

## **Beyond the Test: Connecting Communities Through Pathology**

### **Episode #4: Breaking Barriers: One Physician's Story**

#### **Ranya Gabb (00:00)**

Hi everyone, I'm Ranya

#### **Konstandina Dulu (00:02)**

And I'm Konnie. We're part of the CAP Foundation team and we want to share why your support makes such a difference.

#### **Ranya Gabb (00:11)**

Every gift to the CAP Foundation helps expand access to pathology services, whether it's See, Test and Treat here in the US or global grants bringing diagnostics to communities with limited resources.

#### **Konstandina Dulu (00:25)**

Your donations help to support opportunities for medical students and early career pathologists, helping the next generation lead the future of pathology.

#### **Ranya Gabb (00:37)**

So when you give, you're not just improving patient care today. You're investing in better outcomes for patients tomorrow.

#### **Konstandina Dulu (00:45)**

It's easy to make a difference. Check our show notes or visit [foundation.cap.org](http://foundation.cap.org) to donate.

#### **Ranya Gabb (00:53)**

Thank you for supporting the CAP Foundation.

#### **Joanna Cermak (01:05)**

Welcome back to Beyond the Test, connecting communities through pathology, a podcast from the CAP Foundation. Each episode explores how pathologists are helping bridge health disparities and improve outcomes around the world. Throughout this 2025 season, we've discussed the global diagnostic gap, we've sat with pathologists who are empowering patients to see themselves in their own healthcare, and we've heard from a patient whose life was changed through early detection and compassionate care. Today, in our final episode of the season, we're ending the year with a story. A story that reminds us that empowerment, our theme for 2025, is not just a concept, it's a lived experience. And to help us share that story, we're joined by someone you've heard about, but may not have heard from. Ranya Gabb, Manager of Operations from the CAP Foundation. Ranya?

#### **Ranya Gabb (01:59)**

Hi everyone, I'm Ranya Gabb. I'm honored to be here and to share this story submitted to us by an international medical student graduate who wishes to remain anonymous. I was born and raised in the slums of Ghana, West Africa. Life was tough, tough in a way words can't fully describe.

My parents didn't have much, but they gave us what they could love, faith, discipline, and an unshakable belief in the power of education. That was their currency of hope. They poured everything they had into educating me and my siblings, even when it meant going without themselves. One day when I was a child, I suffered a traumatic head injury. I don't remember all the details, but I remember the shift. After that, something inside me changed. I became

withdrawn, anxious, and emotionally shut down. I couldn't explain it. I didn't have the words for what was happening to me and I certainly didn't know how to ask for help. All I knew was that I felt broken.

Life got harder after that. My dad was a strict man. Like many African parents, his love was often expressed through high expectations and punishment when those expectations weren't met. The cane was always close by. I lived in fear of failing, of being misunderstood, of not being enough. I often felt like the odd one out among my siblings. They were sharper, more organized, better at navigating the rough world we grew up in. I wasn't discriminated against, but deep down I knew I wasn't treated the same. And it hurt. Still, in the middle of all that confusion, pain, and isolation, something in me kept dreaming. I didn't know how, but I believed I was meant for something greater. Even when I didn't believe in myself, the dream refused to die.

Academically, I was average. Not bad, but not brilliant either. I battled intense self-doubt and low self-esteem. I was often sick and mentally exhausted. Childhood wasn't fun for me. But now when I look back, I thank God for that foundation. It kept me grounded. It made me hungry. It taught me to appreciate every step forward.

When my high school diploma results came in, I had failed. Anxiety and depression had taken their toll. It felt like the end. When a teacher asked what I explained to do next, I told him I still wanted to become a doctor.

He chuckled sarcastically. I don't blame him. I must have looked like a fool, but deep in my heart, I couldn't stop dreaming. Everyone who heard me say I wanted to be a doctor thought I was either delusional or just plain stubborn. Eventually, I was talked into pursuing mathematics instead.

During that program, I got accepted into a bachelor's degree in applied sciences at a school that most people didn't even consider a viable option. The location was terrible. The resources were almost non-existent. But it was there I met the love of my life, my wife. That one blessing made all the hardship worth it. She became my anchor, a true gift from God.

That period of my life was filled with trials, but it made me stronger. I became resilient. I had to. I was still dreaming, still believing that somehow, someday, the impossible would become possible. Then one day, after years of trying and failing, God did the unthinkable. I got accepted into medical school. I still don't understand how. It was nothing short of a miracle.

That moment proved to me that with God, all things truly are possible. Medical school was brutal. I had to fight through every semester. It was physically, emotionally, and financially draining. But again, God provided. My wife stepped in and supported me in ways I can never repay.

The school was private and the fees were overwhelming. But somehow, every time a payment was due, the money came. God used her to carry me through that season. After medical school, I completed only part of my required internship. Then I made a risky move. I left for the United States. I knew it wasn't the wisest decision. I didn't have a license from my home country, which meant I couldn't qualify for the US Medical Residency match. I was stuck.

I couldn't go forward, I couldn't go back, but I started studying for the US boards anyway. I had no idea how I'd ever sit for them, let alone match. I also got a job working in a hospital. Looking back, I can't even call it faith. It was sheer desperation and maybe a bit of divine foolishness, but somehow I kept going.

Working in this hospital was another trauma. I was spoken to like I was nothing. I was constantly asked to prove that I had gone to medical school. Where's your certificate? Which school did you attend? Are you even a real doctor? The questions stung.

The judgment was suffocating. The emergency department was intense and I was often singled out, mocked and ignored. But I had seen worse. My story had built armor around my spirit. I refused to break. Then COVID-19 happened. Everything changed. New policies were introduced. Pathways were created. And just like that, the very thing that had made my dream impossible became the key that unlocked the door.

Only God could have orchestrated that. Years later, I was sitting quietly when a message popped up on my phone. I read it, then read it again. I screamed. I wept. My wife-in-law ran to me in panic, thinking something was wrong. But I was crying tears of joy. I had matched into residency in the USA. Me, the boy from the slums, the one who failed his high school diploma, the one everyone laughed at when he said he wanted to be a doctor.

The one who was told, you can't. I had made it.

Residency hasn't been smooth. I've faced racism, discrimination, and more subtle forms of abuse. But I no longer see these things as setbacks. I see them as part of my story. God is still writing it. And I believe it will end in praise. Now, I see the bigger picture. I see why I had to go through every single hardship.

It was never just about becoming a doctor. It was about becoming a witness. My life is proof that God takes brokenness and creates beauty, that he chooses the most unlikely people to do the most unbelievable things. And I'm still dreaming.

This story isn't over, but one day it will be. And when it is, I'll be standing with my hands lifted high, giving all the glory to the one who carried me through it all.

**Joanna Cermak (09:14)**

Ranya, thanks for bringing that story to life and a big thanks to Ace My Path for sharing it with us. We'll talk more about them later. Alright, Maya, let's close out the year.

**Maya Ogden (09:26)**

I'm Maya Ogden, Executive Director of the CAP Foundation. Each year, the foundation selects a theme that will serve as our guiding star for everything we do, from programs to scholarship offerings, and even how we encourage our board members. This year, under the theme in power, we focused on what it means to open doors, doors to early detection, doors to global training, doors to mentorship and education, and doors to understanding through patient Pathologist Conversations. Empowerment is about giving people agency and access.

And throughout this season, we've seen how empowerment transforms lives, not just in the exam room or laboratory, but in communities. Next year, our theme is connection. Connection speaks to everything we believe in, connecting pathologists with communities they serve, connecting patients with answers and hope, and connecting future leaders with the opportunities that help them be better physicians.

It's about strengthening the ties that hold our mission together and expanding the circles of impact we create. I want to take a moment to thank you, our listeners, our donors, our volunteers, and everyone who has supported the CAP Foundation this year. Your generosity, your time, and your belief in our mission make this work possible. If you haven't yet explored our first season, I encourage you to listen.

Each episode reflects the heart of what we do in the future we're working toward. And with that, I'll hand things back over to Joanna. Okay, Joanna, do you want to wrap this up?

**Joanna Cermak (11:03)**

To our listeners, thank you for being here with us for this special year-end episode of Beyond the Test, Connecting Communities Through Pathology. Your support, your curiosity, and your commitment to patient care are what makes this community so meaningful. As we close out 2025, we want to shine a light on a project close to our hearts. The CAP Foundation, in collaboration with ACE My Path, is collecting firsthand stories from international medical graduates,

whose journeys reflect resilience, courage, and unwavering dedication to their patients. Whether your path began in a major academic center or in a resource-limited setting, your experience carries lessons that can inspire and guide the next generation, and we want to help tell those stories. You can learn more about Ace My Path or submit your story in the show notes. To learn more about the CAP Foundation, visit [foundation.cap.org](http://foundation.cap.org). And if you haven't already,

Be sure to follow us on social media and like and subscribe wherever you get your podcasts so you never miss what's coming next. We'll be back in 2026 with new episodes. Until next time, my friends, I'm Joanna and thank you for listening.