

Life and Achievements of Mary Mahoney

Janet Powers

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Biographical Information

There has been a host of African Americans who have made significant contributions to the medical field. One, in particular, is Mary Eliza Mahoney the first African American nurse (professionally recognized). Mary Mahoney was born on May 7, 1845, in Dorchester, MA to Charles and Mary Jane Stewart Mahoney, (Jacksonville University, 2017). She was the oldest of three siblings and research indicates that she had very strong family ties. Her education began at Phillips Street School in Boston and she would go on to work as a maid, janitor, and unofficial nursing assistant at New England Hospital for Women and Children for the next 15 years, (Nursing Theory, 2017). In 1878, Mahoney decided that she would like to continue her education and applied to the hospital's nursing program. She was accepted and completed an intensive 16-month long program where she learned foundations in nursing and how to care for patients. Despite the adversity and discrimination that she faced on a daily basis, she was able to complete her program and became the first professional African American nurse in 1879. Mahoney never married but was loved and respected by many in her community. Mahoney continued her work for the next several years and was known for her professionalism, dedication, and kindness. She was laid to rest on January 4, 1926, after a long battle with breast cancer, (Jacksonville University, 2017).

Achievements and Contributions

Mahoney had numerous contributions and achievements during her life. Some of these include:

- Creation of the National Association of Colored Graduates in 1908

- Director of the Howard Orphan Asylum for Black Children in 1911
- Advocate for women's rights, including the right to vote
- The first women to register to vote in Boston, MA in 1920
- Induction into the Women's Hall of Fame in 1933
- Induction into the Nursing Hall of Fame in 1976
- Credited with improving racial relations between nurses throughout her career
(Nursing Theory, 2017)

Belief

Mary Mahoney was a deeply religious person and she had ties to People's Baptist Church in Roxbury, MA. She attended church with her family and was known for her love of the gospel. Religion, family, and her career seemed to drive her life and played a fundamental role in her accomplishments, (Davis, n.d).

Conclusion

In conclusion, Mahoney made several significant contributions that have paved the way for African American nurses in contemporary society. She was a leader, advocate, innovator, and fearless Christian who faced diversity and obstacles head on to achieve world-changing accomplishments in her field. Her work is still admired and respected in present-day nursing and she continues to inspire all those who learn her story of triumph, dedication, and passion.

Reference(s):

Davis, A.T. (n.d.). *Early Black American Leaders in Nursing: Architects for Integration and Equality (National League for Nursing Series) (Eds.)*. Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers

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