

2020: *noun* /'twen(t)ē-'twen(t)ē/ Definition: Diversity; Adversity.

Growing up biracial had its ups and downs. On one hand I was unique, on the other hand I was different. For example, I'd probably be considered an above average athlete. This of course was "because I was black". I mean it's not like Caucasian genetics can contribute to athleticism, right? No, no that's ridiculous. Also, all that time spent in the gym only helped me so much because of my all powerful "extra" *insert one: (tendon, muscle, bone)*. Whew, we wouldn't even have known about that advantage if we had paid attention in biology. But I digress, I definitely can't say it was all bad (not that it was particularly bad at all). There was something "unique" about being one of the only black kids in the school. In a small Nebraska town, when ticking the race box labeled *Black or African American* they should put an asterisk by it and have a footnote at the bottom of the page saying "Warning: others may view you as more handsome and interesting than you are in reality." But eventually high school faded and the uniqueness wore off.

I then entered a world full of diversity, and honestly the world of healthcare is probably more diverse than your average workplace. When I first started as a certified nursing assistant (CNA) I was surprised by how many of the nurses at our facility were from other countries. We had nurses from multiple countries in Africa, the Philippines, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic. I realized I was not so unique after all. All these nurses were at least bilingual, but some spoke several languages. I was kind of in awe of how much they accomplished/sacrificed to be here helping others. All was well in our little "melting pot" of a facility and nobody viewed anyone as different or "other". We were all one big healthcare team with a common goal of helping and putting others before ourselves. And then 2020 came.

As racial tensions began to rise early in 2020, a line started to appear in the sand. Initially, just about everyone was on one side of this split. It wasn't until the riots and protests started that the line had multiplied, and people began to fall into different areas between the lines. Suddenly coworkers were arguing, some feeling quite strongly about what was going on. As if things could not get any worse, the pandemic was picking up speed, and that gave people another issue to divide on. Pretty soon our workplace, which once held all nationalities of people and opinions in harmony had turned into a free-for-all, but not in an openly visible way. The chaos was silent and passive. We still put the patients first, but we put ourselves second. Although on paper it was always an "assigned patients" setup, it only recently became so obvious. The trust and helpfulness have disappeared from some as they only look after themselves and their patients. The worst part about it all? The dynamic with patients has shifted as well. Some patients will make normal light talk, while others will let you know all about the stupidity of masks and the how Black Lives Matter has become terroristic. Before, there was always issues that everyone might not agree on, but I cannot remember a time when it felt this divided. And in this fractured state people have been asking me questions.

As a nursing student and a person of color, people seem to think that I surely fall on one side or the other of the BLM movement and the seriousness of this virus. To tell you the truth I cannot tell you exactly where I stand. I know racism is wrong, but I also know violence and chaos isn't right. I am well aware of just how threatening this virus is, but I'm also aware of my friend whose small restaurant may not survive any more business closure orders. The only things I do know was that 2020 was truly a year for adversity and diversity, and I can only hope that we come out of it stronger.

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