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Ernest Grant's Journey To ANA President

By: **Dr. Phoebe Pollitt, RN**

Abstract

On January 1, 2019, James Ernest Grant, RN, PhD, FAAN, became president of the American Nurses Association. His election to ANA's highest office is historic because Grant is the first male ANA president, the third African American to lead the organization, and the third NCNA member to hold that office.

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Ernest Grant's Journey to ANA President

By NCNA Member Dr. Phoebe Pollitt, RN; Nursing History Council

On January 1, 2019, James Ernest Grant, RN, PhD, FAAN, became president of the American Nurses Association. His election to ANA's highest office is historic because Grant is the first male ANA president, the third African American to lead the organization, and the third NCNA member to hold that office.

Grant was born on October 6, 1958, in Swannanoa, in the mountains of western North Carolina. When Grant was 5 years

It's challenging and rewarding to make a difference in someone's life every day... nursing is the foundation of health care. We are there 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We're the ones the family remembers. We're making a difference.

- Ernest Grant ("The Influencer," 2003)

old, his father died, leaving his mother to raise 7 children. In high school, when Grant became interested in a health career, his guidance counselor urged him to enroll in the LPN program at Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College. Grant noted: "If it wasn't for the community college system, I would not be where I am today. It was a leg up to continue my education. I went to a one-year nursing program and decided that I really loved nursing" (as cited in Trossman, 2006, para. 4).

Grant moved to Chapel Hill in the early 1980s, beginning work at the Jaycee Burn Center at North Carolina Memorial Hospital. He found his life's calling. Knowing he wanted to provide more services than his LPN credential would allow, Grant earned a BSN from North Carolina Central University and then an MSN and PhD from UNC-Greensboro.

While providing excellent clinical care for burn victims, Grant became an international leader in burn prevention education and policy advocacy. For over 20 years, Grant has coordinated the nationally acclaimed burn prevention outreach programs at the Jaycee Burn Center. He has led numerous efforts making fireworks, home appliances and recreational fires safer.

Following the World Trade Center attacks on September 11, 2001, he volunteered at The Burn Center in the New York Weill Cornell Medical Center-New Presbyterian Hospital, working 12-hour night shifts for 10 days straight.

For over a decade, Grant has served as a consultant to the government in South Africa preparing fire safety curricula and advising the Congress on burn prevention law and policies.

His numerous awards include Nurse of the Year Award from President George W. Bush for his work treating 9/11 burn victims, the American Nurses Association Honorary Nursing Practice Award, Nursing Spectrum's Nurse of the Year award and recognition as the UNC-Greensboro Alumnus of the Year.

Grant's passion for fire safety is rivaled only by his passion for professional nursing. He has been active in a variety of professional nursing organizations at the local, state, and national level. Grant has served on almost every committee and held almost every office in the North Carolina Nurses Association, including becoming the first African American male President in 2010. He has served on the American Nurses Association Board of Directors, 2004-2008 and as ANA Vice President 2010-2019 and the Board of Directors of the American Nurses Credentialing Center from 2004-2007. He has been an active member of the American Association of Men in Nursing, serving as a role model for young men of color entering the profession.

NCNA CEO Tina Gordon, MPA, CAE, FACHE, enthused "North Carolina should be proud that Ernest will be representing our state in such a high-profile role at ANA. He is a spectacular choice to lead the organization."

"I'm so happy and humbled to be voted in as the 36th president of the ANA," said Dr. Grant. "I hope to continue the work of advocating for nurses, the nursing profession and those that we care for."

The opinions expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the view of the North Carolina Nurses Association or its board of directors. •