

‘THEIR STORY IS MY STORY’



Sharon Withers



Adrienne Abiodun

In 2016, DAR created its DNA Network Committee to educate members on the use of DNA testing for genealogy, encourage more members to test themselves and family members, and help potential members better understand how to utilize DNA information in the DAR application process. *American Spirit* sat down with **Sharon Withers**, the National Chair for the DAR DNA Network under both the Dillon and Wright Administrations, and **Adrienne Abiodun**, one of the National Vice Chairs for the DAR DNA Network under the VanBuren Administration, to learn more about the committee and how Daughters can get involved.

Q: What made you want to pursue genealogy?

Ms. Withers: I don't remember ever not doing genealogy. My grandmother was a vivid storyteller and made history so interesting. I felt compelled to learn more about my ancestors because their story is my story.

Ms. Abiodun: My parents were in the U.S. Army and Air Force, and we moved around frequently. We were not always near our grandparents or other relatives. I pursued genealogy because of the lack of information in my family tree.

Q: What are the goals of the DAR DNA Network Committee?

Ms. Withers: We strive to educate members about how DNA can be used for the purposes of DAR applications and supplemental applications. The DAR has partnered with FamilyTreeDNA for a long-term project to build a database of DNA results.

We're trying to preserve the genetic records of our ancestors.

Ms. Abiodun: We want to help potential Daughters who may be hitting roadblocks with family records to use DNA to prove their lineage. For example, my application to the DAR was approved in 2016. At the time, autosomal DNA and Y-DNA were not accepted forms of proof in the application process. But my application did include a DNA portion with affidavits attached, because of an issue of missing information about my maternal grandfather. Now, DNA evidence is accepted with applications and can help prospective members move past obstacles.

Q: What are some of the benefits of DNA testing and sharing the results?

Ms. Withers: It can help build community. I have cousins I never knew existed, and I discovered them through

DNA. Sharing the results can also create a collaborative research effort.

Ms. Abiodun: DNA can help you substantiate stories or give you the leads you need to pursue evidence of your ancestors. DNA can also help to determine whether your documentary research is on the right track, as well as generate research leads as to where you may need to look for additional records.

Q: How can Daughters get involved with the DAR DNA Network Committee?

Ms. Withers: We encourage Daughters to do a DNA test and upload their results to FamilyTreeDNA—and then we want them to share the importance of DNA at their chapter and state meetings!

Ms. Abiodun: Daughters can participate in DNA testing by submitting their samples to AncestryDNA or 23andMe. They can upload copies of their raw DNA from one of those two sites to FamilyTreeDNA as well as MyHeritage DNA. They must have their DNA uploaded into FamilyTreeDNA to join the NSDAR DNA project at FamilyTreeDNA and the group on Facebook. More importantly, Daughters should continue to learn about the limitations of using genetic evidence as it relates to historical and Colonial DNA research. 🌐

Learn More! Take the GEP 4 Course, “DNA and the DAR: Using DNA as a Piece of the Evidence for a DAR Application.”

- Visit dar.org and sign in as a member.
- Click on “Members.”
- Toward the top of the webpage, toward the right side of “Member Resources,” click on “Genealogy.”
- Click on “Genealogy Education Programs (GEP).”
- Click on “GEP 4” in the red box to learn more about the course.