What Does It Mean to Be an Ally?

In the fall of 2019, while researching nursing’s social mission within the context of health equity, I suddenly came to the realization that when the founders of the United States of America wrote “all men are created equal” in the Declaration of Independence, they meant just that—all men; specifically, all white men. The United States has been built on the premise that whiteness is the norm, with laws and policies to support white supremacy. Within nursing and nursing education, we remain a mostly white (approximately 80%) profession. Calls to examine the “whiteness” of nursing are not new, but the public killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Elijah McClain, and others have created a more widespread call to examine systemic racism. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on communities of color have created calls for racism as a public health crisis. But where do we start? What can we, as individual faculty members, do?

The scholarly publishing community created an Antiracism Toolkit for Allies (Toolkits for Equity: Transforming Scholarly Publishing Communities, 2020) that provides approachable steps toward making a difference. They outline five steps to becoming an ally:

- Become conscious of white advantage
- Listen to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) without judgement and/or defensiveness
- Move out of social segregation and develop truth-telling relationships of accountability with diverse groups of people
- Take action to interrupt racism and white advantage at all levels
- Create work communities where everyone thrives

Become Conscious of White Advantage

When we begin to think about inequity, we think of marginalized groups. The challenge of this first step is to understand the power and privilege that is held by dominant groups. Examining the advantages we hold, just as a matter of being white, will assist us with coming to terms with our own race, seeing the advantages we have and continue to experience, and starting to notice racial dynamics on a regular basis. It is only through first noticing and then understanding our role in the dynamic that we can begin to work on change. A creative way to get started is by accepting the 21-Day Racial Equity Building Challenge© (America & Moore, 2014)

Listen to BIPOC Colleagues Without Judgement or Defensiveness

First, it’s essential to listen actively and with empathy, affir ming the message that you hear. Second, it’s important to lean into difficult conversations instead of distancing oneself. Common defense mechanisms include proving our credentials, denial, minimization, justifying our own biases, focusing on intent instead of impact, competing victimization, and deflection. Finally, accept feedback with humility. These conversations are difficult, and we won’t get them right all the time. We need to work on listening with a spirit of gratitude and improvement.

Move Out of Social Segregation and Develop Truth-Telling Relationships of Accountability With Diverse Groups of People

Suggestions for expanding your social circle include purposely going to places where you will interact with people of color, volunteering with racial justice groups, and diversifying your circle of friends (ayo, 2007). It’s important to focus on learning and growing on your own understanding of racism and not imposing on people of color to explain it to you.

Take Action to Interrupt Racism and White Advantage at All Levels

Within our hallways and classrooms, it’s important to listen for and intervene...
regarding the use of microaggressions or harassing language. We live in an era of “silence is violence.” It’s important for each of us to take action in an effective manner. One mechanism to do so in the United States this year, the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife, is to cast your vote (Figure A; available in the online version of this article).

Create Work Communities Where Everyone Thrives

Characteristics of a culture of white supremacy include “perfectionism, a sense of urgency, defensiveness, valuing quantity over quality, worship of the written word, belief in only one right way, paternalism, either/or thinking, power hoarding, fear of open conflict, individualism, belief that I’m the only one (who can do this ‘right’), the belief that progress is bigger and more, a belief in objectivity, and claiming a right to comfort” (Okun, 2020, “Manifestations of White Supremacy Culture,” para. 2). Instead, consider cultivating a culture of appreciation embedded within a learning organization. It is only through valuing the work of all our colleagues that we create a culture of trust and success.

We live in difficult times, and the journey ahead will be challenging. What path will you choose?

References

Amy J. Barton, PhD, RN, FAAN, ANEF Editor
The author has disclosed no potential conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise.
doi:10.3928/01484834-20200921-01

CALL FOR MANUSCRIPT PEER REVIEWERS

The Journal of Nursing Education (JNE) is expanding its review panel and invites qualified individuals affiliated at all levels of nursing education programs to serve as peer reviewers. JNE is a peer-reviewed journal that publishes research and other scholarly works involving and influencing nursing education and has published original articles focused on undergraduate and graduate nursing education for over 50 years. Regular monthly features include Major Articles, Research Briefs, Educational Innovations, Quality Improvement Briefs, and Syllabus Selections. General qualifications for serving as a peer reviewer include:

• Experience as a nurse educator or educator in a related field (e.g., statistics, information literacy, basic or social sciences) in or affiliated with one or more types of nursing programs.
• A record of publishing in the peer-reviewed and other nursing and related literature, preferably with at least two peer-reviewed published articles.
• Expertise and experience in one or more of the following areas: undergraduate and/or graduate nursing programs, teaching–learning methods, scholarly inquiry methods, academic issues, and clinical population focus.
• Knowledge of trends and issues in nursing education, higher education, and health care.
• Willingness to use the online peer review system (Editorial Manager) and complete assigned reviews within the specified time frame.

Reviewers are expected to complete substantive reviews of approximately 6 to 10 manuscripts of varying lengths each year, assigned according to the reviewer’s designated areas of expertise in the journal’s online peer review system. New reviewers will be provided with detailed guidelines for writing substantive reviews and using the online review system.

If interested in being considered as a peer reviewer for JNE, please send a cover letter and CV to: Jaime Clayton, ELS, Executive Editor, at jclayton@slackinc.com.
From Frontlines to Voting Lines: Nurses Need to Vote in 2020

As the most trusted professionals on the front line of health care delivery, combating current and future public health challenges, nurses continue to provide priceless insight and input around the future of health care. Nurses’ voices carry immense weight and now, more than ever, it is critical that those voices are heard loud and clear in local, state, and federal elections.

For that reason, the Tri-Council for Nursing, an alliance between the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, the American Nurses Association, the American Organization for Nursing Leadership, the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, and the National League for Nursing representing nurses in practice, nurse leaders and nursing educators, urges you to exercise your right to vote in the 2020 Election.

The Tri-Council for Nursing calls upon all nurses to carefully weigh the positions, proposals, and legislative voting records of candidates who aspire to elected office on November 3, 2020. In these unprecedented times, voting may look different, especially with early voting options and vote-by-mail opportunities becoming increasingly relevant.

As we get closer to Election Day, the Tri-Council strongly recommends that you consider the safest way for you to cast your vote. To ensure you have the best information available and are ready to cast your ballot, follow these three simple steps:

1) **Register.** Double check if you are registered to vote by going to [Vote.gov](https://vote.gov). Some states allow same day registration, but it is important to check now to ensure that you are prepared for Election Day.

2) **Do Your Research.** While 2020 is a Presidential Election Year, there are many open seats at the state and local levels as well. It is important to research not only who will be on the ballot, but any proposals that may also be up for consideration this election season.

To learn more about local and state voting plans, gain information on polling places, mail-in options, or absentee ballots visit:

- **American Nurses Association:** [https://nursesvote.org/](https://nursesvote.org/)
- **American Association of Colleges of Nursing:** [https://www.aacnnursing.org/Policy-Advocacy/Get-Involved/Nursing-Voices-Nursing-Votes](https://www.aacnnursing.org/Policy-Advocacy/Get-Involved/Nursing-Voices-Nursing-Votes)
- **American Organization for Nursing Leadership:** [https://wecarewevote.aha.org/](https://wecarewevote.aha.org/); or [USA.gov/voting](https://www.usa.gov/voting)

3) **Vote:** With COVID-19 states are also looking at how to provide socially distant voting in person. Look at your work schedule, check out voting options in your state, find your polling site, and determine the best way for you to vote in this year’s election.

We understand the many challenges continue to face our country and nurses continue to answer the call to meet the demands of our nation’s health and safety, from rural towns to urban centers. With more than 5 million nurses nationwide, there is power in our voice. So this year, during the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife, exercise that power by going from the front lines to voting lines to cast your ballot in the 2020 Election.
More information on the **Tri-Council for Nursing:**

**About the American Association of Colleges of Nursing**
The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) is the national voice for academic nursing representing more than 840 schools of nursing nationwide. AACN establishes quality standards for nursing education, influences the nursing profession to improve health care, and promotes public support of baccalaureate and graduate nursing education, research and practice. For more information, visit [www.aacnnursing.org](http://www.aacnnursing.org).

**About the American Nurses Association**
The [American Nurses Association](https://www.nursingworld.org) (ANA) is the premier organization representing the interests of the nation's 4 million registered nurses. ANA advances the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice, promoting a safe and ethical work environment, bolstering the health and wellness of nurses, and advocating on health care issues that affect nurses and the public. ANA is at the forefront of improving the quality of health care for all. For more information, visit [www.nursingworld.org](http://www.nursingworld.org).

**About the American Organization for Nursing Leadership**
As the national professional organization of more than 10,000 nurse leaders, the American Organization for Nursing Leadership (AONL) is the voice of nursing leadership. AONL's membership encompasses nurse leaders working in hospitals, health systems, academia and other care settings across the care continuum. Since 1967, the organization has led the field of nursing leadership through professional development, advocacy and research that advances nursing leadership practice and patient care. AONL is a subsidiary of the American Hospital Association. For more information, visit [AONL.org](http://AONL.org).

**About NCSBN**
Founded March 15, 1978, as an independent not-for-profit organization, NCSBN was initially created to lessen the burdens of state governments and bring together nursing regulatory bodies (NRBs) to act and counsel together on matters of common interest. It has evolved into one of the leading voices of regulation across the world.

NCSBN’s membership is comprised of the NRBs in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and four U.S. territories — American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands and the Virgin Islands. There are three exam user members. There are also 27 associate members that are either NRBs or empowered regulatory authorities from other countries or territories. For more information, visit [www.ncsbn.org](http://www.ncsbn.org).

Mission: NCSBN empowers and supports nursing regulators in their mandate to protect the public.

**About the National League for Nursing**
Dedicated to excellence in nursing, the National League for Nursing is the premier organization for nurse faculty and leaders in nursing education. The NLN offers professional development, networking opportunities, testing services, nursing research grants, and public policy initiatives to its 40,000 individual and 1,200 institutional members, comprising nursing education programs across the spectrum of higher education and health care organizations. Learn more at [NLN.org](http://NLN.org).

---

*Voting OpEd Statement printed with permission of the Tri- Council- August 26, 2020*