



Response to Racism 2020:

Historically, for people of color, when white America catches a cold, Black America catches pneumonia. The fact that African Americans continue to die disproportionately at alarming rates due to COVID 19, proves as a nation, this reality is still our truth.

Just as I thought we were going into the new normal, my heart and mind could not process witnessing a 17 year old's cellphone video of Mr. George Floyd being tortured and slowly murdered. As Mr. Floyd desperately called out "I Can't BREATHE". Neither could I.

As a 66 year old black woman, born and raised in the inner city of Detroit, I know that race matters then and now regardless of your title, college degrees or paycheck. Inequality, and injustice, have simply been based on the color of your skin. As we have made much progress, it has been clear throughout my lifetime, much progress is still needed. Racism, is not my imagination or the imagination of people of color. In my role as a clinician servicing vulnerable communities for nearly forty years, we have attempted to call disparities, many things. The buzz phrase now is social determinants of health. For us to create real change we must call it out for what it is. Racism! And racism is clearly a Public Health Crisis.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr in his "I Have a Dream" speech said "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."

I believe across this nation, people of good conscious can no longer sit silently after witnessing the inhumanity in Minneapolis, and in Indianapolis, Louisville, Ferguson and many other cities. Although shocking, it was not new. For people of color, inequality, even in health care has become the norm. In our city of Rochester and in cities across this nation, unified multicolor voices are rising up to proclaim the audacity that in America, our constitution demands that equal justice is not just the right of some, but the right of all men and women, regardless of race, creed, national origin, gender, sexual orientation or socio-economic status.

Although, each one of us may be mourning this tragedy differently, Jordan Health mourns this loss as one family. This week a colleague of mine reminded me that, community health centers, like Jordan Health rose out of the turmoil of the civil rights movement of the 1960's, with the mission to provide quality health care for people in underserved communities. That mission for Jordan Health has never changed. Healthcare with dignity and respect for all, regardless. Period.

I can only pray that in this moment in time, we as a people will learn from our past and grow from our present. I pray that this time creates a lasting change for us all.

Together Change is Possible!

Janice

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