



Perspective

On Inclusion, Diversity, and Why Black Lives Matter Too: What our MCW Community BLM Protests Mean to our Colleagues of Color

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Dr. Seymour writes about the recent MCW Black Lives Matter protest and why it is important to create a flourishing, diverse, and inclusive community ...

On Wednesday, Sept. 2nd, at 5:11pm, members of the Medical College of Wisconsin community held a Black Lives Matter protest to help shine a light on the frequent propensity for violence against people of color. This latest protest is one of hundreds of protests against police brutality and racial injustice that have been occurring in various cities, states, and countries, most recently triggered by the murder of George Floyd on May 25th, 2020, in Minneapolis, MN. So many people have demonstrated peacefully and expressed their voices, all vying for the same dream Martin Luther King Jr. expressed to the world. Almost every aspect of the world's population has provided an overwhelming outpouring of support of the Black Lives Matter movement; taking the baton and relaying the message that "Black Lives Matter too" to widespread media coverage and the political stage.

MCW faculty, residents, and medical students alike raised their voices in support of the Black Lives Matter movement. This stance informed the world that MCW and the Froedtert medical community will not tolerate racism, and that racism itself is a pandemic that needs to be eradicated. The Sept. 2nd protest involved holding 7 minutes of sustained silence, each minute representing every bullet maliciously aimed at the back of Jacob Blake, an unarmed African American man returning to his vehicle, by Rusten Sheskey, a Kenosha WI police officer. Mere seconds after an instinctive proclivity for violence towards nonaggression left a man paralyzed, the world responded with outrage and exhaustion, yet another example of the unfair mistreatment of people of color when interacting with those with a perceived position of authority.

Many of us have protested these injustices before. I've protested it before. Our parents protested it before. Our grandparents protested it before. Our ancestors survived and protested it. I've stood face to face with the Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazis, and individuals who have all decided that racial slurs and anger were the best response when asked why they hate people of color or different sexual orientation. Nobody should have to be afraid to walk outside or live in their own homes. People should not be judged by the color of their skin or their sexual orientation, but by the content of their character. People of every ethnicity, background, or creed, should not have to be afraid for their lives when interacting with police. With the many

communities, committees, social circles, and groups that I belong to, I can single-handedly attest to the importance of diversity, the inclusive nature of MCW, and why having people of varying backgrounds, experiences, and cultures is so critically important to both the health of a community and a medicine brain trust.

As a new internal medicine resident and as an African American, I have witnessed firsthand the most beautiful sides of humanity, and the darkest corners of vitriol. I have cared for patients who have been incredibly appreciative and receptive of my presence, feeling more at ease with talking about their privileged information because I am a person of color. I have also had patients turn me away for the exact same reason. When I wanted to become a physician, I made a lifelong commitment to improving and protecting my community. I've vowed to provide a safe haven for those without a voice, to be a vanguard in the face of hatred, to be the lighthouse in someone else's storm. But when it is you, your family, your friends, or your community who is being harmed, harassed, and violently mistreated, it takes that community to heal the hurt. It is hard to sustain a thriving and supportive community if that same community refuses to break bread with a particular subset of the population, even when everyone shares the same table.

I am proud to belong to a program and institution that takes a hard stance against institutionalized racism and is incrementally rolling out educational opportunities for those interested in, and in need of, anti-racism education. It is comforting to know that my colleagues and peers support the Black Lives Matter movement and understand the deeper inclusive meaning behind the statement. However, supporting the movement is only the first step of a marathon many have been running for years. With many cities in various countries now protesting the same cause, only time will tell if our collective voices have resonated, and what changes will result from our collective stance against institutionalized racism and racist ideology. Myself, my colleagues, and my peers at MCW have already decided which path we will walk, and that is hand-in-hand with our flourishing, diverse, and inclusive community.

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