and ideas, creating and being a supporting resource to our UIM researchers and helping people who may feel disadvantaged in some way are all things that I just enjoy and something that is inspiring to me when I see others doing the same or creating initiatives in this space.

Of course, it has been important to be a role model to my daughter and younger family members in making sure they learn from my mistakes or my solicited advice about college, work and just life. I make sure that my daughter has friends within and outside of her own race and ethnicity. I want to make sure she knows that the world is diverse and that when she is the only person of color or woman in small or large space that should be diverse, she does not feel uncomfortable or as though she does not belong.

### **Who inspires you to do this work?**

Like many of us in healthcare, I have a natural tendency and desire to help. To know that my work brings diverse people together and assists others with their research and career goals, is very rewarding. For this work to increase the number of UIM researchers and

physicians touches my heart. We are helping to make the dreams of our students and even their parents and family's dreams for them to succeed come to pass. Creating opportunities in areas that lack the presence of the diverse community we serve then seeing our UiM and diverse faculty do well and succeed is inspiring. Although I do not know each of the students personally, seeing our new class of young UiM students and trainees enter and graduate from CDI and MGB programs brings a sense of pride and inspiration as well.

Although they have passed on, my parents of 6 children inspire me the most. They were role models in action and not just words. I saw them helping others, using their words to uplift others within and outside of their own race, ethnicity and ability versus tearing them down with gossip and hearsay. Some may say, what does this have to do with being a great leader? A lot. As a leader, role model, your words can show compassion and create life and inspire others or produce the opposite. To me, it's so great when we choose compassion.

**What message would you give to others?**

Remember to listen and lead with compassion. As leaders, our words and actions have significant impact. If we come across something or someone who offends us, let's not lose hope. Whatever our next steps are to overcome, let's remember to stay strong and carry on.

I believe it it's going to take all genders, races, religions and ethnicities to end unequal treatment and inequities among us humans. Let's self-examine, pray and meditate to end this thing called racism. Last but not least, enjoy life as much as you can! 😊