

Reckoning With Racism in Nursing

Gay Pasley Transcript

Duration: 11:29

We're addressing racism in nursing

My name is Gay

Pasley and I am actually an immigrant to the United States.

I was born in Antigua,

which was the British West Indies

to a black American father and a Caribbean mother.

I

arrived in the United States before my first birthday

Of the reasons

that people immigrate

from the Caribbean to the United States or England

and sometimes Canada from the islands

often was to pursue a career in nursing.

That is a huge part of my identity.

I decided that I would be a nurse at a very young age.

I feel it was a calling. I was six years old.

In high school.

I had taken a health careers class

Initially, I flunked out of college with a . GPA.

I then became a single parent

and I thought,

I have got to overcome these obstacles that are preventing me

from pursuing this career.

I went all the way back to the basics. I took

basic study skills. Also gone to the military.

And in the military I had become a combat medic.

All of those things,

unbeknownst to me,

helped me become a nurse assistant, which was one of my first

early careers.

I went back and got my bachelor's of science in nursing

I was the first person in my family on both sides to

go to college.

My dad as a child would often tell me that

I should be a doctor.

I can be the first black doctor in the family.

And he bought me a kit.

But on that kit were three white people.

Man was a doctor.

The woman was a nurse.

And the patient was a doctor. Passion

for being a nurse

came about from identifying with the woman that was on

the package.

Representation is so important.

You know what would have happened

had I seen myself as the black doctor?

The majority of us have experienced it

within the first six months of our nursing careers.

I started my career in labor and delivery

and within the first six months.

I remember coming on to the floor

and I was eager and excited to be there.

And I was the only black nurse.

In the hospital that I worked in. There were

I think three black nurses.

Coming on to the floor one night, one day,

and my nursing supervisor said to me, Gay

and she put her hands up,

"you can't go into this particular room."

They said, they don't want a Black nurse.

We are

what we believed postcivil rights era.

And I did not realize what was going on.

I just remember sitting there with all these skills as a nurse,

and here I am at work where I'm being paid

and being told I can't enter a room because I'm black.

It is the biggest secret in medicine

that it is the it's a Jim Crow practice that still exists.

Was my first experience, but it was not my last experience.

Caring for this family and they're laboring

and they're having this first baby

struggling to bring this baby into this world

and I'm monitoring and my shift ends.

No good nurse walks out when you're this close to a delivery.

So I stay.

We deliver the baby and the family is in the room.

Baby is blue and I'm administering the oxygen

waking him up and he's to his mom's chest.

Grandma comes over

and she starts to sing this baby's first nursery rhyme,

"Eeny, meeny, miny, mo

catch a nword by his toe."

And I just remember going, [gasp]

It is this placating to white supremacy?

And we act like

we're paying respect to the patient when actually what we're doing

is paying respect to this white supremacy

and saying that it's going to go away and it doesn't

Along with this racism, I also experiencing incivility in nursing

where we eat our young.

Once I got into Ph.D.

school is when I began to learn about it

and began to

to find the words

it's patient race refusal in the health care setting.

I coined a phrase called Patient Initiated Employer Sponsored

Race Bias.

And, you know, you go to your supervisor

who is often a white woman.

I'm in a career

that is predominantly has predominantly white women.

Who are also impacted by patriarchy

and are protecting this white supremacist

One of the presentations that I did

was called patient initiated race refusal

in the health care setting addressing patient to nurse incivility.

Racist patient comes into the workplace.

It's usually a white male

who comes into the workplace and says,

I don't want a black female nurse.

They don't do that to police officers who are usually black men.

You don't say, I don't want a black fireman to come to my home.

The American Medical Association

and the American Nurses Association have guidelines

that indicate

that the health professional is not to exhibit bias

when administering care to patients.

However, none that govern how the health professional of color

is supposed to engage

when they are targeted for patient race

bias in their own workplace.

What I find is that even black nurses,

you know, we

sometimes don't even realize

how entrenched we are in this white supremacy.

I'm equipped to provide competent care to you,

and I'm not going anywhere. And

because of

that, I wasn't able to find jobs for a while

I was at a point

where I could not find a job in Oklahoma, was blacklisted.

An organization called the Rosenberg Foundation,

they help protect progressive activists.

And it's amazing what gets you labeled as a progressive activist.

Staff are not educated about the history of racism in health care.

And that they believe

that we are actively living in a postracial society

and that the patient has the right

to discriminate based on race or racial preference.

The most painful things is when black nurses say,

well, just don't.

Just don't do it.

When they say that,

I just go to another floor

and we cannot continue to placate to that.

There's the Hillburton Act.

There's the Title VI

Civil Rights Act, Medicare the Patient's Bill of Rights

that indicate that

they don't have the right to come into our workplace

and discriminate against us.

You don't know that

the Civil Rights Act affected many aspects of hospital life

and was the key to racial equality in the health care setting.

This fight gives me strength

because I want to see us move past this Jim Crow

era practice and call it out

In Tulsa at Tulsa Community College.

I think that I may have been one of four

nursing students of color as one professor of color Um,

it was. You felt very isolated.

I did not know about organizations such as Ki Eta Phi

which is a black nursing sorority

or the National Black Nurses Association.

I would tell a nurse

somebody whose interested in nursing

is to consider where you want to go

and look at what the criteria is that you will need to meet.

So that you can begin to align yourself

and be the ideal candidate.

Connect with nurses. Connect with people you can find.

I would tell her to call the National Black Nurses Association.

Go to your nursing board.

Talk to them find somebody.

Find a mentor find an encourager.

I remember,

not passing dosage calculation And I had to sit out a year.

If this is your dream, this is your dream.

I didn't have any other dreams

I don't think that you can put love

and attention and focus on something and not find a result.

There was a lot of times that I failed,

but I came back and that's what you have to do.