

CENTER FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

WE

ARE

OHSU



CELEBRATING
WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

In March 1978, educators in California first celebrated “Women’s History Week,” to increase awareness of women’s contributions to society. The movement was recognized by other communities who then initiated their own Women’s History Week celebrations. In 1981, Public Law 97-28 was passed by Congress to recognize National Women’s History Week in March officially. Women’s History Month was born from this week-long celebration; in 1987, Public Law 100-9 was passed by Congress and made official.

WE ARE OHSU

OHSU is a diverse campus with members with different identities. Diversity is one of our core values, and we strive to create an environment of respect and inclusion. We acknowledge that diversity is not always seen, and we want to be intentional. The Center for Diversity and Inclusion started an initiative to highlight OHSU members in an interview series named We Are OHSU. This will go on all year long, where we can uplift and celebrate members of all communities, highlighting their impact on campus and their daily lives and showing everyone the wonderful communities we belong to.

WE ARE OHSU NIKKI ALCALA

Nikki Alcalá is a Nurse Educator for Clinical Education. In her role, she helps folks at OHSU identify gaps or needs impacting staff or patients and focuses on creating inclusive solutions. Alcalá's department does this by providing training and education opportunities. Alcalá first started at OHSU in 2020 as a Nurse Manager in Family Medicine at the Richmond Clinic; then returned in 2022 to her current role.

What do you enjoy most about your role and is there something specific that you enjoy about being at OHSU?

There's lots of parts of my role that I really enjoy. I would say the biggest part is being an educator. Training folks, helping explain things, helping break things down in a way that makes sense. Educating and ensuring we use a health equity lens while making it trauma informed, making sure that there is harm reduction there and being as inclusive as we can be. I would say the thing that I really like doing is being curious and advocating for the voices that are missing from the conversation. What haven't we considered? Is there a way for us to be innovative? I think that phrase "we've always done it that way" is just so dangerous in healthcare. Trying to be innovative and creative but not to our own detriment. Luckily, I work on a wonderful team that supports that.

Based on your own

experience, what advice would you give to women considering pursuing a career in healthcare?

Women belong in all careers, especially healthcare. There's a place in STEM, specifically medicine and healthcare for women. Therefore, I fully support women pursuing STEM careers, not just nursing. While nursing is still majority female, most people still hear "nurse" and think of a woman. There's just so much more there. There are so many opportunities. I would say that in my area specifically, it's neat because a lot of the time people think of a nurse at the hospital bedside nurse or in direct patient care. I have worked in acute care but it's always nice to remind folks that there's so much flexibility in nursing. You can be remote, or travel, work in ambulatory care, or in education like I am. So, I think the flexibility that a nursing career offers you is a great option.

What does gender equality

mean to you?

I feel like with DEI and gender equality, they're buzzwords and people tell them a lot, but it's sometimes they're bigger ideas and it's hard to break down and really understand what that means. For me, gender equality means to have the availability to access, opportunity, and rights not being affected by one's gender (real or preserved/assumed). Recognizing that has not always been the case, sometimes explicitly, sometimes not. The other piece is just whether you know gender is being assumed or presumed, and whether that's real and how you identify your gender. We know that there are biases. We know that we stereotype and make judgments, and it's not necessarily a good or bad thing. It happens automatically and it is our implicit bias. It is impactful when biases turn into actions, and you see



when biases turn into actions, and you see someone and assume their gender.

Is there any female figure that inspires you, personal or and you know, culture?

When I read this, I was just like, oh goodness, there are so many. I follow a lot of nurse leaders and innovators online and on platforms like LinkedIn. One of the nurses I've followed for a long time is Dallas Ducar.



She recently opened a clinic for transgender health called Trans Health Northampton in the Pioneer Valley of Massachusetts. She is their CEO and created this clinic and needed healthcare resources. It is primarily community driven; the community did not want to drive hours and hours to Boston to access culturally competent transgender healthcare. She met that need and has just done such great things. She has a few good podcasts out there, like Amplify Nursing and See You Now if you want to learn more about her. I've always been really impressed by her and the work that she does.

If you could have dinner with three inspirational woman, dead or alive, who would just choose?

I really thought about this. Just who? Who do I really like? Look up to? Who did I learn from? At the top of the list, I put Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who I think most folks are familiar with. If you're not, she is an amazing human and has contributed so much to women's rights and access to reproductive healthcare and is one of the first females on the Supreme Court Justice. Next is Audrey Lord. I found Audrey Lorde's writing in high school and just felt such a connection. It is powerful and I am thankful for the Public Library system offering these bigger ideas of feminism and empowerment from the BIPOC (Black,

Indigenous, and People of Color). I must choose Lizzo as the final member of my awesome dinner party because she is one of my personal heroes. She is brave and vulnerable in ways that are truly admirable. Lizzo is body positive in a radical way and inspires so many to love themselves just as they are. I would love to meet her plus we'd have some great dinner music.

Anything you would like to add?

I'd like to put on my educator hat and remind everyone that gender is a social construct, not a binary. I grew up thinking the words sex and gender were interchangeable, but they are not. Gender is simply a set of agreed-upon roles, norms, and behaviors. Gender is fluid and constantly changing. For example, American women wouldn't dare wear pants that long ago or have short hair. So, for Women's History Month, let's ensure we see, uplift, value, and celebrate all women. That includes transgender women, BIPOC women, butch women, older women, women with disabilities, obese women, queer women, neurodivergent women, by choice children-less women, and yes, cis women. All women are real women and deserve to be honored.