

Reckoning With Racism in Nursing

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We're addressing

racism in nursing

I am an Asian, Indian born.

I like to identify myself as a person of color.

I'm an immigrant as well.

I moved from India about almost

can't believe it's years now.

And I've been a nurse for about years.

When I came into this country, I kind of

did not know where to find myself as an immigrant

with two kids.

I found my identity as a nurse.

I started as a cardiac nurse.

You know,

working in a telemetry

unit in a step down cardiovascular unit.

I worked in the E.R.

emergency room, you know,

I felt like the management really appreciated me,

and they hired me right

for my value that I could bring to the profession.

I found myself as a nurse healing,

helping people,

and I felt like this is where I belong.

I'm going to I'm going to be a healer.

I'm going to help patients

I think in the time when I started practice,

anybody was open to talk about this.

Even to bring the word

racism outside was not there.

I recognized that. I was

I felt different, you know, in the group.

As an immigrant, you don't realize

if the difference is because you're an immigrant

or if it's because you're different

among the % minority.

So I would go to my teach

one of the teachers and ask her,

why is it that I feel different?

This this faculty member, wonderful woman, she said

just keep going on.

You just keep going.

I think I kind of understand what she meant.

She meant that as a person of color,

you just have to ignore the noise.

You know, keep going on.

Advice, I every time I felt different,

I would just keep going on.

I got my PhD

I'm so glad she told me that

I went back to work.

I didn't feel much different

because in the place of work, there was,

you know, different colors, you know,

people of different ethnicities in a very diverse

I had a student

ask me, can we refuse because of the color

and that really, you know, shocked me.

We are the number one trusted profession.

We want to be accepted

as people who will accept people,

as people, as patients, not as, you know,

like you're this color you're that color.

You know, color should not be in the way thing.

It's upon us

nurse leaders to step up and,

you know, to help the newer generation of nurses to

empower and to learn

and to educate and seek knowledge.

As much as I'm glad

that we have these discussions, you know,

trying to bring awareness

about the world of racism,

and how people are different,

you know, having differences,

we are the most trusted.

And I want nursing to continue

as the most trusted profession.

And that doesn't come without leaders.

There's a lot of research to

show that stress can impact your health

very open about this. I'm a cancer survivor.

It's an existential question.

What is the purpose of your life?

What do you do from here?

I had to heal myself,

take priorities and handle the self conflict.

I did sometimes think if this structural racism

that was underlying,

you know, was a big part of my cancer,

the stress of the job

and being a person of minority did play a big role

in my cancer, came back after getting treated

I had this one thing I want to help nurses

to take care of themselves.

I was very close to death.

You know,

when death came knocking at my door,

I had to decide what is my priority.

I'm a qualified mindfulness

based trusted action teacher.

And I practice it every day. I take care of myself.

I meditate every day.

I'm first.

I'm going to take care of myself

because if I, only if I'm here, I could help.

There are times

I would just

give myself permission

to sit and cry for minutes,

tell myself, OK, here is it.

Anitha, take your minutes. minutes.

Sit and cry.

I gather myself.

I said, OK, time for action.

Let's do the next thing.

People of color,

we know how to identify if this is racist.

So I'm not like

a big fan of using this word racism,

but just the like. How else to say this?

You know it's there

and you want to bring it up

and you want to create awareness.

It's interesting to see

many people will not say that word.

I bring that word often

to address it. I'm like,

It's there

let's and pretend it's like this.

And I think many schools are starting to do that.

Open conversations.

We cannot change everyone

but small steps

steps like these, you know, like having us talk.

Nurses of color

supporting each other,

acceptance of each other, right.

To create that awareness, acceptance and then

action.

When do I speak?

When do I not speak?

When do I have the courage

when do I not have the courage?

And at what cost?

I will find a place where they like me speaking up.

They want to hear from me

and I'll work for the organization

who will listen to me.

If there's a situation that is very telling

and this is not acceptable,

I will write a very clear email.

I will tell them This is how I feel.

You know, I feel threatened, I feel unsafe,

and bring it to the table to converse

and hopefully you know,

help me get better

that I'm not going to be put down by them.

I'm not here to be walked over by anybody.

You ask, and it'll be given, if you don't ask.

It's it's not given.

So you ask and you be humble, you listen.

You you think and you do your best.

You cannot change everything in one day.

It's long due.

I knew this had to happen ten years ago,

but I think this is a chance for us to, like,

step up

with the social media

in the past few years

in this in our country has created a lot of rift.

It's upon us and us leaders to step up

and you know,

to help the newer generation of nurses, to

empower and to learn

and to educate and seek knowledge,

cohesively create an environment where

we could help each other.

That's how we nurses

can show that we're leaders.

We can set an example.

And this is a really good place

for nurses to do this,

use this time

to bring everything to the table, talk about

it and make changes.

The search for knowledge, I think it's power.

For nurses.

If there's one thing

that I would say, search for the knowledge

and the power comes,

I tell them it's a very humbling profession.

I would do this again and again.

I would want to be a nurse throughout.

If you ask me like a million times, I'll be a nurse.

I have a very diverse

group of students, I make sure I share my story

to be vulnerable,

to give that permission,

to be vulnerable and tell everybody that, you know,

yes, I had cancer.

I worked in very sick, with very sick patients.

You know, I didn't have walking out patients much.

So all of my patients are pretty, you know, sick.

And when they're in that stage,

they look as look at nurses

as, you know, some angels.

They just love your energy. They want to be healed.

And you are there.

So then this tough thing comes

what matters is not your color of skin.

I think that's what we learn from patients.

We open ourselves up and we care.

Everything transcends.

Consciously.

I want to be able to answer

the questions that come up.

That I did not treat anyone differently.

I don't want to be guilty

of anything in my knowledge, you know,

without us knowing we do harm.

My consciousness with sound reasoning, with deep

insight thinking

I want to leave this world saying that

I was just, fair.

[We] come to this world alone.

You know, and we go alone,

in between

what we create is our choice.

And every day, you know, is a choice.

Every moment is a choice.