



Tide of change

Report calls on nursing to confront and eradicate racism.

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RACISM: “Assaults on the human spirit in the form of biases, prejudices, and an ideology of superiority that persistently cause moral suffering and perpetuate injustices and inequities.” —*The National Commission to Address Racism in Nursing*

The Commission’s foundational report, issued in May 2022, has found a connecting theme of racism in nursing, from its origin story and context in contemporary society to how the profession educates students, provides care, organizes and operates work environments, conducts research, and develops and implements policies. Racism, the report found, manifests in subtle and systemic ways, all of which contribute to an environment of exclusion, lack of diversity, and inequality.

In my view, this is the right document at the right time for our profession and our country. I hope that it’s received as intended—to be transformational and to advance the nursing profession on many fronts.

This unprecedented inward assessment of the profession by nurses represents a watershed moment in healing our profession and in improving health outcomes for communities of color. Our position as the most trusted profession for 20 consecutive years gives us unique standing and responsibility to be a force for positive change not only for our patients and the organizations where we work, but also for the nation’s health at large. The Commission’s report lays the groundwork for addressing deep cultural, structural, and societal barriers grounded in race that have held the profession back from fully effecting this change.

The report also comes at a decisive time in our country, which is finally awakening to and becoming energized—slowly and unevenly—to deal with long-standing injustices and inequities experienced by people of color. Notably, the Commission, co-led by the American Nurses Association and the National Black Nurses Association, National Coalition of Ethnic Minority Nurse Associations, and National Association of Hispanic Nurses, reflects the leadership of 24 major nursing groups. The

open, honest, and respectful deliberations of this inclusive body have set the tone for our efforts from the Commission’s founding in January 2021 through the report’s release.

The Commission sees the report as a significant step for the profession to fully embody its values and be the standard bearer for modelling change. We intend the report to serve as a living document that will inspire both individual nurses and institutions to have crucial, even painful, conversations that lead to progress and to act against racism whenever and wherever possible.

Nurses, we hope, will reflect on their thoughts and actions toward patients and colleagues that don’t align with our Code of Ethics’ call to respect the human dignity and rights of all individuals, set aside bias or prejudice in providing services, contribute to a moral environment that demands respectful interactions, and integrate social justice in their practices. We expect that organizations and the nursing profession will examine their policies, practices, and cultures and act to make lasting, impactful changes that create and nurture diverse, equitable, and inclusive environments with the contributions of all nurses recognized and rewarded equally.

Some necessary reforms, including those involving nursing education and research policies, won’t be accomplished overnight. But the Commission will highlight progress with unwavering focus to keep momentum flowing across the domains of education, practice, research, and policy.

As the report is disseminated, I urge all nurses to read it with an open mind and self-reflect on their thoughts, actions, and behaviors and how they can evolve positively. My hope is that the streams of our individual journeys will flow into rivers of reforms that swell to a tide of change within nursing and across the nation.

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