

Marilyn Johnson, ThD, MEd, BSN, RN, CORN

Retired Colonel U.S. Army

Retired Operating Nurse

During my 47-year nursing journey, I was blessed to have several incredible nurses that did not look like me but gave me the basic tools of nursing.

My nursing career started as an LVN in the small city of Texarkana, Arkansas as the only Black person in the Operating Room. My goals were to move forward in nursing to the highest level and to educate my community about how to deal with health disparities.

I earned my BSN from Prairie View A&M University while a working mom, wife, and soldier. Each time I moved up in my nursing career, I moved up in military rank. In my 28-year career in the U.S. Army, I was promoted from Second Lieutenant to Colonel.

I am a born leader and was a no-nonsense nurse in the preoperative arena as Director of Nurses, Nurses Manager, Nurse Educator and Clinical Preceptor Coordinator.

In 2004, I graduated from Texas Southern University with a Master of Education, specializing in Counseling. I am still applying this degree to help the underserved population with their underlying mental issues connected to their surgical outcomes. Combining my medical training and my education future led to my third degree: the Doctor of Theology, which is a most valuable degree. Now I feel I can help the whole person: mind, body and soul.

My success in moving forward in my nursing career and remaining a nurse in the operating room was due to staying focused and keeping a firm grip on reality as the idea of life balance is really a hard task as a nurse. The greatest obstacle was learning how to stay focused, to be kind, and to help others. I lead by example: see a new nurse, teach a new nurse the right way always, and encourage that nurse to share with other new nurses.

Also, give back. I think nurses are not only the first line responders, we are the most important responder because, most of the time, we are the only responder.

I love being a nurse and it is not an easy job. My life's dream is helping others, with the hope of paying it forward with Love.