Tim Dentry (00:03):

Welcome, loyal listeners, back to Tim Talk. We have a great discussion today about advancing health equity with a man who has been talking that talk and walking that walk for decades. Dr. Lynwood McAllister is the assistant clinical director for the Morehouse School of Medicine Physician Assistant Program. And in addition to that, he is a multidisciplined and credentialed professional who has done extensive work in education, public health, academic medical centers, healthcare consulting, and public policy. Dr. McAllister, thank you for being my honored guest.

Dr. Lynwood McAllister (00:44):

Thank you so very much for having me.

Tim Dentry (00:46):

My pleasure. You have done so much work to advance health equity and promote community health over the course of your career. And by the way, I just have to say, you know, for a lot of individuals, the terms like health equity and promoting community health are, um, kind of new, especially health equity, kind of a new term. Uh, even though then, um, others that have been in the, you know, health profession for a long time will say, oh, well, that's what we've always done. There's something I think we can really, really learn from an individual like yourself that has indeed been advancing health equity and promoting community health over the course of your entire career. So what are some of your proudest moments and accomplishments?

Dr. Lynwood McAllister (01:36):

Believe it or not, some of my most proudest moments have nothing to do actually with healthcare per se. So I am a professor, and so I get tremendous satisfaction, tremendous joy from the, the teaching process with all my, uh, my young students. So I, my my focus of studies are around American government and public policy. So I love teaching, uh, that subject matter and, and broadening the, the, the minds and scopes and opinions of, uh, students. Um, seeing the process of students, um, especially young adults because of their own station in life as being politically, politically socialized, uh, in terms of, uh, from their parents, from their, their loved ones, from their close social friends, and how to give them a different perspective so that they can do what, at the end of the day, make up their own minds about issues, especially when it comes to our politics and, and different ideologies within our, our government system.

(02:49):

So I absolutely love teaching. Um, as well as that, I enjoy the mentorship process. Um, I've, the, I would say I had the pleasure in having, and still have the pleasure of mentoring so many students, um, at different levels in education, all, all, all the way up to the doctoral level. And I get so much satisfaction from that in terms of healthcare, I, because it is so huge in terms of, um, putting a, your, your, your finger on, am I, am I making a difference here? Am I helping someone? So it's almost like trying to boil the ocean sometimes. Like you really, it's so huge. So I, I try to be as fundamental and simplistic as possible. Um, did I help someone? Did I assist someone? Was I part of someone's process in learning education? And in fact, if I was a part of that in a positive manner, are they going to move forward as a practicing clinician to help others? So I just have that faith in a sense that work I've done is similar to almost like planting a seed, but I won't necessarily see the seed grow, and I won't necessarily get the shade from that particular tree, but I was part of the process. So those are some of the things that bring

me complete satisfaction over the years I've been in healthcare and just over the years in my, in my career.

Tim Dentry (04:39):

Uh, I love your last analogy, the, the tree analogy, professor McAllister. Um, and, you know, um, when you say greatest joy in satisfaction, and you mentioned the, you know, teaching and mentoring and broadening minds, you know, really reminds me of one of my, uh, I was speaking to a group the other day and, and the question posed was, what? Like, how, how are you changed? How, how did the pandemic these three years, you know, make you different? And, and I said, not necessarily make me different, but one thing rose to that, you know, within me, and that is, uh, being inspired by those that I serve. So, you know, leadership, especially crisis time leadership, oftentimes it's, you know, are you an inspirational leader? Well, I get inspired hour in and hour out by the people that I work with, you know, so I, I think you and I, it's a common bond in the way, you know, when I ask you that broad question of your entire career, what are your proudest accomplishments? It's, uh, people's whose, whose minds you've broadened. And I that's fabulous.

Dr. Lynwood McAllister (05:54):

It, it, it is about service, um, to, to, to assist and to help. And that brings the most, most satisfaction. And, and it is part of my, my core values and core principles as far as, as far as to be a servant for others.

Tim Dentry (06:09):

So that's it. True. Now, let me ask you, we clearly, uh, asked you to be here for this, our Special Juneteenth podcast, because much of the work you do aligns with the Juneteenth celebration. And as I said to you, as we were getting warmed up, Northern Light Health Honors and celebrates Juneteenth. It's one of our official holidays. And, um, we know that we want to encourage people having a deeper understanding of that. It's not just a day off, you know, it's not something in your PTO bank. It's got real significance and meaning. So, you know, historically, a lot of people would say that, you know, the day commemorates June 19th, 1865, when the enslaved Africans of Galveston, Texas got the news by way of the Union Army troops that had ended up at Galveston, at the tail end of the, uh, civil War, um, about freedom that had come at last about two and a half years before when President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. But let's keep in mind that it was also six months after the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution was passed. So really, really significant day. Um, but Juneteenth isn't just about celebrating a day or a single historical event, it's a celebration. And all Americans, all people should rally around this celebration of freedom, resilience. What else would you add to that list, professor?

Dr. Lynwood McAllister (07:58):

It's a, it's a, it's also a, a moment for the nation to pause, to pause and look back at our history, and to look back at our history, not from a flawed point of view, not to look back at our, our history, um, as tainted, but just to embrace how far we have come in this nation. Do we still have so much further to go? Absolutely. So we have to take this moment just to pause and understand that African-American history is American history, right? So we celebrate the Fourth of July's Independence Day, July 4th, 1776. We declared our independence, our founding fathers, and those authors of the Constitution spoke about life and liberty. All men are created equal. But at that point, in July 4th, 19, 17 76, all men were not created equal. So we know that enslaved Africans were not included in this declaration. We knew that women were not included in this declaration.

(09:13):

We knew that indigenous Indians of North America were not included in this, in this declaration. So as this nation evolved, and we come up with this idea, this, this experiment to create America based on rules and laws of constitution, this nation is a document, a living, breathing document. And our forefathers had such foresight to understand that the demographics of this nation will change. And in order for us to form a more perfect union in the preamble, to form a more perfect union that we will have to change, we will have to include enslaved Africans. We would have to include indigenous North American Indians. We would have to include women. We would have to include all of those who were left out and were, were not granted the, the privilege and the sovereignty of being a United States citizen and all the privileges and rights that had come with.

(10:23):

So we can see over time, leading, even from the, the point of the Declaration independence, declaration independence to the Emancipation Proclamation, we, we could see a, a period that this nation was changing. When we look at what Juneteenth represents, many people, even some people in my community, the black community, don't fully understand the significance of Juneteenth. Um, especially if you were raised in the northern parts of, of our nation. If you were living or raised in, in the South, you had an idea. I had friends who grew up in Texas or grew up in Georgia. They knew what Juneteenth was. But growing up as a young person, um, in, in, in New York City, I didn't know what Juneteenth was until, you know, I saw it as a, a young adult on my own and understood, um, what Juneteenth represents. So Juneteenth, we have to begin to not treat it separately, um, in terms of what it represents compared to Independence Day in Juneteenth, because I think that sometimes we are, we are caught in that, that separation or, or in, in, in a, in a sort of way of a dichotomy, one represents what white people, independent and the other represents black people.

(11:59):

So we have this, these two, these two ideas on both of our shows and speaking to us, no, it's American history. So on this juneteenth, we must take a pause and we must understand that this is about a, a, a struggle about what is known for us as freedom. It's very simple. It's freedom to have the, to be treated as a full citizen, and that means have all the rights and privileges to be treated with dignity, to be treated with respect, to be treated with equity, and as well as justice. So this is what this moment, um, um, this juneteenth means is that, and this is for all people who have been marginalized and not fully included in the solvency of, of these United States of America.

Tim Dentry (12:55):

Excellent. Thank you so much, professor. I really enjoyed listening to you describe that. Um, let me ask you about, uh, Morehouse. So obviously, you know, coming from Morehouse School of Medicine, it has produced an impressive list of graduates that have championed social and medical justice. As a matter of fact, we've had, uh, more than one on this podcast series, um, and the college continues to do so. Before we talk about your, um, your latest endeavors, what would you like our listeners to know about the Morehouse legacy, which is world renowned?

Dr. Lynwood McAllister (13:32):

Mo Morehouse, uh, was founded in 1975 to not only provide opportunities for, um, students of color, in particular African Americans to become, uh, physicians as w but as well as to diversify the workforce. So Mark School medicine has a rich history that lies in creating health equity for, for our society. So we take a step back prior to MO School of Medicine. And so we look at, historically, if we look at medical

education, so a little over a hundred years ago, a report was written by Abraham Flexners, known as the Flexner Report of, yeah, 1910, right? And within Flexners report, prior to Flexners report, there were over 25 what will be considered black historical medical schools. After Flexner report, that number went down to three medical schools that were considered, um, ranking to be ranked and to, to receive support, financial support through other entities such as the ama, so forth and so on.

(15:00):

So, historically, um, schools of medicine from an H B C U perspective are necessary. We can see that if we look at the number of physicians, especially, um, of color, it, they are not in proportion to society. And as this society grows, and as this society becomes more brown, there will be a need for physicians that represent what our society looks like. This is not to say that white physicians are not significant. That's not what I'm saying. What I'm saying is that when we look at health outcomes and we look at, um, how, um, patients of color respond, there's, there is a better response to comply with physicians or practitioners that look like you. So there is definitely a need in order for us to address some of these health disparities that exist in our society. Most group of medicine provides those opportunities for, for practicing clinicians, residents, medical students, pa students, to enter into a workforce, to diversify their workforce, to address the needs of those who need it most, those who are underrepresented in our society, and those who have less services in our society. So most people, medicine is significant when it comes to that, but it from, even from a historical perspective.

Tim Dentry (16:49):

Yeah. You know, fabulous. And when I think of, um, you know, the challenges in, um, our health system, for example, and where we have, uh, the need to recruit more professionals, more physicians and PAs and nurse practitioners and nurses and the like. Um, you know, I also look at the corresponding, uh, information showing that predominantly rural states like, like Maine is, have far more, um, unmet needs a met needs. And so we need more providers. And so when I hear you, you know, describe the importance of, of Morehouse and training, uh, the professionals, absolutely. That, that connection, there's new data coming out now on breast cancer and women and, and so many other examples where, um, exactly what you're talking about. There's a, a, uh, professional force, um, that can really connect, patients feel easier to share from a trust point of view, and their providers maybe have a different set of radar. You know, in talking to the patients, if I may say that, then, um, healthier outcomes happen. So what's not to like about that and everything is to learn about that, right?

Dr. Lynwood McAllister (18:12):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, and we, and we have to, um, in a sense, we have to address this concern immediately because we know that we are dealing with a physician shortage in this nation. So we're not producing enough physicians. So from a allied health point of view, from a health science point of view, from being part of a interdisciplinary team point of view, um, physician assistants will play a vital role in addressing, um, uh, the needs of our, of our, of our nation, of our citizens in terms of healthcare.

Tim Dentry (18:47):

Yeah, so true. So now, to make it more, um, specific, I guess to, to your work in the, uh, physician assistant or PA program at Morehouse, tell us about the, the program and the goals, but I also want to hear here, like how it is part of you.

Dr. Lynwood McAllister (19:07):

Okay. So the PA program, the basic PA program in terms of accreditation standards, usually around a 28 month program that include, um, uh, didactic, um, uh, curriculum, um, students during their didactic year, which is approximately 15 months here at Morehouse School of Medicine. Um, they received, uh, classroom education that talks about disease pathology, uh, anatomy, physiology. Uh, they also participate in a capstone program research project that is culminated at the end of their pa, PA education. Um, then the second half is their clinical experience. So second half of their education, um, involves clinical clerkships. These clerkships are areas of internal medicine, family medicine, um, surgery, pediatrics, emergency medicine, psychiatry, or behavior health, or in OB g OB G Y N or, or women's wellness. And students also has the opportunity to participate in an elect in an elective. Many, um, students, uh, may have interest in say, podiatry or dermatology or podiatry, and they can select an elective.

(20:34):

And also part of that is emergency medicine as part of one of the core specialties. So that's, that's basically, um, what the PA program here is at at medicine. I think more importantly, what our program represents is, is the need to diversify, um, the workforce. Um, if we look at PAs, so 69.4% of PAs in this nation are Caucasian, and Caucasians only represent 60% of the population. 3.9% of PAs are African-American compared to, we represent 13% of this nation. And as far as Hispanics and Latinos, 7.5% of those PAs are Latino, Hispanic, but they represent 18% of the population. So there's some disproportionate, um, uh, in terms of, of, of PAs within our population, it's disproportionate to our population. So what's key and what's so important about what the we do here at Law School of Medicine in terms of advocacy, is that we are trying to diversify our workforce and in diversifying the workforce, that means that we are, we are going to improve the health outcomes, um, for those individuals, again, who are underserved, what the pa, pa program means to me.

(22:04):

So I've been in medical education a little over, I would say, 14 years. If you go back to my days of public being in public health and what it means to me, it's almost, life is funny. Life is funny. So I grew up in New York City, specifically, I grew up in, in Harlem. And I'm gonna, I'm not gonna tell you the period I grew up in <laugh>. I don't wanna, I don't wanna think myself, but I grew up, um, and I received 95% of my healthcare at a public health service, uh, a public health center within my community that was not adequate in these, in today's standards to provide healthcare that had an impact in terms of this, the work that I do. I also grew up in a, at a time where the life expectancy for African-American men in New York City was below the life expectancy for those in Bangladesh, a third world country.

(23:18):

So, so those things had a huge impact in terms of the decisions that I made, made in terms of, uh, career-wise, we all are sum totals. Up until the moment that you and I spoke on this phone, we are all just sum totals of all of our experiences. That's who we are. So my entire life, I I, I had family members who, who were impacted negatively in terms of, uh, the due diagnosis of hypertension and diabetes. And I saw, I saw the, the poor level of care personally. My father passed away because of diabetes and because of lack of education and compliance and diet and all those things that, that are, you know, so common, commonly known now, you know? So all those things had a huge impact on my decision to, to, to do the work that I do, and to love the work that I do.

(24:29):

And I know what it feels like to, as a, from a, from a patient point of view, uh, I, I know, I know what it feels like to not get proper care. I know what it, it feels like to not be heard, to not be seen. I know what it feels like to honestly feel like a second class citizen when it comes to healthcare. So these are all the

things that, that drive me. And then I tell everyone this also, the work that I do is very selfish. Is very selfish. And I tell you why it's selfish. So I talked about my service and my support for the, these, these young learners, but it's selfish and selfish in the sense that I know at some point in my life, especially around end of care, those who I have assisted in supportive, there's a high probability that they may be the clinician in the room that I'm in, and I need their care. So it's selfish. There's a very high probability, because I am human too, in terms of, you know, the, the decisions I make to choose my own practitioners, I have chosen, if it could, it could be implicit or, or it can be, um, it could be on purpose. I've shown clinicians that look like me throughout my, throughout my life. So there's a high probability that one of these young learners will be taking care of this old man. But the work that we do here at Law School of Medicine is very, very important.

Tim Dentry (26:13):

Yeah, professor, I love that. And I tell you, if that kind of selfishness would pervade, uh, we'd all be in much better place. Right? I appreciate that very much the way that you said that. So now we're, as, as I said, we're celebrating Juneteenth, and, uh, I just want to say, you know, some of the things that you said really resonated with me. It's an opportunity to take a pause. Um, let's reflect on freedom. Um, it is for all, it isn't for a one segment of our, of our population, and term you didn't use, but I've been using a lot lately is unfinished business. It's not, we're not, we're not dwelling on where it's, you know, not working right or broken, or somebody doesn't like this, or somebody uses a, you know, derogatory term. You know what, it's not. It's unfinished business folks. That's what, you know, a more perfect union as you, as you quoted. Um, that's really it. So, um, I'm gonna let you have the, the last word on on that and Juneteenth and the meaning of it, but that really drove home with me. So I'm sorry, I interrupted you. Keep going with what your thought was.

Dr. Lynwood McAllister (27:25):

That's okay. So I was going to say that we all, we all have to sit up when we see someone's rights being violated. We all must take a stand, right? This is this, this thing is about justice, right? And it is about, um, tolerance. You may not, you may not accept someone's, uh, lifestyle. You may not accept someone, uh, preference or orientation. You may not accept those things. But when you see one's rights being violated, especially when laws are unjust, and the the saying goes like this, any law that's unjust is not a law at all. And so when we see some of these unjust laws, we need to pause. We need to sit up, and we must recognize that this may not be my fight, but it might not be my fight right now, because if I don't stand up for this person's rights, and you can have your own level of what is called political efficacy is what you feel, what you can do to change, um, what, how our government works.

(28:26):

Some people protest, right? Some people sign petitions, right? Some people may blog about it, right? Some may do a, may do a podcast about it is whatever the level of your political efficacy, how you feel, you can change the government. But we all must take a stand when someone writes or being violated because you know why you are next. Because one day you're gonna walk into work, or you're gonna walk into an establishment, and you know what? We're not letting you in here because your shirt is purple and no purple shirt. People can come into this establishment. And then now you have an understanding. You have the empathy to understand what it feels like when someone tries to take your rights away. So it's very, very important that we, we, we take this moment, um, on Juneteenth to look at what is being coined as this wave of freedom, right?

(29:20):

To, to look at what it is to have dignity and respect. And let me, I wanna read a quote by James Baldwin to close the, close it out. James Baldwin said this. He said, if one really wishes to know how justice is administered in a country, one does not question the policeman, the lawyer, the judges, or the protected members of the middle class. One goes to the unprotected, those precisely who need laws, protections, and listen to their testimony. Those are the ones, the ones who are, have been, um, marginalized. Those groups had, that have been denied rights. These are the groups that we must listen to. We must take time to listen to, to understand that the struggle for freedom, the struggle for freedom, it is, it is never ending if we all are not, um, encompassing it. Because if my rights are being violated sooner or later, it will be your rights that to be violated.

(30:26):

So on this juneteenth, I think that is important as, as a, as a nation and, and for your listeners to just take a moment to pause and think about, um, historically, where we are in this nation. We are, we are in unprecedented times when it comes to where our democracy is. We must, we must understand the severity of where we are as a nation. And if this republic, this democracy is going to survive and move forward, we are at a, a serious inflection point in this nation, and we can rise above it and we can improve it, and we can make it better. Because we have a lot of work. We, there is a lot of reform that needs to happen. It, there are a lot of things in this, this country that needs to change for the better, or we won't be a nation at all. I don't know what that will look like. I don't know what that will look like. I don't know what that would feel like. So this is a, a moment for all of us to take this time to reflect and to make some very difficult decisions about where we wanna go from here, from here as a nation on this Juneteenth

Tim Dentry (31:45):

Wonderful Professor McAllister. I really, uh, appreciate you. I thank you for taking your time out and sharing your, your thoughts and perspectives with our listeners. It really means a lot. Um, and to you listeners, I I wish you a wonderful and reflective, uh, Juneteenth. I hope you really think about some of the, uh, universal truths that were shared today, um, on this podcast by Professor Lynwood McAllister. And so on that note, until next time, I'm Tim Gentry encouraging you to listen and act, promote our culture of caring, diversity, and inclusion that starts with caring for one another. Thank you.

Announcer (32:32):

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