

## Thought Leaders Convened at Summit to Share Innovations Around Eliminating Health Inequities

Lenora Reid-Rose, Director for Cultural Competence and Diversity Initiatives and Nancy Sung Shelton, Sr. Consultant, Cultural Competence and Health Literacy, attended the College of Behavioral Health Leadership's Summit in Richmond, Virginia at Virginia Union University (VUU). VUU is a historically black college, founded in 1865 to give newly emancipated slaves an opportunity for education and advancement. Its powerful history was not lost as Lenora and Nancy gathered and explored important questions, and discussed creative solutions to address eliminating health disparities and increase health equity.

The Summit was a powerful convening of thought leaders from behavioral health organizations across the nation, and Lenora and Nancy had an opportunity to mingle with fellow innovators. They heard about the horrid history of African American mental health treatment presented by Dr. King Davis, a major contributor in the fields of health and mental health focusing on public mental health policy, the provision of culturally competent mental health services, health care for the mentally ill and disparities in rates of illness and services for people of color. The profound and unfortunate truth revealed was that as much as Dr. Davis was detailing historical horrors as experienced by patients in the first Lunacy Psychiatric Hospital for People of Color, the pain and injustice continues in these contemporary times for black and brown people. Dr. Davis posed questions to consider in the effort to confront and address health inequities:

1. What business are you in?
2. Is the organization adequately staffed?
3. How are you positioned in the network?
4. How financially stable are you?
5. Is your client-base increasing?
6. How effective are you in the use of technology?
7. Are you using data to drive change?

Also present for a provocative presentation was Daniel E. Dawes, Esq., a nationally recognized leader in healthcare law and policy. Mr. Dawes has led numerous efforts to address health issues impacting vulnerable, underserved and marginalized populations, and was an instrumental figure in shaping the Affordable Care Act. Mr. Dawes spoke on the "Political Determinants of Health" and the need to prioritize behavioral health equity. He asserted that it is critically important to collect comprehensive data to identify issues, essentially, "no data = no problem." Mr. Dawes gifted signed copies to Lenora and Nancy of his book, "150 Years of Obamacare" that "... brings to life the extraordinary efforts of advocates, lawmakers, and citizens to increase access to quality health care for those who have been marginalized and excluded..." (Kathleen Sebelius, Fmr. Sec. of Health and Human Services).



Figure 1: From left to right, Nancy Sung Shelton, Daniel Dawes, Lenora Reid-Rose



Figure 2: Dr. King Davis

The Cultural Competence team's work was selected and elevated among 12 esteemed colleagues from across the nation recognized as Innovators in the behavioral health field. Lenora and Nancy presented their innovation in the "Health Equity Idea jam: Showcasing Innovations in Policy and Practice." Both had the delight and honor to introduce *Cultural Competence: A Transformative Process*, and explained that when cultural competence is conducted in an intentional manner and across all aspects of an entity, organizations could achieve: improved service delivery and outcomes, increased patient and staff satisfaction, elimination of health disparities and health inequities, and reduced costs.

In the end, cultural competence should speak loudly to those who are not listening and startle them into caring - recognizing that culture outweighs strategy in every instance, and requires careful attention paid to its significance.

Contact [Lenora Reid-Rose](#) or [Nancy Sung Shelton](#) to learn more about how your organization can help to eliminate health inequities.

