

Dr. Sharon Grant-Henry
San Diego State University

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For many of my schooling years, I was the shy student in class. Learning passively, taking it all in, and putting my thoughts out on paper. Through junior/senior high school, community college, and university, I absorbed my education and thoughts through my own internal thought process, rarely sharing my perspective verbally. That all changed in graduate school studying counselor education in San Diego State University's Community Based Block (CBB) Program, a cohort of graduate students from all walks of life committed to make an impact through professional counseling in diverse communities. This experiential program challenged us to become architects of our own education. It was during the first week of school that I understood what that looked like. We had to select our faculty mentor/practicum leader for the year. The lead faculty was the most popular amongst everyone and with 32 students and 5 faculty, students had to just choose one. Each faculty member gave us an overview of their expertise, education, and passion for education.

And that's when Dr. Sharon Grant-Henry emerged. I was drawn to her by her strength as a woman of color, her positive energy, her commitment to bettering the community. Thus began a relationship that changed my life. As my faculty mentor she challenged me to dig deeper and seek a more comprehensive meaning. She taught me the art of advocacy by utilizing my educational research combined with my passion for social justice as a way to change systems, minds, and situations. Her constant questioning of my positions made me reflect deeper and strengthen my conviction or abandon a part of my perspective that did not apply anymore. Her kindness and skillful way of providing feedback with complex counseling practices made me stronger internally and more effective as an advocate with my clients and/or organizations. Sharon was a warrior spirit with compassion, purpose, sense of justice, funny, and committed to community.

I look back on my experience with Dr. Grant-Henry and feel warmth, love, and a spirit that transcended her role as an SDSU faculty member. She was an international woman of the world. I was able to understand my feminine spirit as a heterosexual male and how we all have masculine and feminine elements that make us whole humans. To this day, I lean on her teachings of resilience, community advocacy, and the art of empathy. Sharon had her own struggles, yet never wavered to give to others. She lost her life to a disease called Lupus over 10 years ago, yet

never gave up her principles and conviction to make the world around her a better place.

I've greatly benefited from her example as an educator with the ability to challenge organizational systems that must be accountable to its community members. I have been a counselor, administrator, coordinator, and now a faculty member in higher education. My journey in education is inspired by Dr. Sharon Grant-Henry. She showed me that it's possible to reach the highest academic degree while strengthening my personal identity and utilizing it for the community's well-being. In honor of my mentor, my friend, and my spirit guide, Dr. Sharon Grant-Henry.