

## **Black Man in a White Coat Presenter Bios**

**Shari Ward-Cushnie:** Dr. Shari Ward-Cushnie works as a psychiatric nurse practitioner providing therapeutic and medicine management services to patients with psychiatric and substance abuse disorders. She recently started at a new position working for Family Services after 15 and a half years at Arms Acres in Carmel, NY, as the Supervisor of Nurse Practitioners. She has operated her private practice since 2016. In 2021 Shari was invited to serve on the local board of Planned Parenthood. Shari resides in Carmel, NY with three of her four children. In her free time, she enjoys bike riding, long walks, and listening to audiobooks.

**Debbian Fletcher-Blake:** Debbian Fletcher-Blake, APRN, FNP, is the CEO of Vocational Instruction Project (VIP) Community Services, Inc., a 501(c)(3) organization in the Bronx that offers comprehensive medical, behavioral health, housing, vocational and supportive services to the community. She served as administrator and medical provider in several health centers for over 25 years and as a Nursing instructor at New York University.

Ms. Fletcher-Blake has been active in building culturally competent workforces, tackling healthcare inequities, focusing on strategies to eliminate health disparities, and ensuring community members are active participants in deciding systems of care. Due to her vast experience in quality assurance, integrated care, physical and behavioral health care delivery systems, Debbian has served as a subject matter expert on numerous clinical and administrative projects both locally and nationally.

Most recently in 2021, for her role in rebuilding New York City, she was awarded a prestigious Empire Whole Health Hero Award and showcased on the Bronx Power List as the one of the most influential and impactful individual in the borough and her continued commitment to the Bronx and its' community. In 2019, for her leadership, visionary and dedication to reducing health disparities in the communities and transforming lives of the underserved populations, Debbian was selected as a CRAIN's Notable Women in Health Care. She is also the recipient of the prestigious Dr. Philip W. Brickner Award Honoree from CHCANYS for advocating and being a champion for the medical needs of those who are vulnerable and homeless.

Ms. Fletcher-Blake serves on multiple Boards, Councils and Coalitions, including Montefiore Nyack Hospital, Community Health Care Association of New York State, NYC Behavioral Health Council, Coalition of Medication Assisted Treatment Providers, Homeless Services United, Certified Behavioral Health Clinic-Expansion Technical Training Advisory Board. She was also a 2020 mentor for the National Behavioral Health Council's CCBHCs mentorship program.

With an Executive Leadership Certificate in Health Information Technology from the University of Colorado School of Nursing, Debbian brings expertise and efficiency in coordinating health and social services programs through health information technology.

Ms. Fletcher-Blake is a Board-certified Family Nurse Practitioner. She holds a Master of Science in Nursing from Pace University. Debbian holds an Executive Leadership certificate from UCLA School of Business and Bachelor of Science degrees in Nursing from Pace University and Chemistry from SUNY Stony Brook.

**Omar Pecou, Omar Pecou, LPN**

Omar Pecou was born and raised in Brooklyn, NY. At around the age of 15, he and his mother moved to Rockland County where he attended Nyack High School. He also decided around that time to join the Pilgrim Baptist Church, where he was baptized and became a full member. During his senior year at Nyack, Omar met his high school sweetheart, Emmelyne, who he would later go on to marry, have, and raise two children with, Elijah now 19 and Bryanna 15.

After graduating High School, Omar went on to join the US Army, where he served for 5 years. After which, he joined the Department of Homeland Security and became a Behavioral Detection Officer for the TSA. After his retirement from the TSA, he continued working in the security field both privately and commercially. Omar was soon called on and ordained as a deacon in Pilgrim Baptist Church, where he continues to serve his church and community to this day. He ended his 20 plus year security career at The Nyack Library, where he worked as both security and operations support, while attending school to become an LPN. He graduated and received his LPN license in 2021 and decided that it was time to move on to his new career. He is currently a Med Care Manager at Sunrise Senior Living in New City New York and preparing to go back to school to earn his RN.