

Texas Dentist Says Racism Is A Contagious Disease Like Tooth Decay

Dr. Anderson believes the advice she has given patients for more than 30 years can help combat deep-rooted discrimination and social inequity.

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- How dentistry offers a powerful, effective guide to curbing racism



TEDxOshKosh Dr. mOe Anderson

Dr. Monica Anderson knows that most patients are afraid of dentists. In fact, more than 60 percent of people worldwide are nervous about annual checkups. This is why in her recent TEDxOshkosh talk, Dr. Anderson addresses the parallels between dental hygiene and racial prejudices pointing out that 60 percent of us do not have a close friend of another race.

“

Racism is not just antagonism against another because of their racial or ethnic group,” said Dr. Monica Anderson. “It’s a disease, like tooth decay.”

Dr. Monica Anderson

But the Grand Prairie-based dentist and author believes that anxiety about dentistry is a learned trait, just like racism and prejudice. Like dentistry, “There’s the obvious potential pain, loss of control, and distrust of strangers,” she said of racism. “This phobia must be inherited, passed down from generation to generation.”

Dr. Anderson believes the oral health advice she has passed out to patients for more than 30 years can help

combat deep-rooted racial discrimination and social inequity. She discovered the link years ago as a dental student who was assigned to work with a patient, whose family didn’t want a Black doctor.

The patient’s mother blurts out, “Bobby Earl don’t let that nigra put her hands in your mouth,” Dr. Anderson said, of the incident in her recent TEDx talk. “I was hurt and appalled. At that moment, my heart quaked with this painful revelation.”

So, she developed a three-step treatment plan to target fears related to racism. She didn't have to look far to craft a blueprint because it's exactly what she has told patients for years.

The first step: be consistent about daily hygiene, which includes brushing, flossing, and some heart-searching.

"Brushing and flossing are important components of self-care," she said.

"But, you should also practice daily mental hygiene. Self-reflection is when we go into the unexposed grooves of our minds and cleanse them of irrational fears."

Next, make sure regular visits extend beyond the dental office, she said.

"Patients who visited regularly lost their fear of coming to the dentist," said Dr. Anderson. "In our personal lives, we should strive for this as well. I like to say eat lunch with a stranger to add comfortable diversity to your personal relationships."

Finally, early prevention of gum disease and tooth decay is key. The same holds true of all unconscious biases like sexism and ageism.

"Prevention works," she said. "My prescription is that we begin early, ongoing unconscious bias training for our youth to teach them how to recognize the warning signs of this awful disease before they become infected."

See her [TEDx talk featured on TED.com](#) or the [TEDx YouTube Channel](#)

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