

dear residents

Care for the Underserved is Deserved

January 16, 2022

Dear Residents,

The new year is well underway, and this weekend we remember the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. His work remains unfinished as we continue our stride toward a just and fair society. In these times of upheaval and uncertainty, what remains true is that our work in healthcare is instrumental in supporting those who are disadvantaged for one reason or another. In many ways all the hospitals we train and work in are safety net hospitals. Parkland is the obvious example, the care of veterans is another one, but we forget that Clements acts as a safety net for those patients whose needs have outstripped the capacity of referring doctors and hospitals to care for them. In this manner we are both the frontline and the backstop for those who are most vulnerable either because they never had resources to begin with or because they exhausted the resources that were available to them. It is sobering to reflect on the fact that medical expenses remain the [number one cause of bankruptcy in the US](#). In other words, everyone is vulnerable when it comes to healthcare.

**THE DAWN OF
EVERYTHING**

**A NEW HISTORY OF
HUMANITY**

**DAVID GRAEBER AND
DAVID WENGROW**

In their polemic critique, [The Dawn of Everything](#), Graeber and Wengrow reflect on our concepts of the origins of the inequality we are witness to in this world. They challenge the assertions of Rousseau and others that pre-agricultural societies were the last time mankind was truly equal and egalitarian. The contention was that inequality followed the advent of agriculture and the subsequent concentration of property, wealth and power. It is quite likely that power structures existed even before the arrival of agriculture. It seems that inequality, which has lately amplified in its range and extent, cannot be undone but can be managed. We view equality in terms of money, but poverty brings with it a large psychological burden. Those with fewer means are also at risk for not been seen or respected. In fact, poverty is bound up with lack of status and the continuous peril of humiliation.

We often refer to our patients as “underserved” which is true – yet we can overcome that, to the extent we can, by serving them well – ensuring they get the same standard of care and respect as anyone else. We should also consider that these “underserved” are delivering a great service to us and to society. They are in many ways “overserving” us in terms of what they are compensated for. They are construction workers, day laborers, landscapers, maids, warehouse packers, uber drivers, grocery store workers, restaurant workers and amazon drivers - working for low wages to support our quality of life. They take risks we do not. Society would not function without them. When you serve them, take care to honor their service to you and to society. Take a moment to thank them for what they do. When they express gratitude for your care, let them know that you are grateful for what they do.

Martin Luther King, Jr. stood up and advocated for those who were unseen, unheard, and unrespected. Our work gives us the chance to honor his legacy by doing the same. Thank you for all you do each day for those who need you the most.

“Not everybody can be famous but everybody can be great because greatness is determined by service... You only need a heart full of grace and a soul generated by love.”

— **Martin Luther King Jr.**

With warm regards,

Dino Kazi