



## Introduction

Randolph Rasch PhD, FNP, RN, FAANP, FAAN, FNAP is Professor in the College of Nursing at Michigan State University. With over 30 years of coaching/mentoring experience, he was recently certified as an Executive/Life Coach by the Hudson Coaching Institute. Previously serving as the 9th dean of the Michigan State University College of Nursing he has over 30 years of, primarily, academic leadership experience, including service on professional, corporate and community boards. Among others, he currently serves on the Dean's Advisory Board, Vanderbilt University School of Nursing (VUSN), and a VUSN representative on the Vanderbilt University Chancellors' Cabinet Dare-to-Grow Campaign. He previously served as a member-at-large to the Board of Directors of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) and served on the AACN/American Organization of Nurse Leaders (AONL) Advisory Task Force to implement recommendations of *Advancing Healthcare Transformation: A New Era for Academic Nursing*. He is a past chair of the Nursing Deans Group of the Big Ten Academic Alliance. Among governor appointed service, he most recently served, by appointment of the Governor of the State of Michigan, to co-leading the effort to reduce maternal-child morbidity and mortality in the State of Michigan and chaired the Primary Care Connections Governor's Task Force of the Coronavirus – Racial Disparities Task Force and also the Michigan Implicit Bias LARA Advisory Task Force. He also served by appointment of the Governor of the State of Tennessee to the Tennessee Early Comprehensive Systems Advisory Committee, Maternal and Child Health, Tennessee Department of Health, Fall 2004-2010, serving over 1,000,000 minority and disadvantaged children and their families.

Dr. Rasch was the first State-wide Director of Nursing Services/Programs Director in the Tennessee Department of Correction (TDOC), where he provided leadership and direction for nursing services and assisted the Director of Health Services with the overall development, management, and operation of Health Services in the TDOC. As part of a three-member management team, Dr. Rasch was responsible for designing and implementing a system of health care for the TDOC and as Programs Director, leading

the development and facilitating the implementation of the Quality Assurance Program for Health Services in the TDOC.

Dr. Rasch has consulted on a multitude of projects including analysis of nursing productivity and workload, and process improvement and improvement of organizational performance in healthcare delivery. Notably, his expertise is in the area of primary care and community health, particularly the roles, functions and appropriate skill mix for all levels of nursing, licensed practical nurses, registered nurses, advanced practice nurses/nurse practitioners and cultural diversity in healthcare services. Dr. Rasch's clinical experiences as a registered nurse include charge nurse on a surgical unit in a community hospital and public health nurse (PHN) and PHN Team Leader and home health nurse in a county health department. As a FNP, he has provided care in a prison system; a corporate health care center; and a nurse managed clinic recognized as a clinical agency by the NC Board of Nursing.

A Fellow in the American Association of Nurse Practitioners (FAANP) and a Distinguished Scholar, and Fellow, in the National Academies of Practice (FNAP) and Fellow in the American Academy of Nursing (FAAN), Dr. Rasch holds the distinction of being the first African American male graduate of the nursing program at Andrews University and the first African American male masters prepared FNP (a graduate of the FNP program at Vanderbilt School of Nursing). He is the first African American male to hold the PhD in nursing and was the first African American male public health nurse in the State of Michigan. Other honors include Distinguished Alumni of the School of Nursing, The University of Texas at Austin; The Trailblazer Award of the National Black Nurses Association; The Lulu Wolf Hassenplug Award for Distinguished Career in Nursing, Vanderbilt University School of Nursing; and The Dr. Gene Tranbarger Writing Award, the American Association for Men in Nursing.

## **Interview Abstract**

Dr. Rasch was raised in a multiracial household as a Seventh-Day Adventist and attended Seventh-Day Adventist schools from elementary school through college at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. The focus in Adventist schools, and especially college, was how best to serve fellow human beings, regardless of our disciplines/educational pathway. This philosophy has served him well as his professional focus has been on patients and community. Throughout his career, he served his community as practitioner, educator, administrator and advisor. Dr. Rasch emphasizes that he never sought out appointments or recruitments but embraced the opportunities as they arose. Dr. Rasch love of the arts is evident throughout his career.

## **Biographical Sketch**

Dr. Rasch obtained his BSN at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan and his MSN at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. He received his PhD in Nursing from the University of Texas at Austin. As a registered nurse, he began his career in public health. The independence of public health nursing led him to become a family nurse clinician/practitioner.

Following graduation from his master's program at Vanderbilt University, he worked for the Tennessee Department of Corrections (TDOC). As part of a three-member management team, Dr. Rasch was responsible for designing and implementing a system of health care for the TDOC and as Programs Director, leading the development and facilitating the implementation of the Quality Assurance Program for Health Services in the TDOC. He has taught at several universities and was recruited by Vanderbilt University to serve as the director of the FNP specialty and co-director of the mid-wifery/FNP specialties. While there, he worked with colleagues to develop the first dual FNP/Acute Care NP program with Emergency Care focus. He has served as Dean and faculty in the College of Nursing at Michigan State. His professional experience also includes service on professional, corporate and community boards. He is a certified Executive/Life Coach by the Hudson Coaching Institute

Randolph Rasch

Interview

AANP Oral History Project

## **Interview: Randolph Rasch PhD, FNP, RN, FAANP, FAAN, FNAP**

**Date: September 21, 2023**

**Interviewers Name: Michaelene P Jansen**

**Place for Interview: Phone**

### **Education:**

PhD Nursing: University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, 1987

MSN: Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN, 1979 (family nurse clinician/practitioner)

BSN: Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, 1974

### **Short Bio:**

Dr. Rasch has had an expansive career for over 30 years focusing on community and service. As a registered nurse, he began his career in public health. The independence of public health nursing led him to become a family nurse clinician/practitioner. Following graduation from his master's program at Vanderbilt University, he worked for the Tennessee Department of Corrections (TDOC). As part of a three-member management team, Dr. Rasch was responsible for designing and implementing a system of health care for the TDOC and as Programs Director, leading the development and facilitating the implementation of the Quality Assurance Program for Health Services in the TDOC. He has taught at several universities and was recruited by Vanderbilt University to serve as the director of the FNP specialty and co-director of the mid-wifery/FNP specialties. While there, he worked with colleagues to develop the first dual FNP/Acute Care NP program with Emergency Care focus. He has served as Dean and faculty in the College of Nursing at Michigan State. His professional experience also includes service on professional, corporate and community boards. He is a certified Executive/Life Coach by the Hudson Coaching Institute. Dr. Rasch holds the distinction of being the first African American male graduate of the nursing program at Andrews University and the first African American male masters prepared FNP (a graduate of the FNP program at Vanderbilt School of Nursing). He is the first African American male to hold the PhD in nursing and was the first African American male public health nurse in the State of Michigan.

### **When did you become an NP? What was the motivation?**

I was raised in a multiracial household as a Seventh-Day Adventist and attended Seventh-Day Adventist schools from a one-room school way out in the country all the way through college at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. The focus in Adventist schools, and especially college, was how best to serve fellow human beings, regardless of our disciplines/educational pathways. My first career choice was to become a physician. The plan was to get a degree in nursing and then go to medical school. My guidance counselor, who was a certified nurse anesthetist, at Andrews University Academy, the small religious high school I attended, assured me that all I would need to do was to take the pre-requisites for medical school while completing the degree in nursing. I really didn't understand what nursing was but as I progressed in the nursing program, I realized that I enjoyed nursing practice and that it was really what I wanted to do. Nursing was in line with my education and socialization for service. After receiving my bachelor of science (nursing major), I worked in the Berrien County Health Department in Benton Harbor, Michigan, in the combined roles of public health nurse (PHN) and

home health nurse. Because of the independence required for these roles, I realized that I needed more education and, initially, planned to become a clinical nurse specialist. However, the pediatric nurse practitioner (PNP) and the family planning nurse practitioners (there weren't women's health nurse practitioners at that time) that I worked with, recommended that I "not do what they did but become a family nurse practitioner" (FNP). The FNP, a generalist in primary care, and the across the lifespan patient population that I wished to continue work with, was a better fit for me. I applied to Vanderbilt University and was accepted into the "Family Nurse Clinician" program which, at that time, was indicative of a FNP prepared with a MSN, rather than a certificate. Following graduation, I worked for the Tennessee Department of Corrections.

**What experiences did you bring into the role?**

I was strongly rooted in community, public health practice, across the lifespan. I believe that being grounded in community and public health rather than hospital-based care, was a much better fit for practice in primary care. When I started at the Tennessee Department of Corrections (TDOC), the prison system was under court ordered oversight, and healthcare delivery was deemed "unconstitutional". I was hired as a FNP providing primary care within the Tennessee State Prison (TSP). I also was the lead clinician for state-wide neurology clinic with a neurologist who practiced in Nashville, Tennessee, and consulted in the practice based in the TSP. In the TDOC I eventually served as the clinical administrator in the center where all men entering the TDOC were assessed and assigned to a final destination prison, and then, as the first Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) for the Department, along with Jamie S. Brodie, MSN, FNP, the first non-physician director of Health Services in the TDOC. Achievements in those roles included working with Mr. Brodie in the development and management of health policies and procedures for the TDOC. As first CNO for the TDOC, I coordinated and led the development of a quality assurance (QA) program, developing standards of care for inmates (in a SOAP format!) and system of monthly QA reviews in each of the prison's clinics (twenty-five clinics and two hospitals). When the federal courts reviewed the progress of the TDOC in caring for inmates, Health Services, under the direction of Jamie Brodie and documented by the QA program, was deemed to have met the standard for "constitutional" health care and released from court oversight. However, the rest of the department had deteriorated in meeting the responsibilities for care. At that time, Jamie and I looked at each other and said, "time to go"! We were both in our mid-twenties!

Both Jamie and I decided, based on our TDOC experience, that the next phase was to develop the ability to do program research, which was much of our work in the Central Office of the TDOC. We both applied, and were accepted, into the PhD program at the University of Texas at Austin but Jamie decided to work in Saudi Arabia with Hospital Corporation of America. I enrolled in the program at UT. Although trained to do qualitative and quantitative research, I elected to write a theoretical/philosophical dissertation under the direction of Dr. Lorraine Walker, of "Walker and Avant" fame (Dr Kay Avant served on my committee as did Dr. Robert Causey, a philosopher of science and, at the time, chair of the Department of Philosophy, at UT Austin).

**Did you experience any challenges? How were they resolved?**

I am an optimistic person, so I often don't recognize the challenges until they are past! For example, I was the first black male in my undergraduate program, public health nurse in the State of Michigan, nurse practitioner and the first black male to hold the PhD in nursing! There were challenges along the way, but I was fortunate that I didn't know that at the time. As I was graduating from my undergraduate program, the director administered an aptitude test to all of us

and then met with us to interpret them. When I met with her, she told me that my results classified me as “an artist”. I told her I knew that, but I couldn’t see making a living that way. “Oh, that isn’t what it means”, she said. She said, “it meant that’s how you think”. I have often thought of that over the years and recognize that, in most instances, that is how I meet and resolve challenges. I think creatively, like an artist! I was educated, and socialized into nursing by white women. There were no other options at the time. I have realized that they did not look at me as a black male but as Randy; educating me as a person. In my undergraduate program that was because of their religious foundation but I found the same to be true of my faculty at Vanderbilt and at the University of Texas at Austin. In clinical practice, no patient ever refused to accept my care and the same has been true of my experience as an educator. When challenges present themselves, I just figure out how to resolve it. In that, however, I do learn from the way minorities are treated differently and how I can have an impact in that.

**Are there any experiences that you would like to talk about?**

People often comment that they would like to have the kind of career that I have had (and am having). I never planned the career. Opportunities often fell into place without actual planning. My focus on service evolved into service leadership. I never sought to become program director or dean. I was recruited by Vanderbilt University when I was at the University of North Carolina to serve as the director of the FNP specialty and co-director of the mid-wifery/FNP specialties. While there, I worked with colleagues to develop the first dual FNP/Acute Care NP program with Emergency Care focus. The focus was the care that was needed which, more often than not, is urgent and emergent care, not trauma care. We focused on the care that was needed, not the care the clinicians wanted to provide

As I think of retirement, I want to continue to explore other aspects of my life and opportunities for service. I want to do art; to draw, paint, sing and finish my book on *The Discipline of Nursing*. The book examines the practice, education and knowledge development of Nursing. I am certified as a Hudson Professional Coach and would like to continue “whole person coaching.”

**What was most challenging in your career/ most important?**

I think a continuing challenge in my career, and in nursing, is how to have our energies be more productive in working together in a positive and supportive work environment. This is both in the clinical setting, the educational setting, practice setting and in our contributions to communities. We still have a long way to go in terms of diversity! While our communities, our country, is increasingly diverse, nursing does not mirror that diversity. We are too much in the “echo chamber” and talking to ourselves in the way that we talk which then excludes others, who often have a most distinctive, different, perspective. When we act in these ways, we don’t grow and stretch and, ultimately, this limits our effectiveness in practice, education, knowledge development and the ways that we can contribute to our fellow human beings and citizens.

**Is there anything you would want to change?**

For myself, I don’t think I would change anything. At a critical time in my life, I chose nursing. Nursing is a great profession and I have been thankful for that. I have never sought the opportunities that I have had in my career, but they have turned out to be just right!

**What do you see as pivotal moments in the past years?**

The pandemic was very pivotal. I was impressed how colleagues and students stepped up to the plate.

Early in my education and career, I loved working in hospitals but staffing only allowed technical tasks, not professional, patient centered interactions. This experience led me to seek

employment in the health department. The work flowed well with my focus on community and service.

**What advice would you give to new nurse practitioners?**

Pay attention to who people, your patients are and develop with them, plans of care that fit them. As I often say, being a FNP, “it’s not rocket science, it’s primary care.”

**What do you see as the role of Nurse Practitioners in the next 25 years?**

The profession needs to stay grounded in nursing, in the nursing perspective. We need to stay patient and community focused and remember that the technical skills of medicine just allow us to be with patients to “do what a nurse would do!





*The Voice of the Nurse Practitioner*

## **INTERVIEW RELEASE FORM FOR THE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

I, Randolph F. R. Rasch, agree to participate in the AANP History Committee's Oral History Project. I understand that the purpose of the Interview is to collect background information and knowledge from nurse practitioner leaders which will be archived at the Eleanor Crowder Bjoring Center for Nursing Historical Inquiry

(ECBCNHI). compiled into a complete and enduring history of the organization.

I hereby grant permission to AANP and EBCNHI their assigns, licensees, and successors to use my likeness for educational, advertising, and promotional purposes. I consent to the recording of my statements and grant to AANP and their assigns, licensees, and successors the right to copy, reproduce, and use all or a portion of the Interview for all purposes, including advertising, trade, or any commercial purpose throughout the world and in perpetuity.

I grant the right to use my image and name in connection with all uses of the Interview and waive the right to inspect or approve any use of Interview, as well as any rights to compensation or ownership over any collected Interview materials. I acknowledge and agree that I am not entitled to receive any other form of payment from AANP.

**NAME (PRINT): RANDOLPH FRITZ RAYMOND RASCH**

**SIGNATURE: DATE: 28 FEBRUARY 2024**

Administration: PO Box 12846 • Austin, TX 78711 • Email: [admin@aanp.org](mailto:admin@aanp.org) • Website: [aanp.org](http://aanp.org)  
Government Affairs: 1400 Crystal Drive, Suite 540 • Arlington, VA 22202 • 703-740-2529 • Email: [governmentaffairs@aanp.org](mailto:governmentaffairs@aanp.org)

