Florence Nightingale is still the best role model for nurses

I was amazed and somewhat perplexed to hear that Unison members have agreed to ‘ditch Florence Nightingale as the ideal role model for nursing’. There is no argument that she was white, middle class and protestant but so were the majority of Victorian philanthropists. They were all great reformers and although their motives may be questioned, the fact remains that without this part of history the welfare state and health service would not be what it is today.

I believe Florence Nightingale is synonymous with nursing and always will be. She was not perfect – but then she was the first to admit that she made mistakes. I admire what she stood for – after all, women of her time were meant to stay at home. We should not look at history with the views and values of today. Life was very different 150 years ago and with the gift of hindsight we probably would have done things very differently today.

The suggestion that International Nurses’ Day should be moved to May 21 (Elizabeth Fry’s birthday) seems very inappropriate. She too was a great women of her time, but although she was involved with nursing, the majority of Victorian philanthropists. They were all great reformers and although their motives may be questioned, the fact remains that without this part of history the welfare state and health service would not be what it is today.

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Florence Nightingale should not be cast aside so easily

I was interested to read the debate (News May 5) about International Nurses’ Day being celebrated on Florence Nightingale’s birthday.

While this issue has not been formally raised with the Australian Nursing Federation by our members, the general feeling is that Florence’s birthday is as good a day as any other to celebrate nursing.

Perhaps the nurses who cannot see past Florence’s white, middle class, Protestant background should read her books. People can do little about the environment into which they are born. But they can do a lot to change that environment, and Florence did just that. Her writings abound with common sense instruction about basic nursing care.

Technology can only promote healing if it is supported by nursing care based on the principles of care Florence so clearly outlined.

It’s time to remember other nurse pioneers and rediscover our nursing history, but this can be achieved without casting Florence aside so ignominiously.

Lynn Pack
Weston-super-Mare

Florence Nightingale is still the best role model for nurses

I live and work near Clitheroe in Lancashire. I am about 17 miles from Preston, and about the same from Blackburn. A trip to London takes over three hours, and by train can cost in excess of £90.

I checked the last seven editions of Nursing Standard and found 17 major conferences advertised.

The breakdown was:
London (3); Bristol, Leeds and Edinburgh (2) and one each in Basildon, Stafford, Birmingham, Cardiff, Bournemouth, Plymouth and Eastbourne.

What about those of us in the not too distant North? Nothing in Manchester, Preston, Carlisle. Nothing in Durham, York, Newcastle. And further north still – there’s a lot of Scotland north of Edinburgh.

Brian Capps
Lancashire

We must all face up to racism – it’s no joke

I was disgusted to read the article ‘Racism? Not here’ by Daniel Allen (Perspectives March 31).

Every nurse, especially those who are white, must understand that their actions and their attitudes have a direct effect on those people around them. Wearing the ‘right badges’ and using the correct catch-phrases is simply not enough.

We are all part of the problem and must be prepared to analyse and change our behaviour and practices in order to make nursing working environments comfortable for people of all walks of life to work in and for any patient to receive health care fairly.

Daniel, if your article was designed to be tongue in cheek, you have wasted the middle class education you are privileged to have received and have sunk to levels as low as Bernard Manning, who you profess to deplore.

Dave Martin
Cardiff

Daniel Allen replies: You summarise brilliantly the point I was trying to make. Irony is clearly not my strong point.

Jill Iliffe, Federal Secretary
Australian Nursing Federation