



# Dismantling Structural Racism

## in the Nursing Profession: Lessons from the Field

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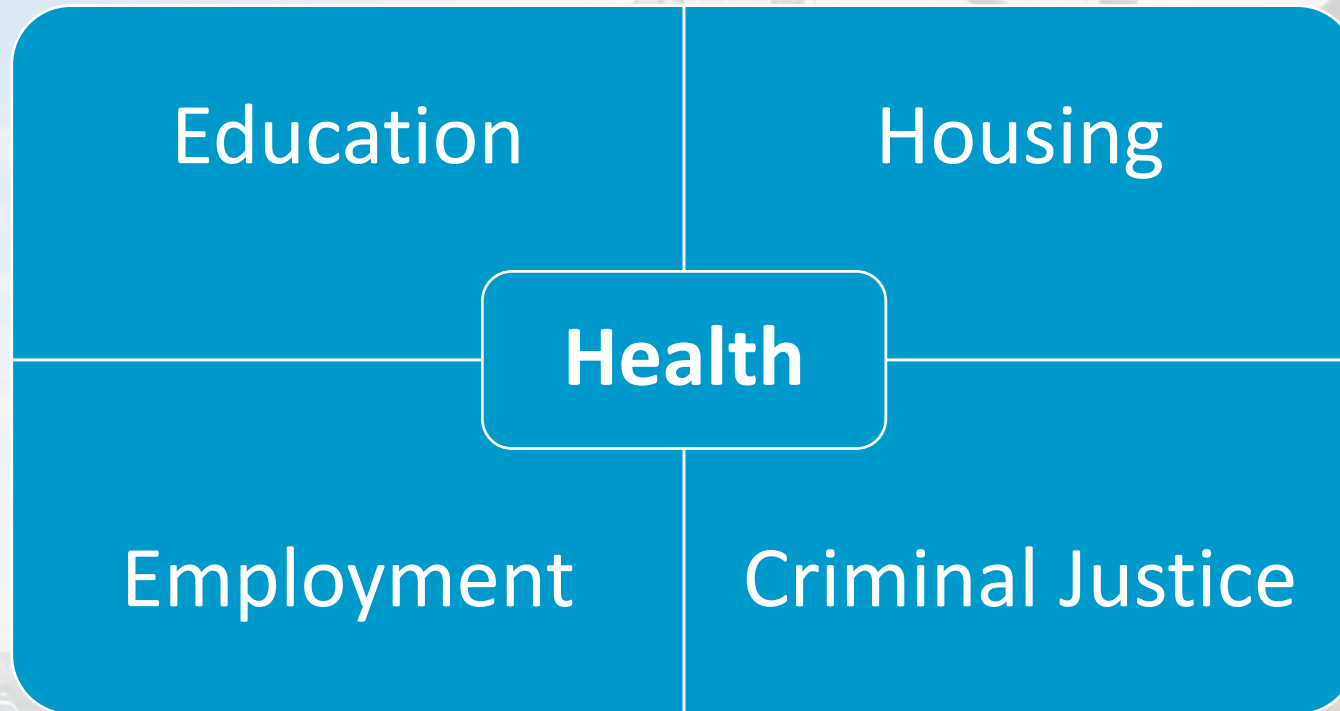
Kenya V. Beard

# Objectives

Recognize how structural racism works

Identify ways to dismantle structural racism

# Structural Racism



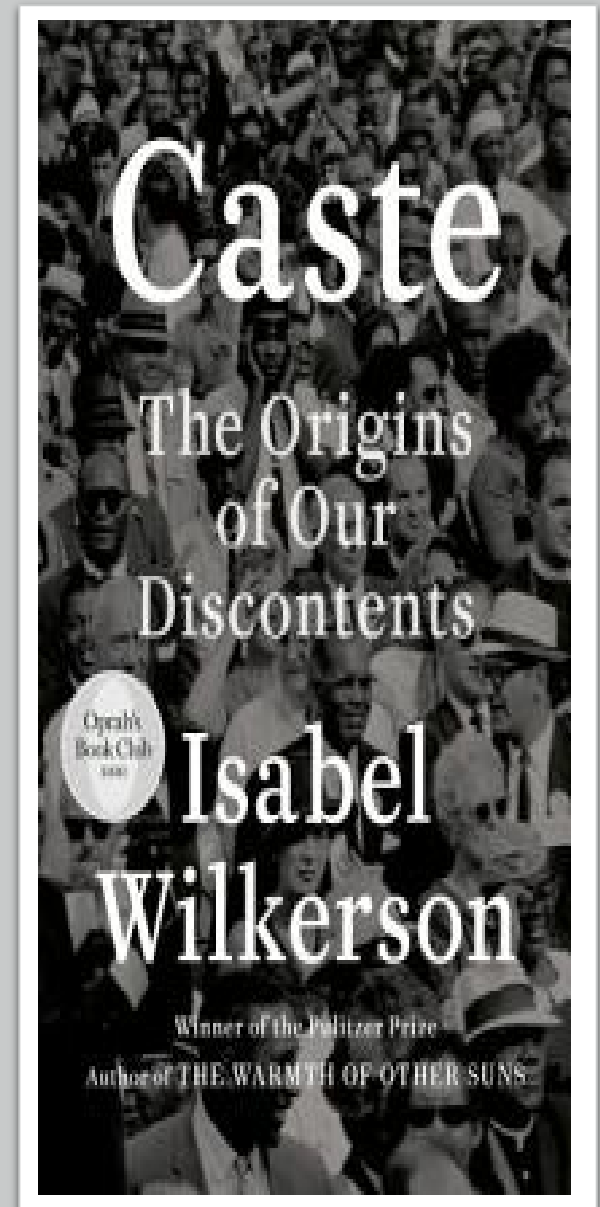
*“The totality of ways in which **societies foster racial discrimination** through mutually reinforcing **inequitable systems...** that in turn **reinforce discriminatory beliefs, values and distribution of resources** which together effect the risk of adverse health outcomes.”*

Kenya V. Beard

M. Bassett

# The Invisibility of Racism

*Racism “...**goes about its work in silence**, the string of a puppet master **unseen by those whose subconscious it directs**, its instructions an intravenous drip to the mind, **caste in the guise of normalcy**, injustice looking just, atrocities looking unavoidable to keep the machinery humming...”*  
Wilkerson



# Recognizing Racism

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## ABSTRACT

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## Introduction

The continued dea  
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## The White/Black hierarchy institutionalizes White supremacy in nursing and nursing leadership in the United States

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Black/African American nurses (BAANs) in the United States (US) experience barriers to career advancement.  
**Aim:** The specific aims of this study were to a) explore how the perception of racism or racial bias affects the motivation of Black/African American nurses (BAANs) in the United States (US) to seek and apply for nursing leadership and faculty positions, and b) to characterize the racism-related barriers that BAANs perceive that prevent them from moving forward with their careers in academia and nursing leadership.  
**Method:** As part of a qualitative focused ethnographic study, 30 nurses who self-identified as BAAN, had a bachelor's degree or higher, and had at least five years of nursing experience were interviewed. Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis.  
**Result:** Although five themes were identified, four were established in the literature, and one – Nursing Leadership Dynamics (NLD) – was novel. A complex network of NLDs that served to both prevent the success of BAANs as well as threaten their job security and health was identified.  
**Conclusion:** This study identified a multi-faceted, tightly-woven system of NLDs that serves to continually institutionalize and enforce a white/black hierarchy and white supremacy in nursing at all levels in the US, including education.

## Introduction

Racism has been institutionalized in the nursing profession since its inception and is rooted in colonialism in the United Kingdom (UK), United States (US), and other Western countries (Smithwaite, 2018; Waite & Nardi, 2019). It began in the 1700s when Africans were abducted from their home countries by white settlers and brought to the US as slaves (Esewa, Tshiswaka, Gebregabher, & Oviagbele, 2018). The US abolished slavery in 1863 (known as "emancipation"), and the descendants of former slaves came to be referred to as either "Black" or "African American" (BAA), and continue to be concentrated in the southern part of the US, where slavery was more prevalent (Esewa et al., 2019; Frey, 2019).

Despite emancipation, BAAs continue to experience overt and institutionalized racism (IR) built into policies and laws formulated by the White majority (Esewa et al., 2018). This included institutionalizing racism into the fields of nursing and nursing education. Florence Nightingale is a famous White nurse who, in 1860, founded the first

formal training school for nurses in London, which only accepted European women of the "right caliber" (Waite & Nardi, 2019). It was not until 1878 that Mary Mahoney, the first professional BAA nurse (BAAN) in the US, was admitted to nursing education at a hospital in New England (Waite & Nardi, 2019).

Many recent studies have characterized the experience of racism among ethnic minority nurses including BAANs in the US (Cottingham, Johnson, & Erickson, 2018; Ghazal, Ma, Djukic, & Squires, 2019; Iheduru-Anderson & Wahi, 2019; White, 2019). A few observations can be made from this body of literature. First, while nurses from various ethnic minority groups in the US—be it Chinese immigrants (Xu, Gutierrez, & Kim, 2008), Hispanic nurse faculty (Jacob & Sanchez, 2011), or Filipino nurses working in acute care hospitals (Lin, 2014)—experience their own brand of racism, BAANs experience the most severe racism. This is demonstrated through qualitative studies of their lived experience (Iheduru-Anderson & Wahi, 2018; Whitfield-Harris, Lockhart, Zoucha, & Alexander, 2017), quantitative studies using survey data, and analyses of administrative data about pay and professional advancement

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# Dismantling Racism



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### Introduction

The continued dearth of African representation in academia re Although undergraduate enroll African-American students recently rose African-American faculty represer ucation lagged behind at 6% in 20 for Education Statistics, 2016). The (National League for Nursing, 2 nursing faculty members are :

<sup>a</sup> Corresponding author: Kenya V. Beard, J E-mail address: [kbeard@jerseycollege.edu](mailto:kbeard@jerseycollege.edu). 0029-6554/\$ - see front matter © 2016 Elsevier Ltd. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.outlook.2016.06>



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### Editorial

Dismantling racism in education: In 2020, the year

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"Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing that is faced until it is faced".

— James Baldwin (Wilson, 2004,

### 1. The twin plagues of COVID-19 and global racism

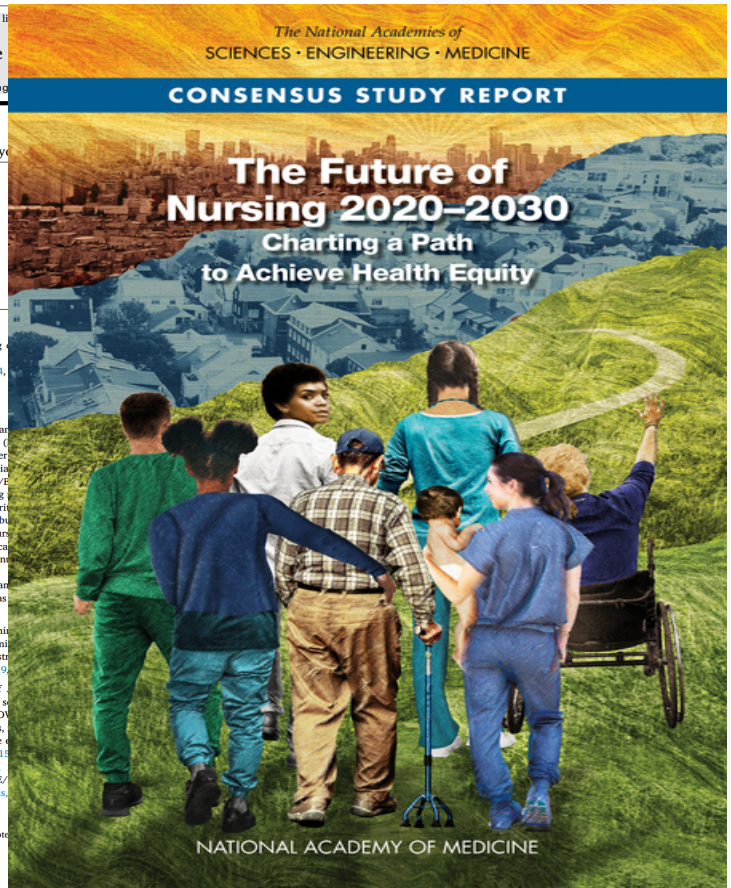
Worldwide, seismic upheavals and demonstrations demand dismantling of structural, individual and ideological racism (forth, SIIR). George Floyd's killing by police, numerous other murders and unprosecuted 'deaths in custody' of Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic/Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BAME/ME) peoples internationally, have catalysed calls that the underlying and oppression enabling such violence to occur with regular impunity, cannot continue. #BlackLivesMatter momentum is building and we hope and urge, in this International Year of the Nurse and Midwife, that nursing and midwifery educators respond to this call for insight, honesty and fierce actions that eradicate SIIR from nursing and the academy.

The twin plagues of COVID-19 and SIIR have thrown their dangerous and effects into sharper relief. Maya Angelou was prescient when she wrote:

"The plague of racism is insidious, entering into our midst smoothly and quietly and invisibly as floating airborne mist enter into our bodies to find lifelong purchase in our bloodstream" (Waite and Nardi, 2019).

COVID-19 evoked a marked rise in Sinophobic abuse of Chinese peoples (Chen et al., 2020). In addition, the increased and determined health risks and greater chances of dying from COVID-19 (Public Health England, 2020a, b) facing BAME/BIPOC peoples, the universally poorer health services and outcomes they have endured for decades (Iken et al., 2017; Ramaswamy and Kelly, 2018) evidence is overwhelming (Paradies, 2018; Williams et al., 2018) spanning all age groups, countries, sexes and genders and BAME/BIPOC communities (Grant and Guerin, 2018; Hamed et al., 2020; Likis,

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***“We will be really misled  
if we think we can  
change society without  
changing ourselves.”***

Alice Walker

