

Reckoning With Racism in Nursing

Diona Martyn Transcript

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We're addressing racism in nursing.

Upfront proud, African American woman. Yeah, my mom's LPN. And one of my Are you becoming a nurse, especially being a black nurse was important to me, because that's an example. They help people understand that, yes, we can do this. My master's in public health and community health Nursing, I was a clinical nurse specialist graduated, I set for the Board's for the clinical nurse specialist and public health nursing. And I got the certification. I worked in a respiratory cardiac unit. My first year, I worked Miss surg floor, which was the cardio respiratory unit. And I saw a lot of stuff and a lot of things that were preventable, as I always knew, I like sub the hill. But seeing that and working out, like I want to prevent people from getting to this whole

first semester of nursing school was my introduction to the racism that I was going to experience. I went to East Carolina University, and it was a predominantly white university. And the nursing program was very competitive. So difficult to get me in only a few of us, as far as African American to Asian students, and a white male students. So we were to others that we all study together with a white professor, he told us, I'm gonna white students that she didn't want to work with black students. I had a teacher, a professor, who told me three shots, and I know they don't want to see. And she was like, but I'm gonna support you. Are y'all gonna make it? And you're smart students. She's like, because she heard and she was like, it's not fair that you have to go through this. And she was a white professor. We didn't do as well on the test. And she said, it's the way you are reading the test. You're reading too much. Aid and another professor had a study session to help us he gave us tips on how to read nursing questions. After user hurts it. The next step, we all did better. Students were upset and we get better on the test, even though they had every opportunity. Those professors that have publicly publicly apologized to them, the nursing students

started to change our our senior year. I think that's very well known in nursing. She created some more questions in North Carolina are very traditional stuff and Lady. But as far as any bias, she didn't show it. He made a statement one day in class, she said, You know, I noticed that some of you all have been making straight A's or high B's. I

looked at your record your grade. But then you come to my class and you're not, you're not doing well. I know some of you had tests from all these other professors to change my test everything. So you don't have some may have no you didn't know anything. Then the professor came to me and said they realized that there's some racial issue do they ask me if I will sit on a board and really share my experiences and update as if you're not a white female in its program, you're not a kid. And it's funny now, the same school accorded me to be accepted in their hall of fame Americans outset this but I want to know that you understand that this was the issue and that you need to continue to work on it.

We have more black nurses, more black nurses with advanced degrees and other nurses of color with advanced degree. People of color with advanced degrees are outpacing white nurses. Regular up front for the most part. I like my braces up front and they just be upfront with you said a word or whatever. I know you don't like me. But what you're not going to do is be disrespectful to me as a professional I don't care if personally, you have an issue with me, but professionally I just want the same opportunity. We don't have to be best friends but I won't, you're gonna have to respect me. I want other black women and black men and other people of color to understand that this isn't relegated to one race we don't have to accept low expectations

I became the chief of nursing education or research so I had to interact with a lot of nursing schools because the VA was a teacher hospital so one professor her and I had been emailing just back and forth we've never we never saw each other she actually saw me you know she just started talking me like I wouldn't do that and now my lab Jack and my degrees Alma so us being one of my main students as a non data Martin so you so you're so young in her mind she's I'm so black think nursing is considered for has never considered so long as a white female profession. The point is sometimes even black patients start believing that they are regular resume if it's a white nursing assistant, that first especially if it's a female, She's the nurse. And if it's the male he's adopted, I've seen black patients not one black that sometimes even black people and people of color take on they'll say hey Sumption.

I think we need to have those open that open dialogue. I think the best example, when I was working my shift, we fit our unit was the one we were we were the Rainbow Coalition. It was mostly black nurses. We had a few white nurses, more white nurse she was her fiance was black, and one white female. She was gay. We had a person that was Native American, we had a Spanish and Hawaiian. So okay, yeah, let's say this won't be the night answer. Stupid. Whatever question. You got a stupid black question that you want. It's not for everybody. We all agree, nobody will be offended. And we will. Okay. Okay. This is what people need to do. Because we all thought about basically, as

far as discrimination, we all right. We know what it feels like. Night and day, the next morning, we all went out to breakfast what my ancestors had to go through. And, you know, not only here, but in the Middle Passage, even when things are stressful, or the things that we go through here because just imagine what they were thinking, what their physical and mental health was on that boat, my family and because my mom was like, you know, nursing school, she was like, I was like I'm struggling. give y'all a time. I'm gonna tell you