Niasha Fray is a program director with the Duke Center for Community and Population Health Improvement, and the adult recipient of the 2019 Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award from Duke University. This award seeks to perpetuate the excellence of character and humanitarian service of Algernon Sydney Sullivan by recognizing and honoring such qualities in others.

One of her nominators writes... “Ms. Fray has dedicated her life to public service and raising awareness about health disparities... She exudes positive energy and is the true embodiment of a service leader.”

Niasha is a native of North Carolina and an alumna of Florida A&M University, UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health (Chapel Hill), and Teachers College, Columbia University. She has worked for almost two decades to improve the welfare of marginalized communities and has been a force of caring and healing to those who are typically left out, silenced, and disenfranchised.

As a counselor, patient advocate, researcher, and program manager, she has supported diverse communities ranging from the elderly to individuals who are incarcerated to African Americans affected by HIV/AIDS, among others. A nominator writes “Ms. Fray has been generous with her professional resources, maintained her professional integrity by following through on tasks that she offered, and is selfless in her service to communities that she cares about.”

As program director for the Duke Center for Community and Population Health Improvement, Niasha facilitates the efforts of multiple leaders to work collectively toward making Durham one of the healthiest communities in the nation. Her work with city and county officials, faith leaders, and the university and health system administration is enhanced by her ability to connect meaningfully with community members and learn about their assets and struggles. She avoids duplicating efforts by masterfully aligning her work with other coalitions, partnerships, and task forces to help everyone move toward the collective goal of health equity in Durham. She has been instrumental in supporting the Duke Population Health Improvement Mapping Project as well as the Healthy Durham 20/20 initiative.

Not only has Niasha had an impact on health equity, but she has done so in the midst of her own health challenges. Two years ago, she was diagnosed with breast cancer and led a battle to overcome it. Even with this diagnosis, Niasha took up the banner to speak out and encourage African American women to seek care. One of her nominators writes “It was an inspiration to watch a colleague exemplify what it means to have faith, perseverance, and commitment to self while still managing to find time to remain dedicated to her professional career to improve the health and wellness of all people...”

Niasha’s nominators describe her as an unwavering, committed, insightful, innovative, and dedicated individual. For her many contributions to Duke, Durham, and beyond and for her continuing impact and service to others, Duke University is proud to name Niasha Fray as the adult recipient of the 2019 Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award.