To the editorial committee:
I very much enjoyed reading the recent article entitled, “Goldie Brangman Remembers the Operation to Save Dr King.” In it, the author noted Ms Brangman’s role as, “the first, and thus far the only, black president of the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists.” I believe Ms Brangman’s leadership is particularly noteworthy given the overall want of representation of minority groups within our profession.

We must continue to ask ourselves what efforts we can make to welcome and support a more diverse workforce, and what innovation we are lacking when we fail to do so. To that end, I commend Dr Wallena Gould, founder of the Diversity in Nurse Anesthesia Mentorship Program, and Sandra Kilde, past AANA President and founder of GALA (the Gay and Lesbian Anesthetists group). As we approach CRNA Week 2016, let us remember that the future of anesthesia care begins with our efforts to recruit and retain the brightest and most talented CRNAs of all racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual orientation backgrounds.

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Response: The profession and nurse anesthesia education programs welcome all nurses who represent the best of the best. Since 2005, the all-volunteer Diversity in Nurse Anesthesia Mentorship Program (DNAMP) has prepared and mentored RNs to optimize their application packet, rehearse interview skills, experience anesthesia skills through simulation and shadowing CRNAs, enter and excel in the education program, and become an engaged member of the profession. Giving back and paying forward never ends for these 400 CRNAs who are engaged with this program.

In 2014, President Dennis Bless, MS, CRNA, and the AANA Board of Directors sponsored the AANA Diversity in Nursing Education Summit. Attendees and presenters represented a diverse and inclusive group from the Health Resource and Services Administration, nursing and nurse anesthesia educators, business owners, minority nursing organizations, student registered nurse anesthetists, and CRNAs who came together in person and virtually to explore opportunities to engage young students to pursue healthcare professions, especially in nursing. A nursing and nurse anesthesia workforce that represents the patient populations that they serve and cultural competencies to meet each patient’s needs have been shown to improve outcomes.

In October 2015, the AANA Board of Directors engaged nurse anesthetists and external experts to create the AANA Diversity Task Force, chaired by Dr Wallena Gould. The charge of this task force is to develop the strategic framework to make recommendations to implement cultural competence and diversity/inclusion initiatives for our profession, the teams we work with, and our patients. This work addresses each of the AANA Core Values of diversity, quality, professionalism, compassion, collaboration, and wellness. Resources and additional information are available at www.aana.com/diversity. As the work of the task force comes to life, additional information will be available on the Diversity and Inclusion webpage. Comments are welcome at practice@aana.com.