

Reckoning With Racism in Nursing

Viviana Garcia Garcia Transcript

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We're addressing

racism in nursing

I am Vivianna

Garcia. Garcia.

I always say my both last names.

I identify as a Mexican.

Family migrated here from Mexico for medical assistance.

I grew up

translating for my family

every time we went to the hospital,

In that all my childhood

and even up to my teenage years,

I wanted to go into nursing

because I wanted to be that person

that when someone walks into the hospital

or a clinic or any medical advice facility,

they look for me.

I want to be that person

that gets to

nurture them and care for them

in their most vulnerable times.

I was a seven year old girl

trying my best to translate medical terms to

Spanish

Always got super nervous

because I already knew like, Oh,

they don't have someone there to translate.

Couldn't believe how these big buildings

didn't have the resources we needed.

When you go into a building or an event,

you look for your people.

You look for someone that is going to assist you.

When you walked into hospitals, all we saw was

white staff.

First I wanted to be a doctor,

and I believe that was more of like culturally based,

like prideful in in the Hispanic culture.

Like oh, my daughter is going to be a doctor.

When I went to the clinic with my mother,

we had a Hispanic nurse

that came in and was translating everything for us.

She looked at my mom's eyes

and mine as well

and she's like,

Did you actually understand what she just told you?

And that nurse actually that day, stayed

there, explained it to her,

explain it to myself, and printed out

pamphlets on what we had to do going on forward.

I wanted to be the nurse.

I want to be

the one that stays

and knows all this information to help my culture.

But not only that, make a change and do that

for any other person of color that

comes in through doors

I am the first person in my family

that I'm going to college,

and I'm also

a DACA individual, a dreamer at the time,

that's what they would call us, dreamers.

Senior year, I was told that there was more scholarships

applied to many colleges I got accepted to

all seven colleges that

I applied to. Heritage City, which is my school apply.

I got a full ride,

luckily, and I learned that

there was a nursing program there.

I got to see

who was in the program,

and I saw all the stuff where, like,

were all white.

Maybe I won't click

or connect with the professor

because we live two different total worlds.

When I walked in into her room,

her office, my dean's office,

the first thing that I noticed was

it was a very safe space.

I was just so unsure

of what was going to happen with DACA.

I saw a poster on her wall, a picture of a world

and a multiple hands of different

race, holding hands and saying

together we will create peace that comfort. I was

like, Okay, she is an ally.

She is someone that is going to work with me.

You are the fourth person

that will be in the program if you go ahead and apply.

I just want to let you know that I am here for you.

I might not know a lot about you and I might just have met you,

but I myself

being, having the privilege that I have,

I will stand in front of anyone

that tries to harm any student of different race.

This was the first interaction I ever had

with someone with power, which is education.

Someone has a title and someone who is white.

That actually gave me the opportunity.

It wasn't until clinical when it started,

I started experiencing more like discrimination.

Most of my clinicals were in the Upper Valley.

We used to describe

as the Lower Valley people and the Upper Valley.

A lot of the lower valley

people are the people that are people of color.

I knew that there was going to be fairly

a small amount of

Hispanic nurses or BIPOC nurses, doctors and nurses were

all white.

See a nurse, come to me.

She was like, oh is your name Viviane

And I was like, Oh no, my name's Vivianna,

but you call me Vivi.

For short.

And she's like, Oh, whatever, let's,

let's just go, Viviane.

There's a different sense as

a student nurse

going with the nurse versus a student nurse of color.

Going with the nurse that that does not want you there.

Prove her wrong.

That's always been my mentality.

Like, you might not like me

or you not, might

not like of who I am or what's my culture

and you will respect me as a colleague

and give me the chance to prove to you

that I'm here to work and I'm the same as you.

At the end of that day,

she noticed that I wasn't sitting down

and I wasn't doing things I wasn't supposed to,

and I was giving patient care

Might be uncomfortable, but I'm not scared.

And I'm going to change your mind.

And I know my patients are going to want me

and need me tomorrow as well

because we had two Hispanic patients

I may have stepped out of line as a student nurse,

but I wouldn't have forgiven myself if I wouldn't have spoken up

Every single patient that I have, I envision my family.

I had a patient who, neglected,

I'm just going to say it was he was neglected and he was

Native American.

The nurses on that floor were

we're pretty much not paying attention to him

because he was quadriplegic.

I knew how he wanted.

He was like

he always liked to be clean

he liked having his hair combed,

had this patient the week before,

and he was

able to communicate with us and everything

and now he wasn't able to because he was also on a ventilator.

He had all these like dirty supplies everywhere.

And I was so mad at that moment.

I talked my preceptor and I was like, hey,

could you please just come into this room

and tell me what's wrong?

The moment she walked into the room,

she's like, Oh, my goodness, this is so bad.

[I'm] So glad that in that moment, my preceptor, she

she stood behind me as a support.

I don't care personally that I'm just a student nurse.

I'm going to say something

because this is why these new generation of nurses

were coming in,

because there's needs to be these changes

This patient is

this fragile little old Caucasian lady.

Her mental status was a little bit altered

so she was a little confused.

My name is Viviana. I'm here to assist you.

Is there anything that I could help you with? This patient

like, turned towards me and she just jumped.

Did I do something wrong? or,

She's like, I'm just scared of colored people.

As a person of color,

you know,

when someone means it

and you know that someone just doesn't

say that for no reason,.

I felt like I had to apologize to her because she was scared of me

I think it still has taken a toll and it's something I'm still

working with

because it happened to me as a student nurse

and not as a nurse that already has experience

For the rest of those clinicals,

I felt like so

I always had to go with the mentality

like I have to prove them. I had to. I can't be caught slacking.

That's so common

with any person of color in the hospital.

At the end of the day, we always have eyes on us.

Any nurse,

any faculty

in the medical field of color always have eyes on them

just waiting for that mistake to happen

who are white or are privileged to make a mistake.

It's like a slap in the hand.

Yeah, they have eyes on me.

But because they have eyes on me.

I'm going to prove them wrong

and I'm going to be doing

what I need to do to prove to them that

I am eligible to be a nurse.

What gave me strength

was my

patients,

especially the ones that they were patients of color.

Little remarks such as like if it wasn't for you,

I wouldn't have been able to make that call

or hear my daughter's voice right now.

If it wasn't for you,

I wouldn't have been bathed

until tonight

or be able to understand what procedure I'm getting.

Those comments made by the patients

were the ones that kept pushing me until today.

Just gives you that motivation

to keep going forward and breaking these barriers

within the hospital walls that need to be broken and

and bringing to light all these injustices

As nurses, we're told to voice our opinions

and be the voice for our patients,

but we should also be the voice for ourselves.

The United States. A lot of people think of

the whites, you know,

but in reality,

America, in my opinion,

is this pot of different cultures.

We bring all these different cultures,

all these mentalities, all these opinions and

and that's what makes us beautiful.

And I feel like that should be in the hospital as well,

especially because we're treating people

that are in the most vulnerable times and are scared.

It is going to be difficult.

It is going to be hard.

It's going to be scary,

but it's not going to be impossible.

You are going to be where you want to be.

And you

if you want to be a nurse, you're going to be a nurse.

Break those barriers, break all those doors.

They're going to tell you

no because they will say no to you

and they will try to scare you away.

The moment that you find

your inner voice,

that's the moment that you start to speak out

on all these injustices.

I am of color nurse,

and I know you try and bring more people of color,

that doesn't mean we're going to stay quiet,

doesn't mean we're going to be your marketing.

It's going to mean there's going to come change

and you're not going to like it.

But we're not here for you to like us.

We are here to make a change.

Either on board on this change

or get off the board

because we're going to keep moving on