



May-June 2022 Residency Times

Resident Spotlight: Starling Tolliver, PGY-2, Dermatology Program
Dingell Veterans Administration Center, Detroit

Residency Times: Where did you grow up/spend formative years?

Starling Tolliver: I grew up in Akron, Ohio, the youngest of 3 daughters. We were from very humble beginnings, but my mother valued higher education and pushed for us to go to college. We were fortunate to be chosen for the Young Scholars program, for which we received a full ride scholarship to Ohio State University.

How did you become interested in medicine as a career?

I became interested in medicine in middle school after reading a book called *We Beat the Street: How a Friendship Pact Led to Success* by Sampson Davis, George Jenkins, and Rameck Hunt. It's about three young socioeconomically disadvantaged black men from Newark, New Jersey, who made a pact to become doctors. It wasn't until then that I realized that becoming a physician was something someone who looked like me could do. Afterward, my two best friends and I made a pact to become a part of medicine.

Where did you attend medical school?

I received an undergraduate degree in neuroscience from Ohio State University and after that I attended the Ohio State University College of Medicine and Public Health. I then completed an internship year at the University of Rochester in upstate New York.

Why did you select dermatology as your specialty?

When I was young, I experienced traumatic hairstyling practices common in the black community that significantly damaged my hair. From then on, I was acutely aware of hair loss in black women, my family, and how our hair compared with other races. Over time, I learned better practices to take care of my hair, but I still saw disease processes which good hair care practices couldn't fix. I wanted to be able to help Black women grow their hair despite these disease processes. But it wasn't until college that I realized that being a dermatologist would give me the background knowledge and clinical experience in order to accomplish this goal.

Do you have any specific research or clinical interests in dermatology?

My interests include skin of color and hair loss in Black women. I'm so happy to be training at institution like Wayne State that sees so much diversity in its patient populations.

What are your plans after residency?

My hope is to enter academic medicine in order to help build better pipelines that will bring more URM's into medicine and particularly into specialties like dermatology. I also want to do research on patient populations related to skin color and hair loss.

What's the best nonmedical book you've read recently?

I recently read *Born a Crime* by the comedian and talk-show host Trevor Noah. It was such an amazing book. I laughed, I cried and I loved being able to get to know Trevor Noah on a deeper level. It highlights the absurdity of apartheid in its own way and gives an interesting perspective on life in South Africa.