

March 5, 2020

RE: Nomination of Dr. Adaora Adimora for the Thomas Jefferson Award

To the Awards Committee:

It is with the greatest possible enthusiasm that I submit this letter of nomination on behalf of Adaora (Ada) Adimora, MD, MPH for the Thomas Jefferson Award. Dr. Adimora embodies the more virtuous beliefs held by Jefferson, namely in the importance of justice, empathy, and scholarship, which Jefferson regarded as foundational to the republic and to the health of its populous.

Dr. Adimora has been a tireless champion for people afflicted with HIV in North Carolina, in the South, across the United States, and globally – particularly those in underserved populations who are disproportionately affected by this disease. She has served this population as a dedicated infectious disease physician, as a researcher, mentor, and as an internationally recognized leader in HIV policy and advocacy. This work is highly collaborative, including close work with UNC colleagues and with senior investigators nationally, as described below.

A cornerstone of her work as an investigator has been epidemiologic and community-based research describing patterns of HIV infection that have been formative for public health approaches over the past three decades. This started with her published work on impact of the AIDS epidemic in North Carolina in the early 1990s, and extended to seminal studies in collaboration with UNC Department of Epidemiology faculty on patterns of disease spread in social networks, and the impact of group-level poverty and subculture on risk. She subsequently led a major national study of HIV infection in women in the South for the Centers for Disease Control.

Much of her work around HIV prevention and awareness has focused on African American populations, including community-based research through a partnership with Shaw University, a local historically Black College/University (HBCU), as well as media campaign-based work in collaboration with colleagues in UNC's schools of public health and journalism. Perhaps most notably is her leadership in the Women's Interagency HIV Study (WIHS), an NIH funded multi-center study running since 1993, including the largest cohort of women with and at risk for HIV infection in the world.

Based on her research record and thought expertise, Dr. Adimora has been asked to serve in a number of national policy leadership roles, including a federal appointment to the US Presidential Advisory Committee on HIV/AIDS, leadership of the HIV Medical Association, and serving as Chair for the HIV Prevention Trials Network's Women at Risk Committee.

She has also been a dedicated mentor, having received a NIH K24 mentoring award, and a role as Director of the UNC Fogarty AIDS International Training and Research Program (AITRP). These efforts have involved training graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and junior faculty.

In summary, Dr. Adimora is an internationally known and presidentially appointed leader in HIV prevention and care who has tirelessly advocated through scholarship, policy work, and mentorship for vulnerable populations. She embodies the best ideals of Thomas Jefferson, and I believe is highly deserving of this award.

Sincerely,

Ethan Basch, MD MSc

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