Systemic Racism in a Contemporary Society

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Some may reasonably question the extent to which systemic racism exists in a contemporary society and falsely assert that legislative rulings like Brown vs Board of Education in 1954, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, along with the 13th Amendment were powerful instruments that extinguished the fiery acts of racism. However, Wilkerson (2020) asserted that racism "goes about its work in silence, the string of a puppet master unseen by those whose subconscious it directs... cast in the guise of normalcy, injustice looking just, atrocities looking unavoidable..." constantly fueled by the seemingly innocuous actions that sustain its mobility. Not recognizing how racism continues to exist or understanding how it operates under the cloak of anti-racist legislation has deleterious effects in nursing and healthcare (Centers for Disease Control, 2021). A plethora of literature supports that the remnants of racism continue to smolder in and around the discipline of nursing (Adams, 2021; Beard & Julion, 2016; Broome, 2021; Doede, 2015; Fitzsimmons et al., 2021; Hassouneh et al., 2021; Waite et al., 2017; White, 2018). In an October 2021 study on racism in nursing fielded by the National Commission 94% of respondents indicated agreement with the statement there is some or a lot of racism in the nursing profession, 76% of respondents attested to witnessing racism in the workplace, and 63% reported personally experiencing racism in the workplace with Black nurses (92%) reporting having experienced racism the most (National Commission, 2021) Lamentably, racism continues to undermine the ability of minoritized groups to access and graduate from nursing school (Barbee et al., 2001), be hired as nurses, advance to leadership positions (American Nurses Association, 2021), and attain tenure in academia (Beard & Julion, 2016; Iheduru-Anderson, 2021). What's more, racism extends into and through the profession of nursing and impacts clinical outcomes. Recently, the Center for Disease Control (2021) indicted racism as a fundamental driver of health disparities. This section briefly asserts the omnipresent force of racism in the denial of opportunities, continuance of race as a risk, and the paralysis of deconstruction.

Omnipresent Force of Racism

Racism does not exist in a silo and its actions are not always explicit. Rather, racism is metastatic in nature, spreading throughout healthcare, education, and other systems, and emerging unambiguously through the actions of others, according to an institution's degree of permissibility. In higher education, racism is demonstrated when minoritized groups are "ignored, assumed to be staff or a student, and...unsupported as a researcher in a teaching institution" (Beard et al., 2016, p. 590). In the clinical arena, racism is manifested by the assumption that leaders who identify as Black are presumed to be patient transporters or told that they won't last in the position because the color of their skin makes them unliked or they won't fit in (Fitzsimmons, et al., 2021). In the classroom, racism creates an ethos of intolerance to difference and has moved some faculty to verbally assault students by exclaiming that they don't like their face and they will make it extremely tough for them at school (Villarruel et al., 2001). Among peers, racism has stoked the myth of intellectual inferiority (Broome, 2021) and

- has prompted some White students to say that Black students are not bright enough to be
- successful in nursing and they would do better in low level nursing positions (Barbee & Gibson,
- 1545 2001).

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1546 Evidence of continuance

- 1547 Could a system of disadvantage rooted over 400 years ago in false rhetoric and based on or
- assigned to skin color continue to exist in a contemporary environment? Beliefs regarding the
- superiority of Whites and the assumption that individuals from minoritized groups are
- 1550 considered less than, were once ingrained in educational policies and hiring practices. Although
- the racial and ethnic demographics of nursing has increased, the American Organization of
- Nurse Executives revealed that the representation of minoritized groups in nurse executive
- positions in 2016 was less than 4% (Iheduru-Anderson et al., 2017). Additionally, racism shows
- up under the guise of hair policies and discriminately determines how one must wear their hair.
- Hair policies can be rooted in dehumanizing beliefs about one's hair texture and the association
- of one's hair style with uncleanliness or unprofessionalism (Cox et al., 2020). Racism is
- endorsed by faculty who tell students, "you can't wear your hair like that" (White, 2018, p 348).
- 1558 In health care, individuals from minoritized groups are further marginalized when some
- patients refuse to be treated by them, and leaders fail to see how their inaction makes them
- 1560 complicit (Beard, 2021). Some educators view themselves as the standard of normalcy and
- individuals from marginalized groups as abnormal (Tengelin et al., 2016). In The Commission's
- 2021 survey BIPOC nurses of all racial categories reported experiencing the highest percentage
- of racism from a co-worker or peer followed by a patient and manager, supervisor, or
- administrator (National Commission, 2021).

Deconstruction paralysis

- 1566 The arduous journey to deconstruct policies, practices, processes, and beliefs that have derailed
- efforts to build an inclusive discipline that values diversity is critical to nursing and might sound
- daunting. Nevertheless, institutions can take actions to mitigate racism in nursing. For example,
- admission essays for nursing programs could include questions that seek to understand what
- 1570 the applicant has done, will do, or believes should be done, to eliminate systemic racism and
- advance health equity. Professional scholarship could encourage anti-racism research along
- 1572 with studies that identify and mitigate the ways in which racism operates at the institutional
- level. Resources should be allocated to support efforts to engage in anti-racism work. All faculty
- 1574 should learn how to contextualize healthcare disparities and teach students how racism
- interrupts efforts to improve clinical outcomes. Self-reflection exercises should prompt leaders
- 1576 to consider the ways in which policies and practices give life to racism and limited racial and
- 1577 ethnic diversity among leaders.
- 1578 The seismic activity of an earthquake may not register at a magnitude that generates a national
- alarm. Likewise, the degree of racism may fail to result in a national protest similar to the
- outcry following the death of Mr. George Floyd. Nevertheless, the fallout of racism in a
- 1581 contemporary society contributes to health and educational disparities that limit the
- professions' ability to live up to its value of justice and standing as the most trusted profession.

1583 Nurses must acknowledge and be sensitive to the distinct, and indistinct nature of racism if they 1584 are to co-create steps that affirm professional values. To advance nursing's ethical values all 1585 nurses should be equipped with the tools to recognize and begin to mitigate racism from 1586 nursing.

Intersectionality between Social Injustice and Racism

1587 1588 In response to Nationally broadcast race-based violence and acts of hatred toward BIPOC 1589 individuals in 2020Following the unjust murder of Mr. George Floyd, we witnessed a national 1590 uprising and awakening to the societal atrocities of racism. The national call for justice cascaded 1591 into calls to address the multitude of societal injustices resulting from racism and a call for 1592 awareness of everyday biases, prejudices, and micro and macroaggressions. Social justice is 1593 commonly defined based upon two major theories, both centered on equality of opportunity, 1594 yet both fall short of addressing the foundational elements of human dignity and respect 1595 (Watson, 2019). As asserted by Watson "constructed on difference, social injustice dramatically 1596 shapes the psyche of individuals, groups, and nations (Stevenson, 2014). At its most basic level, 1597 social injustice is about distribution of wealth, power, resources, and opportunities 1598 (Rothenberg, 2007) resulting in marginalization, disenfranchisement, and exclusion" (Watson, 1599 2019). When we look at the intersectionality between social injustice and racism, we see the 1600 same elements. Racism as it is defined by the Commission is assaults on the human spirit in the 1601 form of actions, biases, prejudices, and an ideology of superiority based on race that 1602 persistently cause moral suffering and physical harm of individuals and perpetuate systemic 1603 injustices and inequities (ANA, 2021). In a contemporary context, when we translate actions of 1604 social injustice and racism into the purview of nursing and nursing practice, we see the same 1605 inequities in the distribution of power, resources, and opportunities in the form of lower pay, 1606 fewer opportunities for advancement to leadership positions, lack of opportunities to gain 1607 tenure, derailed opportunities for research, fewer BIPOC nurses advancing to faculty, and pay 1608 inequities.

1609 Moving Beyond Allyship to Anti-racism

1610 Allyship, deemed, one of Merriam-Webster's 2021's words of the year is defined as "the role of 1611 a person who advocates for inclusion of a "marginalized or politicized group" in solidarity but 1612 not as a member, and the more traditional relationship of "persons, groups or nations 1613 associating and cooperating with one another for a common cause or purpose" (Merriam-1614 Webster, 2021). In a contemporary context, allyship extends beyond bystander support to 1615 active engagement and advocacy to challenge accepted group dynamics that perpetuate racism. 1616 As asserted by Waite and Nardi in Racism as a Historical Trauma: Implications for the Nursing 1617 Profession, "...to promote health equity and support the human rights mandate contained in 1618 the American Nurses Association's Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements, the 1619 nursing profession must understand historically the creation of race, white supremacy in the 1620 United States, and entrenched racial terror and brutality toward black and brown racialized 1621 populations" (Waite and Nardi, 2021). Allyship in a contemporary context draws upon this 1622 understanding to foster anti-racist actions and ideology to dismantle systemic inequities. At the

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1623 individual level, as defined by Dr. Kendi, "...being an anti-racist requires persistent self-1624 awareness, constant self-criticism, and regular self-examination." (Kendi, 2019). Extrapolating 1625 this understanding to the organizational level and to the nursing profession, nurses striving to 1626 foster equity and inclusion within the profession must understand how the historically 1627 constructed hierarchy of race continues to create disparities for BIPOC nurses. 1628 **Privilege, Power and Internalized Oppression** 1629 Racism continues to manifest itself in the 21st century through structures, legislation, and 1630 policies that place Black and Brown people at a disadvantage leading to inequity and inequality. 1631 The recent social and health justice movements sparked by widespread media attention of police brutality and the disproportionate morbidity and mortality of COVID-19 have resulted in 1632 1633 the medical community's own reckoning with its contribution to these disparities in health 1634 outcomes and hindered advancement of health professionals equipped to serve the 1635 communities they represent. 1636 In the current reality, it is important to revisit and examine the relationship of privilege, power, 1637 and prejudice through the lens of the downstream impact of oppression. The 4 I's of 1638 Oppression as outlined and defined by the Chinook Fund Winds of Change will provide a 1639 framework to clarify the experiences and perceptions of nurses who personally experience 1640 racism and nurses who unconsciously normalize an environment that masks and perpetuates 1641 racism. Clarifying and differentiating the definitions of the four I's of Oppression will help 1642 provide understanding of how the rooted history of racism and its historical trauma from 1643 colonization has been internalized and passed down from generations and continues to 1644 manifest in our workplace, environment, policies, and society. 1645 **Ideological oppression** views one group as better than another with the right to control groups 1646 seen as inferior. This is evident by perceptions of higher intelligence, work ethic, physical 1647 strength and endurance, and superiority, compared to the other groups perceived in the 1648 converse as unintelligent, incompetent, lazy, weak, or inferior (Chinook, 2021) In the context of 1649 nursing, this ideological oppression is embedded in practices that hinder school admission and 1650 advancement and career progression. This is made evident by qualitative data from the 1651 National Commission's 2021 survey through written statements such as "Patients assume 1652 people of color are 'the help' and not skilled to help them. They will ask for 'a real nurse'." 1653 (National Commission, 2021) 1654 Ideological oppression transcends individual thoughts and is embedded in systems and 1655 structures in the form of institutional oppression. Institutional oppression is how supremacy is 1656 embedded in "institutions of society" such as laws, education, hiring policies, public policing, 1657 housing development and zoning laws (Chinook, 2021). In the National Commission's 1658 qualitative survey data, 72% of respondents discussed discrimination broadly in terms of race

and racism, bias, prejudice, stereotypes when asked why there is agreement with the

Interpersonal oppression is the downstream impact of ideological and institutional oppression

that reinforces the dominant group's disrespectful behaviors and mistreatment of groups seen

statement of racism existing within nursing.

- as inferior. This is the result of internalized negative stereotypes driving unconscious
- oppression under the guise of normalcy (Chinook, 2021). This is seen through micro- and
- macroaggressions, racist jokes, stereotypes, patient denial of treatment, dismissal of BIPOC
- nurses' knowledge and ideas, and discrediting of work.
- 1667 The compounded impact of ideological, institutional, and interpersonal oppression is
- internalized oppression defined as the internalization of "the ideology of inferiority" (Chinook,
- 1669 2021). As identified through the Commission's qualitative data, this is described by accounts of
- demoralization, insecurity, self-doubt, feelings of 'less human', sadness, isolation, and fear.
- Nurses attested to seeking treatment for anxiety, depression, posttraumatic stress disorder,
- and hypertension as a result of racism in the workplace.
- 1673 Conversely, there is internalized privilege. People who belong to the dominant group feel the
- 1674 most benefit from these systems and internalize privilege, thus accepting the belief in the
- inherent inferiority of the oppressed group and normalizes one's privilege in their own internal
- belief of inherent superiority. It creates entitlement and denies the existence of oppression and
- expresses this privilege or entitlement as paternalism (Chinook, 2021). Internalized privilege is
- seen by the majority of positions in power or even titles occupied by white nurses compared to
- 1679 BIPOC nurses. It is embedded in the structure and governance within organizations, legislation,
- 1680 and policy.
- 1681 The four I's are integrated and the relationship between racism, power and privilege will
- 1682 continue to exist in the absence of nurses' conscious examination of their own biases social
- identity, internalized privilege and how these factors affect their work and interpersonal
- 1684 relationships.

Driving Toward Change

- "What is more important than knowledge asked the mind? Caring and seeing with the heart, answered the soul."
- 1689 Flavia

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- 1690 Khoi Tu, a recognized organizational thought leader says, "culture is a celebration of what we
- hold as important...what we believe and hold sacred". We add that it is more likely to be felt
- than stated and it often shapes a lived experience for those in the workplace and resides in the
- memory as if attached to superglue. Culture, like genetics, has a group definition but individual
- expression. It is shared, learned, dynamic, and evolutionary. With this said, Gendlin and other
- researchers' insightful observations come to the fore including that "if experience appears, it
- talks back" and when it speaks it does so loudly. They tell us that every experience comes to us
- in one of four ways:
- 1698 A feeling
 - a thought
 - an action
- a sense of being
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1703 The experience also brings along an attached emotion that typically comes from five 1704 predictable care concerns:

- 1. appreciation (recognition of value)
- affiliation/belonging (emotional connection to others)
- 1707 3. autonomy (freedom to feel, think, decide)
 - 4. status (standing compared to others)
 - role (job label and related activities).

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In other words, our professional/workplace culture's language includes emotions which cannot be erased or extracted. In today's nursing environment of work and learning for many who are BIPOC, these emotions and experiences continue to occur daily as if cloned and launched unchanged over time as they encounter the vestiges of racism. In fact, they tell us that walking into these spaces feel as if they have stepped into a time warp that sends them back four to five decades. Take a moment and think about what stirs our emotions to the point of tears or anger. It is likely due to something you care deeply about, violated your trust, or did not expect to happen that placed you in harm's way. No one gets emotional about something that does not matter to them in a personal way and how one is treated or viewed matters to every member of humanity. Thus, belonging to a profession that has the fundamental tenets of care, respect, and human rights, yet treats certain members of its own in dehumanizing and structurally disadvantaging ways, is so hurtful. Once these acts occur, anything can be done or

1723 said to those in the crosshairs of its sight. 1724 Currently, where nurses are educated, practice, conduct research and of course face policy in 1725 all its forms, othering and silencing continues to occur and is highly prevalent. It is baked into 1726 our relationships and the updated needs of the operating systems in use. Light must also be 1727 put on the resultant violence and harm that occurs due to such covert and overt acts to both 1728 the individual who is the target...the one to be silenced, invalidated, not heard and in ways that 1729 (2) leaves the modus operandi of power inequities and non-inclusive structures and systems in 1730 place so long that they become the norm and not the exception of ways to be and operate. 1731 This violence and abuse of power, the subliminal epistemic kind with its ways of silencing our

- 1732 colleagues and the combative hurling of rhetoric whether verbally or in written form as well as
- 1733 through acts of denial, can be either procedural or relational. It is entangled with all other
- 1734 forms of violence including direct and physical violence. It's about discourse and
- 1735 representation as well as excluding all other ways of knowing. The identity and self- esteem
- 1736 theft that accompanies is ever present, dynamic, and oppressive. Despite the vowed
- 1737 proclamations as health professionals "to do no harm", harm is done and such hypocrisy is
- 1738 what can produce moral assaults, trigger fear, threaten safety, stoke anger, and enhance the
- 1739 potential to cause suffering physically and mentally.
- 1740 Storytelling puts before each of us front and center, the damage caused by the violence against
- 1741 the subject of knowledge, the object of knowledge, the beneficiary of knowledge and the
- 1742 knowledge itself of operating modes of racism/sexism, separation, pecking order and

1743 naturalization. It leaves the marginalized fighting for existence, afforded not robbed of 1744 opportunities others get and in a constant battle to be seen, heard, understood, and valued. 1745 For the hearer of the story, an inside view of the experience is provided which further allows 1746 the chance for common humanistic desires to be identified. The results could make code 1747 switching, colorism and passing, acts of the past and lead to equitable changes within systems 1748 and within individuals.

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What is being requested in this present day by our BIPOC colleagues requires moving beyond resilience, the ability to quickly recover from challenges to survive. For 3 to 5 Americans according to Cigna's 2020 Resilience Index Report, two thirds of full-time healthcare workers do not have high resilience compared to the national average and are and less likely to rate mental/social health as very good. Surviving is no longer inspirational or aspirational. The ability to thrive is the clarion call and tapping the 6 inspirational acts captured in the composed acrostic outlines and operationalizes how those in thriving environments behave in the world.

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- Tell stories and never stop so that understanding can take root.
- 1759 Hold multiple perspectives without judgment because they are in a constant learning state.
- 1760 Reach for and display sights or visions which actualize their hopes, dreams, and unleashed 1761 potential.
- 1762 Ignite the world with integrity. Speak the truth and be the truth!
- 1763 Validate the humanness and legitimacy in each of us regardless of color.
- 1764 Erase labels placed on you or others which put people on paths both intentionally and 1765 unintentionally.

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The future is in relationships and nurses act from discrete, adaptable, and relational places of power. Relationships may not scale but culture can and does so it is incumbent on us all to take it from invisible to visible. We cannot talk our way out of what we behaved our way into It takes extra psychological work to manage in a world that cannot be seen as morally just and fair. The resultant stress has related costs. Accountability, transparency, reflection are powerful modifying contributors to galvanizing change, promoting human flourishing and are essential to both the business of health care and the acts of health caring. Put them into action and cease the insistence on conformity and the snuffing out of difference. Failure to do so will thwart innovation and the futurizing necessary for the elimination of suffering and the safe delivery of

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1776 care. Authenticity, the full expressions of oneself, has never been more important.

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