

Reckoning With Racism in Nursing

Keondra Rustan Transcript

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We're addressing racism in nursing

My pronouns are she her and I

identify as black or African American.

However, I can trace my heritage to Chickahominy Native American

and Nigerian.

Actually did not originally want to be a nurse.

I wanted to be a scientist.

However, my last year of high school,

my grandmother,

my maternal grandmother became very ill

she had multiple strokes.

I was inspired to be a nurse because she had

I hate to say this, but terrible nursing care.

They were not receptive.

They didn't recognize that she was getting worse.

They didn't recognize the family's concern.

They kind of waved us all off.

None of us were at the time health literate.

So I knew something was wrong,

but I couldn't get anyone to listen.

Towards the end of my schooling?

I took care of her until she died.

Every day after school,

and she lived long enough to see me graduate.

There's so much of a need for

proper health care in the BIPOC community.

I need to do something.

I need to make a career move.

And it was kind of tough because I'm a bit of an introvert.

It was so important to me

that I needed to step out of that shell and do something else.

And so I decided to become a nurse and I haven't looked back.

I, I definitely feel like I made the right choice

I started out in cardiac medicine.

I worked on a cardiac stepdown floor.

I then was able to float to different areas of that hospital

and I did cardiac surgical ICU transplant cardiac ICU.

I wanted to expand my knowledge,

so I decided to go to the general

critical care unit or intensive care unit.

And it was during these times that I started getting students,

I really enjoyed it.

And some of them,

once they became licensed, they actually came and found me.

I then started to

be part time as a clinical instructor.

I was the youngest instructor there.

So they kind of put me in simulation I went into the tech

and I started working with the robots,

the human patient simulators,

and I found that I had a knack for it.

And then I found that I even had a knack for programming,

even though I had no formal training at the time.

Once you discovered that you're kind of good at something,

you then want to learn everything about it.

Then I started taking some formal classes I found some mentors

learning more and more about simulation, its pedagogy and

and andragogy

and moulage and technology and programming and modeling.

And I found myself

working

as an assistant director of simulation

where I'm able to combine these things and still mentor

new nurses and nursing students, as well as new nurses

I'm a person who typically likes to avoid conflict.

My go to really has never really been racism.

I would love to think that that isn't as much of an issue

as it actually is.

I was working as a lead faculty.

I did not know that

I was supposed to be in a leadership position

because they never told me that in the interview

and my title did not list it.

I was one of the

first faculty hired in that role,

and so they hired two other faculty behind me,

and I kind of took them under my wing.

The dean hired a friend

of hers who came in as a part time sim educator.

This person didn't think that I should be in my role.

It was very mild, so I thought, Well, maybe I'm not capable.

She would deliberately alter documents that I worked on

doing this harm.

She always presented herself as someone who was fond of me, but

maybe it's an ageist thing

because once again, I was the youngest person in my department

after overhearing a conversation that it was not related to that

I waited until I had already had so much

that I was on my way out the door

before I finally confronted

the director, the dean, and showed her the evidence.

And I'm sorry to say

that every BIPOC person in that department has left since I left

because of this person.

Now, I'm very quick to speak up if I think something is unfair

or I'm being misunderstood.

But years ago, no, I didn't, and I think I did

the people that followed me a severe disservice.

I was caring for this gentleman who had

he was at the end stage of his heart failure.

And when I came into the room, his family just looked at me

and they were like, I think you want to get another patient.

I've never had a family member

tell me that I should get a different patient.

Why are they saying that?

I was feeling awkward and I was like,

should I talk to my charge nurse?

Why was there so much indecision?

Like, am I setting myself up for something unsafe

and this was my first patient that displayed overt racism.

He started telling me, well,

you seem intelligent. For a black girl.

I think that I probably would have liked black people

if I had met more black people like you.

And I was like, that's an interesting take. On it.

Have you not encountered many black people?

And he was like, No, I encounter many black people.

My dad owned a construction company.

And so he began to tell me all these horrible things that he did

to all the black workers

there, violent behaviors that I really

don't want to go into graphic detail about.

I almost felt like it was a deathbed confession.

He kind of unloaded all of the

the hateful things he did

and all his hateful thoughts about the ignorance

and inferiority of black Americans.

That was very challenging for me

because part of me wanted to lash out.

Part of me wanted to give up this patient.

I'm a human being.

It doesn't matter what ethnicity you are.

I was at his deathbed when he died,

and he said that he felt better

talking to me and confessing to me

at least that he realized before he died

the error of his ways.

But at the same time, he left me with such a huge burden.

As a nurse

you, pretty much you treat everyone with equity.

I don't say equality

because some people need a little bit more help than others.

You can't

take into account that they may have done

horrible things, that they may see you as less than human.

Really was kind of out of it for at least a few weeks.

After I took care of him.

Even if you treat them

with ultimate kindness, there's they're still going to

they're still going to be some people out there

who just because of the way you look, view you as less valuable

or not even human

It would have to start with the schools, to be honest with you.

A lot of the information that is being provided to students.

It's not % accurate.

Many textbooks still list certain certain

health determinants based on ethnicity

when that's really more of a lifestyle thing.

Initiating some DEI [diversity, equity, inclusion] strategies

and the admissions process.

The admission standards set are set

they're geared towards

people who may have had more access to certain resources.

Once you work on the students

you need to make sure that you have enough staff.

Most schools have DEI and antiracism measures,

but often it's one person.

I would love to see more BIPOC faculty,

but that's going to be a long process

because there's not much in place to retain them.

I think there should be brave spaces

available for students and faculty.

When I say brave,

that means that you can have a challenging discussion.

Challenging topics

that may be confrontational and upsetting,

but they can speak their truth

without fear of retribution or judgment.

I'm trying to do something with my current place of employment,

where we do a simulation

using implicit bias training tools for the clinical faculty.

They see

any kind of discrimination encounter,

and the clinical environments

are able to, with confidence, intervene and disrupt it.

I think we should have more trainings throughout the year.

A lot of times something will happen.

We'll have a one day of training and then we'll forget about it.

Like the problem has gone away, but it hasn't

One person can do many things, but when you have a group, it

it's it's so much more rewarding. And it takes the stress off.

Luckily, I have

BIPOC organizations here

that I'm able to have a sense of community, and

if I need to troubleshoot

something, I can go to them and get advice.

Spent a lot of time with my family.

Unfortunately, my family is on the other side of the US

right now.

Remembering who I am, where I come from, and my mission, my goal

that helps me to get through difficult times.

You are worth it. You definitely matter.

And you are a human being who is valid and important

and you have so much to share.

I used to use my hair mantra and you know,

no matter who I encounter

I'll be honest authentic and act with integrity and respect

for anyone I encounter.

That's my hair motto that I say

When I teaching a class, we have that motto.