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Dignity in the Room

Dr. Linda Brodsky transformed her personal fight for equity into a movement that empowered countless women physicians. Her legacy reflects the courage to demand fairness, advocate for others, and insist on dignity in spaces where women have long been undervalued. When I reflect on a mentor who shaped my understanding of equity and advocacy, I think of my mother.

My mother is a family physician and a Black woman who often found herself as the only Black physician in the room. As a child, I did not fully understand the significance of this. As I grew older, I began to feel a mix of pride and confusion. I questioned why excellence did not always translate into equity, and why my mother's dedication was met with barriers rather than opportunity. I came to realize that being exceptional was often treated as an expectation rather than an achievement for women like her. We were living in the twenty first century, yet representation in medicine remained limited. Still, she showed up every day with professionalism, grace, and an unwavering commitment to her patients.

She was not only navigating medicine as a Black woman, but also serving as the sole provider and protector of a family of nine. Despite the weight of these responsibilities, she never allowed inequity to harden her spirit. Instead, she spoke honestly with me about the realities of medicine, including working harder for the same recognition, being passed over for leadership opportunities, and facing pay disparities. At the same time, she always spoke with hope. One phrase she repeated often was that change would come, even if it came slowly.

Her patients trusted her deeply. She stayed late, advocated beyond clinic walls, and treated each patient as family. Over the years, we were invited to countless birthday parties and celebrations hosted by her patients. To them, she was more than their physician. She was a constant presence, a source of comfort, and someone who made them feel seen. In many ways, she became everyone's mom.

If I had to dedicate a song to honor her mentorship, it would be I'm Every Woman by Whitney Houston. The song captures her strength, resilience, and ability to carry many roles at once: physician, mother, mentor, and advocate, without losing her sense of self. It reflects the fullness of who she is and the dignity with which she navigated spaces that were not always welcoming.

Because of my mother, I believe women in medicine deserve dignity. Dignity in their work, dignity in their compensation, dignity in leadership, and dignity in being able to show up fully without apology. This belief has shaped how I move through my own medical training and how I envision my future.

As a medical student, I hope to be the mentor every girl needs: a listening ear when her voice feels unheard, a steady presence that believes in her dreams, and a reminder to remain fully herself in rooms where she may even be the first. Like Dr. Brodsky and my mother, I aim to turn lived experience into action, ensuring that the next generation of women in medicine not only survives, but thrives with dignity.