



NIKOLAJS ABDULLAH BELIKOFF-STRADS
PORTLAND, OREGON, USA
JUNE 2020

Six principles of naturopathic medicine bear a great relevance to the ongoing pandemic of racial injustice. These pillars of naturopathy are the guiding lens through which I practice and I feel moved to highlight their application for these times.

First Do No Harm (Primum Non Nocere)

This primary mantra of naturopathic medicine is supported by all other principles. There are various stages of harm to consider of the body, of the mind and of the world; impending harm, harm in progress, cumulative harm, reversible harm, irreversible harm. The history and continuing pandemics of racial injustice and novel viruses have caused and are causing a spectrum of harm, particularly to Black Lives, People of Color and Indigenous People. Recurring harm from police brutality, colonialism, media misinformation and corporate corruption must be confronted. By inattentiveness, by avoidance, by inaction we are extending the harm being done. By hiding pain, by smothering wounds, by numbing feelings we are blanketing the harm being done. Critical steps toward doing less harm in these revolutionary times include listening, acknowledgement, respect, kindness, curiosity, education, discernment, comprehension, open-mindedness, resourcefulness, decolonization, inclusion, courage, action, transformation.

Identify and Treat the Causes (Tolle Causam)

Just as chronic disease is perpetuated by targeting surface symptoms such as skin eruptions, racial injustice is perpetuated by narrowing focus to surface outcomes such as crime and violence. We do benefit from tending to and relieving symptoms, however if we do not go further or dig deeper then our vision narrows as we plunge into a cycle of illness. We must instead carefully investigate root causes, identify offending agent(s) and organ system(s) affected, remove barriers, detoxify, repair, treat, nourish, vitalize, learn, reassess. Plant roots are typically unseen organ systems monitoring underground pathways, providing energy and nutrient exchange. In order to identify and treat the causes of racial injustice we must explore beyond the foliage to examine the roots, to replace noxious nutrition, to acknowledge privilege and implicit conditioning, to redistribute wealth, to dismantle systemic structures, to dissolve toxic institutions, policies and patterns of our world that serve an unjust, imbalanced, inharmonious reality.

The Healing Power of Nature (Vis Medicatrix Naturae)

Nature is all human beings. We are not separate from nature even when we remove ourselves from natural environment. We have the inherent, powerful capacity to heal ourselves and the oppressed world. When we dive beyond the surface symptoms, when we allow for spaciousness

to heal internally and externally, when we understand the causes and take action to correct the underlying barriers and imbalances, then we are tending to nature's healing power. We must harness this force on all levels: individual, familial, local, communal, spiritual, national, global, universal. The process and outcome of nature healing gives birth to insight, strength, resilience, cohesion.

Treat the Whole Person (Tolle Totum)

If we focus on and treat just parts without considering the whole system, sooner or later the undesirable condition or pattern may reemerge. If in this revolutionary moment we rush to fix everything with a few bandaids, this worn approach will further delay essential and complete healing. While every human has a unique presentation of illness, certain humans' risk and experience illness more often than others. In order to be wholesome in the treatment of chronic racial injustice, we must emphasize black lives matter. We must address cruel disparities and social determinants of health, reduce the disproportionate burden of COVID-19 and other common diseases, and provide ethical, accessible, non-discriminant healthcare to all humans. Numerous roles must be fulfilled in this momentous time of upheaval, internal, external, restorative, active, all of which contribute to whole system treatment.

Doctor as Teacher (Docere)

Healing is incomplete without education and empowerment. A physician guides with informed light to awaken a patient to their optimal health and vitality. A physician performs research to better inform their community. A physician takes time to cultivate healthy communication and relationships. As a male Caucasian doctor I feel great privilege and gratitude for my naturopathic and Sufi circles, and I know that these communities have important work to do in the realm of racial justice. We all have the opportunity to be healer and patient in a time when chronic wounds are pulsating.

Prevention (Praevenic)

Largely behind the scenes, this principle drives hope for persisting change. Through proper reform, learning and healing we become empowered to prevent illness. We must band together to collectively treat and prevent further ripples of racial injustice and colonialism, to avert further psychological heaviness, pain, depression, anxiety, stress, violence, trauma. Universal healthcare and decolonizing medicine are integral aspects of preventing racial and cultural disparities. Racial injustice is that one recurring injury at which we keep throwing medication. True healing and prevention will only come from addressing the terrain.

Ya Sami, Ya Basir, Ya Shafi, Ya Kafi

All Love, Light, Health, Equity, Peace,
Nikolajs Abdullah Belikoff-Strads, ND