

FSU's WhiteCoats4BlackLives chapter raises awareness of racial disparities

Byron Dobson, Democrat senior writer Published 7:36 p.m. ET Jan. 10, 2018



(Photo: Byron Dobson/Democrat)

If director Ava DuVernay's goal in directing the documentary, "13th", was to get people to think, it worked for about 70 people viewing it Wednesday at Florida State's College of Medicine.

The sometime graphic documentary takes viewers from slavery to the Jim Crow era to the civil rights movement to modern-era politics with one dominant theme threaded throughout: the system of mass incarceration has prospered on the backs of black people.

A prompt for responses at the conclusion initially was met with an extended period of silence.

This was not a sociology class. It was part of week-long activities during "Racism Awareness Week" presented by the college's WhiteCoats4BlackLives student chapter.



Racism Awareness Week logo printed on shirts worn by members of WhiteCoats4BlackLives
(Photo: Byron Dobson/Democrat)

FSU's chapter of WhiteCoats4BlackLives was formed last year. It was established nationally by medical students in 2014 as an advocacy organization focused on raising awareness of racism as a public health concern, to end racial discrimination in health care and to prepare medical students to become advocates for racial justice.

Wednesday's lunch-time event drew a diverse, yet predominantly white crowd of students, faculty and visitors. The lecture series continues through Friday.

Taylor Maramara, second-year student, said the chapter's events helps students within the college gain a better understanding of race and culture on health disparities played out in the country.

When asked about the value of the chapter, she said:

"I think, one, is education, two, to have a safe space to discuss sensitive topics, and thirdly, to advocate and to encourage future leaders to take action," said Maramara, who is Asian-American.

"The underlying theme of all of this is the racial disparities we see in health care," she said. "There are differences in how different racial and ethnic groups receive quality care."

Ryan Earwood, 30, said membership in WhiteCoats4BlackLives is open to all medical students. The diverse membership is important, he said, in raising awareness of each other's experiences.

“Given the climate we are learning to be doctors in, we find it exceptionally important to be aware of what’s going on socially,” he said.

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Thursday events (FSU College of Medicine, open to the public):

Continuum of Bias, 12 to 1 p.m., Room 1200: Explore the continuum of bias. Starting with the origins of implicit bias as well as privilege and their influence on behavior, we will then transition to the explicit bias seen today. Presenter: Michael Nair-Collins, Ph.D.

round Rounds, 4 to 6 p.m., College of Medicine auditorium: Explore the continuum of bias. Starting with the origins of implicit bias as well as privilege and their influence on behavior, we will then transition to the explicit bias seen today. Presenter: Dr. David Acosta.

Friday:

Latino Health Discrimination, 12 to 1 p.m., Room 1200. The role of racism seen by Latinos in healthcare in the communities surrounding Tallahassee. Presenter: Ivette Lopez, Ph.D.

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