

UPDATE | October 3, 2017

# Meet Our Advocates: Dr. Aisha Wagner



**Where are you from?**

I was born and raised in Los Angeles—30 minutes from the ocean (without traffic), 30 minutes from the snow, and 100 feet from the mountain’s edge.

**What’s your specialty or area of expertise?**



### **What first inspired you to become a doctor?**

This is a tough one. It wasn't so much one thing or one moment, but more the coalescence of many. I was taught from a young age that dissimilarity between people was strength, that we all come from the same place and go to the same place no matter your beliefs. So to me, medicine became about advocating for people who were considered 'different' or 'lesser' for one reason or another. Honestly, I think it wasn't so much the medicine. It was more about the challenge of being present during some of the most intimate moments in a person's life and having the privilege and obligation to support them in such a unique and non-judgmental way.

### **What story about one of your patients most sticks with you?**

This is what comes to mind when I ask myself this question: I was in New York, working in Harlem, when Trump was elected. It was the day after the election and I was sitting with a patient—a Black woman in her 40s. I don't even remember what we talking about—maybe cervical cancer screening or hypertension or potty training her children. She looked up and told me I looked beautiful that day, and said, "Girl, you know we have to lift each other up." I said, "Thank you. We do. Now more than ever." I will forever treasure that moment because we so easily stepped out of our roles and were just two women sharing a room during a difficult time.

### **What current policy issue especially motivates you to be an advocate?**

Can I say all of them? I think now, as I learn more about who I am and the privilege I have not only as a physician, but as a physician of color, I am focusing on the reproductive rights of underserved and underrepresented women. This means many things in many different arenas inside and outside of medicine, but importantly, it means working on increasing access to



## Who is your social justice hero?

Dorothy Roberts. I wish I had known about her long ago! Through her writings and through her speeches and lectures, she is helping me to understand the past, present, and future of reproductive health, and to begin to navigate through the world of reproductive justice. She is someone who fought to be a voice and succeeded across multiple disciplines—social justice, reproductive justice, law, medicine, and more...it's inspiring.

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*Every week, our Meet Our Advocates series showcases the talents and passion of one of our doctors and finds out, in their own words, what inspires them to be physician-advocates. Aisha Wagner, MD, is an incoming member of the Leadership Training Academy Class of 2018.*

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