



Preamble to the OADN Position Statement on Racial and Social Equity

The 1,200 Community Colleges in the United States have a long history of providing relevant education responsive to the needs of its local and regional residents and employers. For many, the Community College is a life-altering portal for earning a degree or certificate in wide-ranging fields of study, which lifts graduates out of poverty through respectable employment. Minoritized communities comprise nearly one-half of our enrollees, giving dedicated educators unique experiences in designing programs, courses, and support services that promote student success.

Perhaps because of these collective experiences, our awareness that Community Colleges are not panaceas for resolving all issues and concerns related to racial and social equity. Despite this awareness, faculty do not reflect the diversity of the student body they serve. In addition, success and completion rates lag for non-white identifying students, reflecting that the full potential of non-white students is sub-optimized. Complicating the matter, racism and social injustice that is both structural in nature and personal in practice infiltrates the lives of those attending Community Colleges, including but not limited to those who are disproportionately Black/African American, Asian and Pacific Islander, Indigenous, and LatinX peoples.

OADN continues to bolster its awareness of and sensitivity to the multidimensional realities faced by students. This was evident when OADN call out and examined various forms of racism (that has led to violence and death), poverty as a social determinant of health, and other factors that unfavorably impact living and learning in safe and nurturing learning communities. OADN seeks to elevate learners so they can thrive and enjoy the liberties tied to human acceptance in their own communities and beyond.

The OADN Board developed its Position Paper on Racial and Social Equity with bold action steps. Philosophically, we believe the journey to racial and social equity is a lifelong endeavor that unfolds through human connections and shared experiences. Each of us privileged to teach and interact with learners must continuously evolve to appreciate the context and needs of our learners' journeys. Structural biases, whether intended or not, must be challenged and eradicated. State and Federal policies that influence social justice require nursing voices at policy tables. While some high-impact actions require swift responses, others will unfold by co-creating shared learning opportunities. OADN recognizes the achievements of Community Colleges and the faculty, but more importantly, the urgent role that each of us paves for all higher education to advance a socially just and harmonized nation.

OADN Position Statement on Racial and Social Equity

Racism and health inequity present a serious public health crisis in the United States (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2021). Health inequities related to race, ethnicity, disability, gender expression, and sexual orientation are well documented in the literature (Bailey et al., 2017; Institute of Medicine, 2003; Krahn et al. 2015; Restar et al., 2021). For many decades, nursing and health care publications have illustrated the connection between race and health disparities. The relationship between racism and other forms of oppression and adverse health outcomes is not a new concept. Over 20 years ago, Dr. Camara Jones (2000) authored a framework for understanding racism using a gardener's metaphor explaining that health disparities are not a result of race, but rather, they are a result of the social determinants of health that result from structural, institutional, and individual racism. However, this knowledge about the causes and solutions to health inequity have not resulted in substantial improvements in health outcomes.

Additionally, despite the knowledge that a diverse nursing workforce is needed to improve health outcomes, little progress has been made in the demographics of nurses in the United States (Aragon et al., 2020; The Sullivan Commission on Diversity in the Healthcare Workforce, 2003). A diverse nursing workforce is key to impacting future health outcomes and providing culturally informed care for increasingly diverse communities and patients. OADN is committed to addressing the public health crisis caused by racism, structural inequities, social injustice, and implicit and explicit biases.

Recent disturbing events have raised awareness of the impact that racial and social injustice have on Americans' health and well-being. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the severe toll that structural racism has on health outcomes and nurses with diverse ethnic and racialized backgrounds. Black/African American, Indigenous, and Latinx people have disproportionately experienced higher rates of infection, hospitalization, and death when compared with white Americans (CDC, 2020; Khazanchi et al., 2021). Hate and violence directed towards Asian and Pacific Islander populations have increased significantly since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

These inequities remain present in all aspects of healthcare and society at large in the United States. Inequities and injustices based on racism, ableism, gender expression, sexual orientation, residency status, religion, and a socio-economic system continue to persist and are dominating features of American society. The collective power and unified voice of over four million nurses provide an opportunity for leadership to influence meaningful change and dismantle systems of oppression.

OADN recognizes that the need for action goes beyond vows of commitment to achieving health equity. We understand that genuine commitment will necessitate a combination of leaning into discomfort, inviting, and listening to historically excluded voices, and dismantling and reimagining present systems to improve our communities. We support meaningful change in nursing programs, schools, communities, and healthcare systems.

OADN is committed to taking the action needed to address racial and social injustice across the healthcare system and in nursing education. To accomplish this mission, we must engage in challenging conversations and transformational work. To that end, OADN is taking the following immediate actions:

1. The OADN Board has appointed a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity Task Force that is charged with assessing the current state of Associate Degree Nursing education and proposing strategies to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion in nursing education.
2. OADN leadership and task force members are engaging in critical conversations between and among stakeholder groups with the specific aim to increase the diversity of the nursing workforce and address health inequities.
3. OADN will curate and share educational resources and tools for nursing faculty to support the development of antiracism and social justice competencies in nursing education.
4. OADN actively participates in the American Nurses Association National Commission to Address Racism in Nursing and is collaborating with other professional nursing organizations to adopt antiracist policies and practices.
5. OADN enhances the quality of nursing education by providing learning opportunities for nursing faculty and students that critically examine the social determinants of health, the social mission of nursing, and the needs of under-resourced communities.

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