

# Episode 1: Welcome to the DEI Shift

## TRANSCRIPT

### **[0:00] Intro**

**Pooja:** On December 14th, 2019, 15 African American medical students donned their white coats and took a powerful picture in front of the Whitney plantation in Louisiana. The caption read that they are ‘truly their ancestors’ wildest dreams’. The image was posted on Twitter and quickly spread to other social media platforms, and it was eventually picked up on national TV. So far, the post has gotten 88,000 likes, and for many, has continued to fuel the conversation of why representation matters and the slow change that happens in medicine. When asked about the impact of this image, one of the medical student organizers Russell J. Ledet said that “if [he] had seen this [picture] when [he] was younger, it would have been validation that the people telling me that I couldn't be an orthopedic surgeon can't hinder me in any way.” These students exemplify the idea that these individual stories, when placed in a greater context of history, politics, even socio-economic issues, really contextualize the issues that we face in the field of medicine. But it gives us insight into where we've been and where we hope to go, and it allows us to change the way we think about key issues and advance forward. With that hope of advancement, this is *The DEI Shift*.

### **Transition**

**[1:30] Maggie:** Welcome to *The DEI Shift*, a podcast focusing on shifting the way we think and talk about diversity, equity and inclusion in the medical field. My name is Dr. Maggie Kozman, and this is my colleague—

**Pooja:** —Dr. Pooja Jaeel.

**Maggie:** Our title for this podcast *The DEI Shift* uses a common acronym, DEI for diversity, equity and inclusion as a play on the idea of a day shift, the time in the hospital when the daytime teams come in, bring clearer and different perspectives to the issues that arose overnight and progress patient care forward, #dayteampblems. We hope this podcast brings new perspectives and a more inclusive approach to the discussions of diversity issues in medicine. We also hope it shifts it away from avoidance or fatigue from these topics and from negative connotations that have become attached to them. And we aim for

it to shift us from mere classroom didactics and into relevant day-to-day organic conversation and application.

**Pooja:** So what are we trying to do? We're hoping that listeners will be able to gain useful information to improve their practices and environments. We hope to have folks gain empathy and cultural competency and humility to learn more about emerging DEI concepts. And when we say DEI, we mean to really include everything: gender, race, sexuality, religion, ability, socioeconomics, and more.

**Maggie:** Right. And we also hope to foster a community of people passionate about DEI and facilitate successful collaborations and initiatives in this arena by highlighting excellent work, sharing insights from respected experts, and adding fresh voices to the discussion, too.

**Pooja:** Ultimately, we want to provide you, our listeners, with high quality, engaging, practice-changing content.

**[03:14] Maggie:** So, who are we to be talking about these issues? Well, just to let you get a little bit of a feel for who we are, we'll tell you about ourselves. I'm Maggie. I'm an internal medicine and pediatrics physician who's passionate about medical education, global health, recruitment of underrepresented minorities in medicine, and creation of diversity and disparities curricula. To let you know a little bit more about my personal background, I'm a first generation Egyptian American, born on the East coast, but raised on the West, and I am a Christian.

**Pooja:** And I'm Pooja, also a med-peds physician, a first generation Indian American. And I'm interested in advocacy, quality improvement, especially to improve systems for our patients and our physicians and improving access to care for our most vulnerable patients. Through both policy work and community work, I have developed a deep appreciation for the power of sharing experiences and narratives to both broaden our perspectives and challenge the status quo.

**[04:11] Maggie:** Pooja and I have worked both independently and together on several projects for the advancement of underrepresented minorities in medicine and improvement of quality care that is being provided to underserved patients. And so we're really excited to be able to work together on this project together now, too.

**Pooja:** Yes, so we want to acknowledge right off the bat that we're all biased. We're flawed. We have our own opinions and we have our own filters that are colored by the experiences

we have in life and our own kind of perspectives. However, we want to approach this podcast with an eagerness to build cultural competency, humility and come in with an open mind to do these things. We really hope that these conversations will, in a big or small way, encourage a more inclusive and representative healthcare system and overall medical community.

**[5:00] Maggie:** Absolutely. And in keeping that in mind, that we all come from our own skewed perspectives, we also want to acknowledge that each individual has their own unique qualities and attributes that we want to value and honor, and that we each have our own dignity, and we really want to value that throughout every episode of our podcast.

**Pooja:** And so we want to create a safe space for our guests, our co-hosts and our listeners to bring up issues that make them uncomfortable, to bring about strong feelings so that we can both acknowledge them and kind of figure out where they're coming from, and see how we can kind of move forward in our day-to-day.

**Maggie:** Absolutely.

**Pooja:** So setting the stage for future episodes, we're going to ask each of our guests to share something from their background that they'd like our listeners to learn about. This could be a type of food, a drink, a song, a type of music, a poem, really anything; we're calling the segment 'A Step in their Shoes'.

**Maggie:** Right. And it's a step, not a mile walking a mile in their shoes because it's just a little snippet into someone's background. But the idea is to help us get to know our guests better and to build cultural competency and humility throughout this process and really build that muscle and develop that as a habit as we are getting to know other people. So, for this first episode, we'd like to kick it off by sharing something about each of our backgrounds. Pooja, do you want to go ahead?

## **Transition**

**[06:30] Pooja:** Yes. And if you are listening to this before dinnertime, I advise you have something to eat first and then take a listen 'cause this will make you hungry. So, I'm going to reverse the order typically of a meal, but I'm going to start with dessert. And the thing that I have from my background, I am Indian American and I wanted to share mithai, which is a kind of a generic umbrella term for Indian sweets. If you go to a sweet shop and you'll see things of many different colors, shapes, soaked in sugar, drizzled with sugar, and I have so many memories of going to these sweet shops here and on many summer trips in India.

And I think one of the coolest things that we do in our community is to kind of make, get a box of these sweets or mithai and go around to people's houses every time something good happens to you, and kind of share the sweets as like an invitation to share in the happiness of each person in the community. And I always thought it was kind of a cool practice because it really invited other people in your community to share in your happiness, to feel like your accomplishments were their accomplishments. And I think it really built a really strong community network, though it can be awkward. I remember one summer after I graduated medical school, I went to India and I was visiting my grandma's card-playing club, which is like 15 ladies who are above the age of 80 and she made me walk around and say: "Here's some sweets, I graduated medical school, I'm a doctor now." I think from like the American perspective, talking about yourself and your accomplishments in such a direct way is, like, totally unheard of. So I just felt really awkward and very braggy, but it was totally like a normal thing to do and you know, people took a sweet and they were like "congratulations" and patted me on the back, and I kind of moved on to the next person celebrating with me. It was a little awkward. It was like reverse trick-or-treating.

**[08:26] Maggie:** That sounds fantastic. That's a beautiful practice and I really loved that of getting to kind of bless other people because you've been blessed, you've had good fortune or something exciting happened in your life and you get to then have other people share in that with you. My step in my shoes is also food-related. So this is again sort of a theme, Pooja and I's love language is food. Mine is an Egyptian comfort food dish called *koshari*. My favorite Egyptian dish of all time basically consists of Brown lentils, rice with vermicelli, crunchy caramelized onions on top, macaroni of whatever type you want to put in there, tomato sauce. And then a couple of different additional sauces, hot sauce and a garlic vinegar sauce. And my aunt actually combines all three sauces into one, and some people also put chickpeas on top and other ingredients kinda to make it your own, and it's one of the main authentic Egyptian dishes that is actually been exported to a lot of different Middle Eastern countries, and you can get it at places in the West as well now. But it's always best when Nana makes it for you. It's just a classic example of something that people across all socioeconomic classes and backgrounds within Egypt can enjoy, and now people around the world can enjoy it, and I have a lot of nostalgic memories eating it at family gatherings, like cousins' birthday parties or things like that, and just really reminds me of the communal nature of society in Egypt and having gone back there to work in a hospital for a month last year, just really got to, again, firsthand experience that whether or not you're related to the people that you're working with or you're spending time with, they treat you like family, and got to enjoy some *koshari* with some of those family friend groups on a *felucca*, which is like a sailboat of sorts, on the Nile while eating some *koshari*, which is pretty fantastic.

**Pooja:** I have to say that sounds picturesque.

**Maggie:** It was very, yes, exactly—very, very picturesque.

**Pooja:** Yeah. Do you know how to make it?

**Maggie:** I don't. I need to learn. So it's on my list of Egyptian dishes that I need to pick up.

**Pooja:** And are there like ingredients that you or like your family specifically adds like their signature ingredients? 'Cause it kinda sounds like it's very customizable. It's very colorful.

**Maggie:** I didn't actually know until this trip to Egypt that the sauces are typically separated because we always just use our tomato-based spicy, garlicky, vinegary sauce all-in-one, which is amazing. But I didn't know until this trip that people separate them because not everyone wants all of those elements. So, I guess that's something unique that my family does. I didn't even realize it was unique to us.

**[11:23] Pooja:** That sounds amazing. And when you make it and check that off your list, I'm coming over for dinner.

**Maggie:** Perfect. Yes. We definitely need to have a koshari night.

**Pooja:** Yes. Well yeah, and we're so looking forward to hearing about and experiencing the things that our guests want to share in future episodes. And if you want to try any of these foods at home, you can go over to our social media websites and our website to find out more information and then Google the spots that are close to you that sell these things.

**Maggie:** Yeah, definitely. So our goals for this first episode were to give you kind of an introduction to what we hope to accomplish through the podcast and also help you get to know us a little bit better and what the podcast will look like in future episodes. To wrap up this first episode, we'd like to thank the ACP Southern California Region III chapter and the AMA Joan F. Giambalvo award for their sponsorship of our podcast.

**[12:20] Pooja:** We'd love for you to contact us. Give us your thoughts about the episode as a whole. Give us any ideas that you have for future episodes or guests that you'd like to hear from. You can contact us by email at [thedeishift@gmail.com](mailto:thedeishift@gmail.com). That's [thedeishift@gmail.com](mailto:thedeishift@gmail.com). And you can also follow us and get in touch with us on social media @TheDEIShift. Again, that's @TheDEIShift. Online, you'll find information about our hosts,

our guest speakers and resources, about the things that we discuss in each episode, including the yummy food.

**Maggie:** Yes.

**Pooja:** So thank you so much for tuning in and listening to our first episode. We are so excited to go on this journey together, and we hope you join us for the rest of the season.

**Maggie:** Thank you.

### **[13:12] Outro**

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