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# Black History Month 2024

Ian Peate FRCN OBE, Editor in Chief, *British Journal of Nursing*



I acknowledge that this editorial for Black History Month is from my perspective on Black history as a White male. My views, insights and interpretations are shaped by my own unique experiences, cultural background and my position in society. I want to emphasise the notion that each of us has a unique viewpoint, based on our identity. I acknowledge an awareness of the potential biases that may come with a White male perspective. I accept that my understanding of Black history cannot ever fully encompass the experiences and realities of Black individuals.

In stating this, I am keen to encourage readers to consider how their own identities can and do influence their perspectives. I seek to encourage people to reflect on and analyse how their personal identities, such as ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, culture and life experiences, profoundly affect the way that they perceive and interpret stories, histories and information.

The need for diverse voices could not be stronger, highlighting the importance of including a variety of voices in discussions about Black history. The experiences and insights of Black individuals should be amplified, as they provide essential context and understanding.

This year's theme for Black History Month, 'Reclaiming Narratives,' marks a pivotal moment in the journey towards recognising and rectifying the narratives that surround Black history and culture (<https://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk>). This theme calls for a deeper understanding of the rich tapestry of stories, experiences and histories that comprise Black heritage, aiming to shed light on the diverse narratives that have often been marginalised or misrepresented.

Reclaiming Narratives emphasises a commitment to not only correcting historical

inaccuracies but also to encourage celebration of the vast array of untold success stories that reflect the full intricacies that are Black heritage. It serves as a powerful reminder that history is not just a record of events but a narrative that has been shaped by those who are telling it. By reclaiming these narratives, the aim is to ensure that the voices of Black people are heard, respected and integrated into the broader historical discourse, giving Black individuals their rightful place in history, with their voices respected and woven into the larger narrative of our society's history.

Key to this theme is the idea of empowerment, encouraging people to take control of their own stories. This involves acknowledging the heroes of the past and present, whose contributions have significantly shaped society. From groundbreaking activists and artists to unsung pioneers in various fields, the celebration of these figures is essential for inspiring future generations. By shining a light on these narratives, we honour the resilience and achievements of Black people, fostering a sense of pride and identity.

When people are encouraged to reclaim their narratives, they can challenge historical misrepresentations and correct the biases that have shaped how their experiences are understood. Nurses, working in diverse communities, can apply this same principle in their practice by advocating for the unique stories and cultural backgrounds of patients, ensuring they are acknowledged and integrated into their care plans.

This idea of narrative empowerment can enhance culturally competent care. It involves recognising the importance of the cultural, historical and social contexts that influence a patient's health and wellbeing. By fostering an environment where people are empowered to share their stories, nurses can contribute to a more inclusive healthcare experience that respects and values the backgrounds of all patients.

Ultimately, 'Reclaiming Narratives' envisions a society where the complexities of Black heritage are celebrated and where the stories of Black individuals are embraced as integral to our shared history.

In Black History Month we should reflect, learn and engage in meaningful conversations that promote understanding, reconciliation and a true celebration of Black history, as we work towards what can be a brighter and more inclusive future for all. **BJN**