I t is truly hard to believe that I am sitting here writing my final president’s message to you all. It is a bitter-sweet moment to take in; however, it is also a great time of reflection. As 2020 ends, we reflect on what the year has brought us. We all knew that 2020 was going to be a big year as we anticipated celebrating the Emergency Nurses Association’s 50th anniversary, along with 2020 being designated the Year of the Nurse and Midwife by the World Health Organization (WHO).

As I prepared for 2020 and thought about my platform, it was all about recognizing the great care that emergency nurses exercise every day and the impact they have on their patients. To help highlight this message, the slogan I came up with is “One Person Can Make a Difference.” This slogan is a reminder to us that each one of us can make a difference.

The year started off with the Gallop poll listing nursing as the most trusted profession for the 18th year in a row. This designation shows that 85% of those polled said that nurses have very high or high ethical standards.1 This designation is truly an honor for our profession; however, it comes with high responsibility. This designation demonstrates that our communities trust us and expect us to do what we believe is right to care for them.

This year has been one that we could never have projected. We continue to face a global pandemic with coronavirus disease 2019. The first case diagnosed in the United States was on January 20, 2020, in Washington state.2 Just 11 days later, WHO issued a statement for a Global Health Emergency, and on March 11, 2020, WHO declared coronavirus disease 2019 a pandemic. Two days later the US would declare a national emergency.3 Throughout the pandemic, nurses, especially emergency nurses, continue to be on the front line caring for our communities. These communities continue to look for guidance as we face these unprecedented times. We do not have all the answers, and sometimes the answers seem to change from day to day as we learn more. One constant is the fact that we are there, willing to step up and serve our communities. The nurses are there when visitors are not allowed in the hospitals, trying to support the patient from both a medical standpoint and an emotional standpoint. The nurses are there when no one is.

Not only are we facing a global pandemic this year, we are also facing demonstrations highlighting the social injustices our Black and brown brothers and sisters have faced for centuries in the US. These demonstrations range from peaceful protest to riots as described by law enforcement officials. These demonstrations started after the tragic death of George Floyd; however, his death was just the latest death by law enforcement. We cannot forget Breonna Taylor, who was an emergency medical technician killed in her apartment by police as they issued a no-knock warrant.4 These demonstrations target law enforcements’ response to the Black and brown communities; however, the dialogue is so much more. It is about looking at all aspects of our society and ensuring that all are treated equally no matter their racial background.

How does this all relate, you may be asking? The simple response is that through the challenges that we have faced in 2020, there is one thing that stands true: emergency nurses are here serving their communities. It is a simple act of kindness, holding the hand of a dying patient or trying to console a family member over the phone after their loved one has died. It is a nurse caring for a victim of violence, treating the victim with kindness and grace regardless of the racial background of the victim or the nurse. These actions that nurses take every day are what have given us the respect of our communities. I am unsure what the next 50 years will bring us; however, I can assure you that emergency nurses will continue to be on the front line serving our communities. As I leave, I want to challenge you all with this: How can you make a difference in a life today? Remember, “One Person Can Make a Difference!”

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