Trauma and Mental Health with Nicola Noel Transcript

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Opening with the NBCC Rising Star win

Welcome to the Wellness on Tap podcast with your host Dr. Debs Eastwood. >> 2024 I won the NBCC Rising Star. And it was really interesting to watch because as the names came up on the screen, like people were like clapping and cheering.

Nobody captain shared for me. >> Nobody knew who I was. >> Ah, okay. Just because you were at that point still anonymous. >> Yeah. Nobody knew. Okay. And so then when I won it, I was like, what has just happened? Because, and I know you can't base like cuz people have got people with them and you can't base cheers and claps um on things.

>> However, like it's usually a pretty good indicator and it was near enough silent. There's a few people in the room who knew me. Like nobody knew me. absolutely nobody. And everybody's like, "Are you?" And I was like, "Yeah, like I I don't know how." And it was really interesting because when I went back a year later, so November just gone, I'm going to say I probably knew a good 80% of the main people in that room.

>> What a difference a year makes. E. >> That's really interesting. And I was like, that's some hard graph that is. >> Cuz these aren't just like, and no disrespect, like your normal Joe blogs, >> they were literally like top echelons of people in government in it was just it was the most bizarre experience I've ever had. So I was sitting on the table with this woman and she kept looking at me and smiling and then she said, "Oh, you know, we should do some stuff together and like work together after this." I was like, "Oh, yeah." So it was my mate Dear Dree.

So me and Dear Dree, like my mate, Dear Dree. So anyway, this girl comes along and she's like, "Hi, Dear Dree." And then she was like, "You didn't tell me you knew Dear Drew." I'm like, "Oh no, this is my mate Dear just met tonight." And she's like, "The Dear Dree." And I'm like, "Okay, yeah, my mate Dear Dree." She like, "Do you know who Dear Dree is?" And I was like, "My mate Dear Dree?" Turns out my new mate Dear Dree is who they call the Olivia Pope of Governance and she solves problems for national and international government.

That's not one of the things that she does. >> One of the things. >> Great. >> Wow. >> Yeah. >> Nice stuff. >> I know. And then from there, it just just kept going. And then uh so we ended the year November to November on five awards. Two of those being national from Wales um in diversity and the girl from West Brom who was never going to become anything I think.

>> And there the story begins, does it not? >> I'd say that's where the meaty part begins. it, you know, it's it's interesting cuz it kind of doveetails. So, we were talking about prisons and >> absolutely. Yeah.

>> What I learned in prisons and it was such an interesting place to be and to work.

Career path into specialist mental health nursing

So as you know as a medical professional um you have specialisms but I happen to specialize within my specialism. So I qualified as a mental health nurse or RMN.

I then got headunted for my first job. So I didn't go into normal acute. I actually went into perinatal psychiatry which is mother and baby. Um then whilst at mother and baby I did uh neurossychiatry, deaf psychiatry, eating disorder.

Then went into rapid assessment. So when you're based at um a >> and then worked for the team who >> I suppose it's hard to describe to a layman but you'll essentially manage the risk of people coming in but then you also like hold beds like you would for a normal ward for people who are in the community under a mental health team or forensic team but come into hospital are in hospital. So you manage their care >> while they're there and then you'd almost like discharge them back to their team.

>> And then from then uh went into forensic psychiatry although that had always been a part since qualifying and even before qualifying. So I did the forensic community teams where you're managing offenders out on license. It could be like life license time license.

Um who have severe and enduring mental health problems and then from working in prisons from broad mort uh managing some quite notorious >> offenders. So looking after their mental health care. But what I found on those wars, on those wings, was they taught me the biggest lessons ever. The biggest.

And >> yeah, I bet >> people like to label them as monsters. And you get the ones that you're just like, you're a monster. >> Yeah. You can't dress this one up.

>> Yeah. You can't like if it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it's a duck. Yes. >> However, the majority of them something happened >> and you have to say or my mom used to say a little bit of love goes a long way and you were like if you were just loved a little bit more.

>> Yeah. If somebody just took the time out to nourish your hero or water to you, what would have become of you? Because we're all one step away, aren't we?

We're all one step away from making a mistake that can be lifechanging and lifealtering for us. >> Yeah. >> Or for somebody else. >> Absolutely. We're entirely fallible beings, aren't we?

>> Yeah. Yeah. And so mental health has always been a massive driver for me. And I never ever thought I'd be a nurse. Never. Uh not in a million years. And I remember when I was nine, somebody said to me, they like, "Do you know when you grow up, you're going to be a nurse?" And I went, I'm not going to be somebody's skiibby.

And skipped off my skipping robe. This woman was horrified cuz I was just like, nurses, absolutely not. And then someone's like, oh, and and your work with children. And I was like, okay, firstly, I don't want children.

Secondly, I don't want to work with women. And thirdly, no, I'm not going to be a nurse. Goodbye. All food came true. >> Yeah. perinatal. Yeah. >> And when I end up in that ward, I was like, "Fuck >> women." >> She'll be right back.

>> Yeah. Women, babies. And then by that time, I'd had a child of my own. Um even though I was like never going to have children. and that it's in the full circle now because I truly believe that we have to when I'm in if that nursing home or as I you know age and my career goes on you have to know who's got your back and in order to do that you have to be mentoring the future >> yes >> and guiding them agree I agree. I do look around sometimes and think heaven help us.

You know, I I need to just have some time with you and give you what guidance I can offer and hope that a lot of other people do the same. >> And you take the best from what each of us offer. Yeah.

It's so scary to especially when we look at the medical field, at the NHS, um, and what a great institution it started as and where we are now. And, you know, we could get all political and go to government and all the rest of it, but we're not going to do that. But the fact is, it is where it is. And we're overworked and certainly underpaid.

Lessons from prison and forensic psychiatry

And that's the reason why I left and became a private contractor. But when you look at case loads for instance, so when I was in prison, you it's crazy having to have a case load of 40 men.

That sounds like a lot. But it gets worse because 30% of them like 25 to 30% of that if not more or not percent actually per people. So So we've had 40 25 to 30 of them would be severing. So they would be the ones that would most likely end up in coroner's court.

>> Right. So you'd come in every day and you switch that computer on and you'd pray that you could get into

everybody's notes. Oh, >> cuz if those notes were blacked out, you knew that that person had died during the night.

>> Oh my goodness. Okay, that's a grim way to start your day every day, >> right? That was and that and and it happened to me. >> Yeah, I'm sure. I mean, you you you you're very charmed if you do if you go through working in forensic psychiatry like within prisons and never have a death in custody >> like you're you lead a charmed life.

>> Yeah. >> But the one thing that you do learn is about nursing robustly. >> Yeah. >> Because your back is against the wall and especially during COVID times. CO times were just feral. That was just a nightmare. And I remember being threatened a lot of the time with losing my job >> because they So what had happened is they started putting phones in the cells, >> right?

>> Which is fine. Um because you know you had like all the the safety stuff like you know two meters because co new distance and all the rest of it but you too [__] ridiculous. If you're inside this square you're going to be safe. You're not going to catch it.

>> Yeah. Of course that's how it works. And then there was an expectation that we would assess them over the phone. I was like are you mad? Are you mad? You think that I'm going to >> using all those body language cues, >> assess them, right? So, assess them over the phone and when they string themselves up, then you want me to stand in coroner's call opposite their loved one and say, "Your son's dead because I missed the signs because I assess them over the phone." That that's that's what you want me to do. me and my off limb's a little pin number that I've taken that I've had for 25 years. You want me to roll on down to that wing and or not even go to the wing? And I was just like, if you open that door and I was like, don't worry about me. I'll open the door.

>> Good for you. Good for you. At med school, one of the most favorite lecturers that we had there who also did some pastoral stuff. Um, and I spent some time with him as a pastoral tutor.

>> Yeah. >> Um, Dr. Steve Peters, and he was a forensic psychiatrist, >> and he worked out of Rampton, >> um, which isn't a million miles away from where we're sitting right now.

>> Yeah. Yeah. >> Um, and obviously he didn't disclose any details about anything, but, you know, he used to say it was an an interesting ride. Yes. Yes. You know, clearly he met all sorts of people that were very severely and designated as as criminally mentally ill. Yeah.

>> Because they'd committed crimes that were designated down to their mental health, rightly or wrongly, whatever the reason. I'm not here to judge. That was just >> the way the system categorized them. And then when I worked um at the hospital here in Doncaster >> Mhm. Um, as part of my training, I one day had a a patient who came from Rampton.

>> That was an interesting experience for me as somebody who unlike you had never worked in a prison. I'd not got any real concept of what it was actually like, really like. So, seeing um an inmate, a patient, don't know what the correct terminology is.

>> Residents apparently. Oh, of residence. My god, I don't think I'd have ever got there. Um, coming in for surgery. >> Yeah. >> And me going into the room where they were and standing in the same room and seeing them shackled.

>> Yeah. To the bed. >> To the bed. And to guards. There was about six. They were out. >> Prison officers. >> Yeah. They were out. >> Call them guards.

>> Sorry. See what I mean? I am so unpy with my language here. Um so but yeah she was being looked after. >> Yeah. >> Um and then one of the people one of the prison officers got changed into scrubs and came into theater >> at the same time.

>> Mhm. >> Because once that person was under anesthetic >> there was the potential then that they would need

protection. >> Yeah. >> From the public. It was such an eyeopener for me.

>> Yeah. Like people don't realize what happened behind those walls. And I say that because what we're talking about now is you have somebody non-medical coming into the surgery, the surgery room.

>> Everything that we do behind those walls is to keep them behind those walls. So they do not to the point of when we when we're talking about um life support like the things that how we're like we can we do everything up until waiting for the ambulance to arrive because of the paperwork because of the security.

Like honestly to get just to get them out safely and get them back in and the risks to everybody. >> Absolutely. Yeah. >> And then people like, oh, how can you work for those monsters? And it's just like, well, it's nice for you to be privileged, but what we're doing is we're keeping you safe.

>> Know that. >> Yeah. Yeah. And actually we're safer than you are cuz at least I know who I'm walking amongst. Do you? >> Precisely. Yeah. >> Because like you were saying earlier people like that who we can classify as monsters.

Rightly or wrongly, but we do. >> Yeah. Yeah. >> Um they're the visible >> Yeah. >> monsters. It's the monster within the ordinary person on the street that is potentially >> more dangerous because it's the unknown, isn't it?

>> 100%. And we miss we miss the trauma, the things that have happened along the way to cause that for them. So I never forget the one day and I was far from home because I used to it and there was like a local so I had my local cat be and I did that for a little bit but when when you're going shopping so you know like as you get older you have that memory thing where you know you know people and you don't know where they're from and you can't quite remember used to go shopping and they like, "Hi, miss." And I'd be like, "Hia." And then I'd be like, "Oh, shit." >> Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So, I thought, "Right, we're going to we're going to move away a little bit, change our work area, and I I was far away from home." And during lunchtimes the staff can use the prison gym.

So I love Olympic weightlifting. Got my lifting shoes. Lifting shoes about £200 and I'd left them at the gym and I was like they are not going to a prisoner cell. That is not what's happening today.

So I went down to the gym and as I walked in, closed the gate behind me, there was a higher miss and I was just I ain't got no time for this nonsense. So I carried on, got my shoes, came out and as I was leaving, you're not going to talk to me then, miss. And I was like, do you know what? Let me give you an IEP. Like just booking. So I was just like, you're getting like pretty chipsy and like I ain't got time for this. And as I turned around, I saw my childhood friend. So we had gone from infant school all the way to high school together.

>> And I was like, "What you doing here?" And he said, "I'm serving life >> for a gangland murder." Oh, wow. Gosh. >> And I went home that night and I cried.

>> Yeah.

Trauma, childhood, and the impact of teachers

>> Because we were two people who grew up in the same environment and we were on different sides of the bars. >> Yeah. And when he told me, and he didn't have to, um, cuz I wasn't going to ask him, but when he told me the story behind it, it was like, wow, who look at who nourished his monster, but to him it looked at the time they were nourishing his hero cuz he went through some trauma, then went to the gang from belonging, and now countless lives. lives have been lost, including his own.

>> Yeah. >> Because I might have been 40 then. So, you know, he was like never had uh a proper girlfriend, haven't got any children, >> losses the majority of his life.

>> Yeah. Yeah. Would never have the experiences we take for granted. It's normal. >> Yeah. And I just thought, "Oh my god." And seeing stories or hearing stories like that, seeing things that had happened to people when them

to end up where they are and doing those sorts of things. I will for always for always be grateful for my experience of prison nursing and and working in the queue and work working in um inner city communities.

I'm grateful for doing it and I'm grateful for leaving with my life. Yeah. >> Yeah. Yeah. Oh my god. That's just popped something an image right into my head. So, as a medical student, you obviously do a psychiatry rotation.

>> Yeah. >> And we went out into the community. Um, and I remember pulling up with, you know, whoever it was I was with. I wasn't going on my own, obviously.

>> And there was um a I'm going to call them a patient. There was a patient waiting outside their house, crouched on all fours like an animal ready to spring. And I'm like, and I'm willingly walking into their house.

>> It's a normal day. >> Am I insane? And then another time going, it might even have been the same day. I don't know. I can't remember. >> It will be, it would have been the same day.

>> The same day. um going into another person's patient's home and um without disclosing anything, they were displaying a lot of the attributes of what I learned were reasonably typical for schizophrenia.

>> Oh, okay. Yeah. >> In that they had a lot of silver foil around things. >> Oh, that's old school schizophrenia. >> Yeah. Um they had um toys for their child. Anything that had anything electronic in there that voices could come through were outside in a box in the hallway of the flat complex.

>> Um and machetes and things on the wall, which is apparently something that used to be really common that they would >> Yes. like that kind of and beautiful old samurai swords as well. But I'm sitting in this room. One of the rules that was hammered into us was always make sure you're closest to the door.

>> Amen. >> The only door I was closest to was out onto a balcony and we were three stories up. >> How did you end up that far into the room? because it was a rectangular shaped room and the only way in you couldn't stop in the first bit and I'm like well this person that I'm with knows this particular patient and they've been seeing them for a long time so I'm relying on them to do the risk assessment and know that we are actually safe to be here. I was like, okay, I can't say I was comfortable during that encounter. Let's put it that way.

So, I knew that mental health >> was not for you >> as a career passion was not for me. >> But I found it so interesting. >> Yeah. >> And it made me think, and this is something you've touched on a few times now, and I really want to dig into because it can happen to any single one of us.

>> Yeah. how incidents of trauma, >> yeah, >> bring out the worst in us, if you like. And when we're talking trauma, we're not necessarily talking huge things. We're talking about belittlement. We're talking about shaming. We're talking about >> all those kind of things, aren't we?

>> We'll come back to that. And it just because I've got to tell you this story because I still find it hilarious talking about being the community and patients, service users, however you want to call them.

>> I'm bound to call it wrong. >> And um No, I'm just saying whatever because it it is probably changed again. But I never forget we so I don't know where to to compare it to, but it's like in the city of Birmingham. Anybody from Birmingham will know where the main mosque is in Birmingham, rough around there. And you've got lots of um tower blocks.

And so we were going to see a patient and the patient on the 10th floor, not the first time seen this uh patient and they were having a depo. So a depo injection is for usually used for somebody who's um non-compliant with their medication or non-concordant.

but normally not compliant. We're not having it. So, and they've normally got syringe or in mental health like schizophrenia, bipolar. And as we were walking to the building, my colleague got a call cuz you go in twos.

>> And I said, "Take this call." Cuz they were on an old fashion depot, so it's really oily, takes long to draw up. Normally you'll place it between your legs some up or put it in your boobs in a glove people before people start losing their mind. Um but didn't have time to do that. So I was like it's going to take me time to warm it up.

Take the call. Meet me up there. Fine. >> So get there lift's not working. I'm like okay. So I walk up 10 flights of stairs knock on the door. He's like hi Nicola. Hia. He's like coming. I'm like yeah you know such and such is just coming. So leave the door knock. They're like yeah cool. No problem. Nicolai, he said, "You want a cup of tea?" I was like, "Oh, do you know what? I'd love a cup of tea." And he said, "Let me just clear off the table for you." I was like, "Okay, then." So, he clears off his crackpipe and his firearm before. So, we So, so we've got a nice little space to draw up my depot. And I was like, "Okay." And he said, "I went to the kitchen to put the kettle on to make that cup of tea. And let me tell you, by the time he had filled that kettle up, switched it on and came out the kitchen, that depot was drawn up.

>> I bet it wasn't. >> And he was like, "Are you Yep." Gave it to him. And then he was like, "Are you not?" Nope. Got to go. Going to fly laterers came out. And as I got five down, a colleague met me and was like, "Where are you? Where are you going?" And I was like, "Let's roll. Let's talk about that a little bit later." Wow.

That polarized your thinking rather, didn't it? >> I was just like just like, "Oh, let me be so helpful and and clear my firearm, my crackpipe off so you can so you can I was like, wow." >> Yeah. Yeah. Wasn't expecting that. Today today's I mean today I mean that's probably not one of the worst things that's happened but >> it's and just to to say that that that's the reason why I ended up coming out and doing more of what I do now which we're going to later because the one time I I finished a shift at prison and I was going going home and it's about 10 minutes from the prison to the motorway and then curious taxi driver and he said, "Oh, what's the worst thing you've ever seen?" >> And it took from the time I got in the taxi to the time I got to the motorway for me to think about the worst thing that I'd ever seen cuz there was that many to choose from. And I just thought, "Oh god." So for anybody, one of those things would have been enough. Like so it wasn't the time when you cut somebody down or it wasn't the time when you're giving somebody CPR who's aspirated, who's dead, but you got to because you're waiting for that time. It's not the time that you stand and watch them carry a body out of that prison that should have been leaving two days later >> or the time when you've got to make that phone call >> desperately hard to tell. Do you know what I mean? And I was just like, how have we normalized or not we but we have to normalize those things.

>> Yeah. So when we talk about trauma, which I'm back around to now, and we have blue light professionals, medical professionals, prison officers taking their life because that's what they do every day.

And then when we circle back round to training, the support that's given, least said about that, the better. And when you look at if we just take prison officers and they got rid of all the people with the knowledge, with the experience, with the respect, political stuff, all to do pensions and all the rest of it. We all know this. Same as the NHS.

And look what becomes of them. >> Look what becomes of them. >> Yeah. And then when we look at trauma and people always think that trauma's you know it's got to be a big thing like domestic sexual but our brain waves between the ages of naugh to five any change in those cuz normal at the more like relaxed brain waves any change of those that can cause trauma. traumas hidden.

So it can be it can be anything can be your it can be you remembering you know your mom leaving not coming back something happened I mean she came back but something happened and that's it stuck.

>> Yeah.

From EDI work to public recognition

Yeah. >> It doesn't have to be what we think it has to be. >> Yeah. That is very true. And I think every well I I can think I could put my hand on my heart and say I know every single one of us >> carries multiple instances of those many traumas if you like just to differentiate them for the purpose of this conversation >> around. Some of them we've dealt with, some of them we haven't.

>> Yeah. >> It could just be a teacher at school humiliating you. >> Had plenty of those. Do you want to go first? Yeah, we've all got them, haven't we?

>> Yeah. I um we have teachers humiliators and we have also have teachers who are heroes. So, I'm just thinking >> absolutely. Do I do a [__] sandwich?

>> Yeah, let's do a [__] sandwich. >> Go for it. So, >> go Oh god, it's like this is like it's like a spider's web. This is so weaving back to the childhood friend who committed that murder.

There was he was our head of Yeah. He was called Mr. Wear. I don't think he's with us anymore, but if any of his family ever see this or ever watch this episode, the guy was a legend. So, he's a Welsh guy. Typical like rugby player build. He had these brown cow eyes and he was just like as Welsh as you could get.

And the one day, so he was a DT teacher, like woodwork and all the rest of it. And they have like their office would be in the classroom, don't they? >> So come into the office and he said, "Have you seen such and such today?" And I said, "No, not at school." He said, "I have." I said, "Oh." Said, "Yeah, he was robbing a petrol station just a mile up from the school." >> Oh my goodness.

>> So, of course, that's part of how it all started for him with the gangs. And I was like, "Oh, right." And he said, "I want you to promise me something." I was like, "Right." And he said, "When you as soon as you can when you finish school, I want you to leave West Bromage and never want you to come back. And I was like, West Brom, the epicenter of the you what is wrong with you? What? He goes, you got the Carter's Green Chippy, you've got nickelbees, you've got um Busies, this this club, bar pub, like it was horrendous.

And I was like, and I remember laughing and walking out and just being like, "Okay, wow." >> Yeah. They had your best interest at heart, didn't they? >> And I have. I have. And I can see because now West Brom is and always has been, but it was one of the most deprived areas within the UK. And within my cohort of say 200, two 300 just within that cohort alone when we talk about trauma and nourishing monsters or heroes.

There was a boy who committed murder with his dad and tried to shove the body down a manhole. Oh, there was a boy who was Jehovah's Witness and went to London and became a famous sex worker and wrote a book about it or rent boy. There were victims of pedophile rings.

It's like 200 kids like just in a in a local area. And then there was me who was told by a teacher that I would be nothing. I wouldn't amount to anything. I'd be pregnant by the time I was 18 and I'd be a lady of the night, which I found out later was a prostitute.

And that was his response to me saying, "I've taken some GCSEs a year early and I've passed them." And he lost his mind. So, who was I to be a young black intelligent girl?

Who was I? >> How very dare you? >> How very dare you? >> So, all you're good is to be slept with. That's all you're good for. That's exactly what he said. So when we grow up in those areas when and it's not just minority but for a large extent it is when you're from a marginalized or otherred community.

The expectations are low. We were never supposed to make it out alive. We were never supposed to be anything. They decided what our fate would be before we could even spell our own name.

Those words formed the bars of a cage that we were never arts to be put in. >> And yet me and my friend, so we got we laugh because I do what I do now. and she is an emergency planner for the NHS. So when things happen like at the Manchester Arena.

>> Oh yeah. Yeah. Yeah. >> She's responsible for the planning of that and we was like [__] hell. Two girls from West Brom >> doing really significant important work and making an impact and changing the world.

>> Yeah. You go girl. >> Thanks. So that was the hero. We was talking about the monster. And then another hero,

she was a drama teacher and she gave me Mal Malcolm um Martin Luther King's book with like all these sermons in >> a >> And I bet you treasured that. Oh well, I did until horrible story.

Got uh I didn't lose it in the NHS. I I was off sick. It was in my locker. They got rid of lockers and the book went >> I know >> that's awful. >> That's awful. But I still remember that book >> to this day. And so there are people out there who want to nourish the good side and we can make the choice as well. One thing that we have to do is take 100% responsibility.

[__] things happen to good people all the time. >> Yeah, they do. And this is this is something and this is why I tell my story quite frequently. Probably not as often as I think I do, but definitely when I speak because it doesn't have to mean the end. Like words are spells and people speak them over you, but it doesn't mean that you have to accept it.

>> It really doesn't. And to know Oh, it's just like how awful. How when I think back now or look back with my adult eyes to that teacher, I just like that was wild.

Who does that? Who says things like that? >> But now, and I'll name and shame him, Mr. Stevenson. Hope you're [__] watching now. >> Yeah. Yeah. Look at me.

Yeah. Yeah. Okay. My [__] sandwich. Um, senior school music teacher. Oh, Mr. Biggin. What a delightful man. How lovely was he? Young guy was like skateboards became a thing when I was at school.

>> They were brand new. and he designed the end of year, you know, musical thing, you know, that every school used to put on at the end of every year and got the school hall decked out so that kids were coming in and doing stunts on skateboards and he built like ramps and everything in the school hall and composed all the songs about skateboards and whatever else the story was. I can't remember much more about it. and then came on at the end when everybody was cheering and applauding him, wearing a skateboard helmet and some shades because he was just balling his eyes out. He was there for everybody. He He had his finger on the pulse of the young people there. He was just an absolute diamond.

Two mini shits in the middle, one at school and one at college. The one at school, um, you know, you go to your careers lessons and things like that. And I mean I was brought up in semi- detached suburbia.

>> Yeah. Yeah. So the theory goes from my narrative that I was going to become, you know, some sort of high office, low professional kind of that was my sort of band if you like that I was expected to perform in. And they were basically saying that I wasn't performing in that and said you you'll be in a typing pool.

Wow. I mean you you that's what that's what you'll do. That's your thing. Um, at college I went on what was called the pre- nursing course for 2 years.

I hope it's improved now because the course then was so dire that they took two cohorts in at the beginning of year one. By the end of year one, they had to take it down to one cohort cuz so many people left.

Most people left without saying anything >> to this poor lecturer or I I changed my opinion of it that day, >> you know, and so I made the decision that I was going to stay on and do a couple of modules including my Alevel biology in the second year.

>> Yeah. >> But I really wasn't interested in continuing with the bulk of the course. And we had a tutorial. I remember it well. Friday morning. So I walked up to the front of the class and said to her, you know, I'm just want to let you know that I'm not going to be continuing on into year two and you know, I'd like to do this A level blah blah blah that I've already started.

She absolutely lost her [__] with me. And I'm like, I don't understand. You've been saying every Friday for the past six months, does anybody know where so and so is? We haven't seen them. we believe they've left and they haven't had the decency to tell us. So, I thought I'd done the right thing and had the decency to go and say to her

>> and you know like when your mates are chattering at the back of the class trying to keep up cuz she was raising her voice and in the end they had to quieten down and I left the classroom in tears. I was so humiliated and so upset and I just didn't understand and she compounded it later on when I started applying for work for nursing courses.

>> Mhm. never even got invited for interviews and all my friends were getting interviews and job offers and I'm like, "What's going on?" And she was one of the teachers on the biology course as well. So, I went to the other lady, this is the nice part of the sandwich, and said, "I don't understand what's going on. Here's what's happened. Could I ask you to write me a reference instead?" And she says, "Yes, of course.

I got the first job I applied for as an operating department practitioner. H. So, >> and what was the first job you applied for? >> Um, so I was applying for nursing and getting nothing. This was operating department personnel or practitioner. It was called back then. Oh, yeah. ODA. It was our current operating department assistant. Basically, an assistant to an anotist, which is part of the reason I ended up doing what I do in the NHS at the moment. Mhm.

>> But yeah, as soon as I changed my referee to her, I got the first job. So yeah, lovely people that were nurturing, as you call them, the hero in me and supporting me and others that >> for whatever reason, the coach training that I have, so they were servicing their own needs. They were meeting their own needs at the time and they were couldn't look beyond that.

But they were trashing me. >> Wow. >> At the same time. So, we've all got them, haven't we? >> We have. Unfortunately, do more damage than others. >> Yeah.

>> Yeah. >> So, you don't still work in the prison system anymore. >> I don't for one moment. I've got to fix my hair. Cut that out. Um, so no, I don't work in the prison system anymore. So I still hold my PIN number.

However, now I sit at the intersection of mental health, EDI, and leadership. And I never saw that's the one that I never saw coming. For those of us that don't know, what's EDI?

>> Sorry. Equality, diversity, and inclusion. >> Wonderful. That's a good place to be. >> Uh, it is. I I never never saw myself there. The signs were always there.

And as I went through my career, I was either the only person of color in a room a lot of the times apart from the mother and baby unit. There was there was that was and maybe that was because it was inner city Birmingham as well. Was that inner city? It was it was in Birmingham. Um, there was it was diverse, but normally I'd be either the only person of color in the room and then to double down the only woman of color in a room. And so, of course, you're aggressive. Of course you're over opinionated.

Uh you have a lot to save. The just everything the you know the micro aggressions that get thrown at you. The not wanting to accept your lived experience.

One thing I found really interesting about lockdown was do you know Dr. Bnee Brown? Mhm. So she spoke on this subject really really well and it's the fact of people owning their stories. So when it comes to marginalized communities and them talking about their lived experience and their stories, people not from the marginalized community will become very offended if you want to talk about or can become very offended if you want to talk about history or you want to talk about how what how things have or how things have become the way they've become. And it's like we're not asking you to pay for your ancestors, but what we are saying is when you start owning the story, then you can create change.

>> Yeah. >> You can create impact and you can move forward. And what I really started to realize was actually I'm here to create change and I'm here to create impact.

And then when we had the nonsense with the flags, I wrote a post which I thought uh you know maybe uh 60 70 people might like it. Over 100,000 people engaged with that post. It was shared nearly 600 times and it just blew up.

And now it started a movement and a body of work called the libraries open and that sits exactly at the intersection of mental health leadership and EDI and it gives people a place to be able to put their hand up and ask questions >> a space for them to be vulnerable for them to say I don't know everything but I want to talk.

>> Yeah. The stories that came out from that, stories from parents with special educational needs, children to people who were grieving to people going through divorce, people talking about their lived experience of being from marginalized communities.

And I was like, "Oh god, I really am sitting in the kind of leadership se, oh, you know, you're a leader." And I was like, "No, I'm not. No, I'm not. I'm I'm a nurse who's got a bit fancy, but with a bit, you know, we put a bit of therapy in there as well, but I'm definitely not. And then as I started to look back at the conversations I was having, the things I was talking about, I was like, "Oh my god.

Legacy, awards, and inspiring others

" And then I went to the a diversity conference in Wales run by Bernie Davis. Why the name escaped me? Oh, that is ridiculous. That's that's my age. Anyway, and it was a wonderful day. There was lots of dignitaries, um, lots of people with honors that were involved.

And then at the end she's like, "Oh, we've got our rewards coming up." And I thought, "Oh my god, that'd be cool to come down like this day and if anybody can ever go master in diversity. Yes, come back to me." So master diversity conference and they had the master diversity awards.

Uh, and they had like loads of people involved like Lee Day solicitors. If anybody does like Lee Day, they're like the bad boys of solicitors, like just crazy. All these people involved like uh Welsh sport, ambulance, all the rest of it.

And there were all these rooms and you could go and you could talk and learn lots of stuff and listen to panels. Then they said they had these awards and I was like, "Oh, that'd be good to come back down." And then somebody said, "Are you applying for the awards?" And I was like, "A girl from the UK? don't think so. Like what I'm applying for the awards for? No. And then the next day somebody said to me, are you going to apply for awards? I was like, I don't think I can. I'm I'm not Welsh.

Spoke to Bernie. She was like, you need to apply for the awards. I thought, okay then. So I was like, okay, well, I'll apply for representation cuz I'm big on representation um and gender equality. And I was like, yeah, child here.

went to the awards on my own and representation was up first and they did kind of all the memeritus awards and then I got bronze and I was like okay well that's me done for the day cool got a bronze wonderful >> nice well done >> and then the gender equality came off and they were reading out names so they went past all the meritus and my name was read out and I was like oh well you know I got a bronze then they read bronze out and I was like oh that makes sense know of that person they read silver out and I was like that makes perfect sense and then my video flashed up on the screen and I was like what what is happening and like you've won and I was like I have come to Wales and I've just won a national diversity awards in gender equality. I thought, what is happening?

And part of my video was saying I'm only just getting started and it's about the change I'm making from working with Amazon EMA. So that's Amazon globally working with the female black employee network, the female sub sector of it.

working with people at HR Dutch of Cornwall which I have done this year. I'm due to work with Deote and I'm back at Amazon again and I truly believe if you cannot see it, you cannot be it.

And we need to be in those rooms. It's no longer acceptable to say that we are not welcome in the rooms. And I know that we have to go back into rooms that have traumatized us.

>> I know we do. And it's hard. I know we shouldn't be expected to. But here's the thing. If we are not at that table, our voices cannot be heard in policies. They can't be in the story. We are cut out of a whole sub sector of things

and our faces cannot be seen. And there are little black and brown boys and girls that are waiting for us to take up the mantle.

Like it is our job to kick those doors in and then hold them open for others to walk through. >> Huge congratulations. >> Thank you. >> Yeah, very worthy and necessary.

>> Yeah, it really is. So, back to M. STEVENSON. >> YEAH, take that. >> Take that. You know, you little EDI queen over here, which I just >> genuinely like this time like even this time last you said that to me. I've been like, he's smoking crack. Look, behave yourself. I I do I do therapy and I have a background in mental health. That is it. That is where we're going. We're not leaving anybody. We're not having any big conversations. We are just we're just here. And to know now that I am creating impact but not just impact within the UK that has rippled across the world genuinely blows my mind.

And to sit here and like hear myself say that I like what is what is happening? What is happen to the girl in West who was just, you know, you're stepping into you? You're being the authentic you, my darling.

>> Yeah, you can see it when you're talking. It shines out of every pore. It's wonderful. It's lovely to see. >> Thank you. But it's uh it's been I think I said it on one of my videos after. So I stood on stage and cried.

Honestly, when I got that award, I sobbed. >> I just sobbed. And I was like, I'm not going to cry. And then I just stood there and sobbed. And after they interviewed me, they was like, "So what's the journey been like?" I was like, "It's been a thing." Cuz I was like, "It's been a thing." And when I look back on those wards prisoners on wings, I did chase them and they were like, "You are crazy." And I'm like, "You don't even know the half of it." It's it's been a it's been a journey.

And the one thing that I cannot thank enough is all the people that made it. And that includes the patients, that includes the prisoners. >> Yeah. That includes this I had this um one nurse and I need to like shout her out. Jill Hart. So Jill Hart nurse she's retired now. Um she gave me as much anxiety as she did knowledge. I mean Jill was like Jill.

But what she did she's old school right? Proper old school manic as well. But what she did teach me was how to be clinically defensible and robust nursing.

>> Important. >> Really, really, really important. >> I would imagine especially so in the fields you were working in. >> Yeah. So, I met Jill in prison nursing and she's character. But Jill was a character, but she's one of the people that genuinely made my career. And a lady called Sharonetta, who I believe she probably does, she still she came out of prisons and then she went into Oh god, it's it escapes me now. But anyway, formidable, formidable characters and again people I mean and don't get me wrong like you'll put a lot of pressure on you as well like for real for real.

>> However, the things that I was taught by them both the way that I know specialist nursing inside and out because of them. >> Yeah. the way that I could walk on a prison wing now and and still now and just know that I can hold myself and the way and I will give this to Jill as well that I had a death in custody and everybody else was called to interview except for me cuz you'd done your recordeping right.

>> Yeah. >> Yeah. Never went in front of the coroner. Mhm. >> Never interviewed by the independent commissioners for the prisons. Nobody. >> And that genuiness and authenticity is what's going to carry you through this next stage, isn't it?

>> Well, let's hope so, cuz I don't know. I don't know where that's going that that's that's the scary part now. Uh because it's it's where next. It's well I can't say where next. I know a few of the things that potentially are coming up, but it is about now really bedding down and making that impact and making that change and about legacy. I never thought I'd be talking about legacy, >> but making that legacy for people who are coming through for nurses, for therapists, for people like me who never saw themselves in rooms that I step that I've stepped in. I I won woman who so a woman who award last May and I did a lot of speaking about representation and people being in rooms

and yada yada yada then I was a keynote speaker at so Sandra Garlic runs womanh who and solarpreneur woman who's in May solarreneurs normally in October I end up being a keynote speaker and a lady that I that we know each other from online and we follow each other. She's a lady of color. She was in the room. I was like, "Oh my god, what are you doing here?" Like really surprised. Never seen you in these circles.

And she said, "I'm here because of you. I saw you do it and I knew I could." >> Amazing. How wonderful. That must have warmed your heart. >> Do you know what? It did make me want to cry. I was like, "Oh my god." I was like, "It's working." because I genuinely think that still nobody knows who I am and nobody's watching and nobody sees what I'm doing or what I'm up to. Like, who cares about me?

>> And then you hear things from time to time >> and I'm like, "Oh my god." that I had just after I won the last award and between that and Christmas, people that I worked within uh who I went to school with and that I worked with within in the prison service, men, mostly men, had messaged me and was like, I've been watching you, not in a creepy way, sounds so creepy, >> and thank you for what you're doing because my daughter gets to see what you can do, what what what you what can be achieved, what can be done, and that's that's what it's about.

>> Yeah. >> You carry on doing that, my darling, and thank you so much. >> Oh, and sharing. >> Thanks. Thanks for having me. It's been it's been lovely. Do >> you know what? It's been um it's been really cathartic, hasn't it?

>> Oh, I thoroughly enjoyed it. Me too. How mad. Oh, thank you. >> You're welcome.