Alice Woodby McKane

February 12, 1865 – March 6, 1948

Empathy

"I worked very hard that I might be able to carry out the Hampton idea of passing along what one has received." Alice Woodby McKane

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How are you showing empathy for others at SSU in preparation for your future?

Alice Woodby McKane was the first African American female physician in Georgia. She and her husband founded nursing schools, a hospital in Liberia and a hospital in Savannah—driven by McKane's **soft skill of empathy**.

Alice Woodby was born in Bridgewater, Pennsylvania, in 1865. At the age of seven, she lost both of her parents followed by the loss of her eyesight for a period of about three years. In spite of these setbacks, Woodby attended public school and continued her education at the *Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute* in Virginia and the *Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia* followed by the *Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania*, from which she graduated in 1892 with a medical degree and high honors.

Dr. Alice Woodby moved to Augusta, Georgia, where she became a resident physician, the first African American physician in Georgia, and instructor at the *Haines Normal and Industrial Institute* before meeting and marrying another physician and surgeon, Dr. Cornelius McKane, who lived in Savannah. Cornelius was the grandson of a Liberian King. He was an active clergy member, writer, and speaker, as well as a supporter of charity.

Alice and Cornelius were not even settled in Savannah, before developing and starting the *McKane School for Nurses*, once again making history with the first training school for nurses in the

Southeast. The nursing school, designed as a two-year school, graduated its first class of three nurses in 1895. The McKanes then left for Liberia. Alice became a medical examiner for African American Civil War veterans living in Liberia. The McKanes opened the first nursing school in Liberia similar to the one in Savannah. Upon her return to Savannah, Dr. Alice McKane opened a practice on West Broad Street that specialized in gynecology and women's diseases. She also obtained a charter to operate a hospital for women and children. McKane's hard work and determination paid off with the opening of the *McKane Hospital* in 1896. The hospital was turned over to a group of local African American physicians and became *Charity Hospital*, a building still standing today, located at 644 West 36th Street in Savannah, now Heritage Place Apartments.

Dr. Cornelius McKane died in 1912 after the couple moved to Boston. Dr. Alice McKane did not slow down as she continued her medical career, continued to advocate for women's suffrage, became a *National Association of Colored People (NAACP)* member, worked on committees for the Republican party, and authored a book. Dr. Alice Woodby McKane died at the age of 83, having devoted her life's work to caring for others and training others to do the same.

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