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Guests at a recent Toast to Diversity and Call to Action evening; the annual event was established by Thompson.

Reflections. Remedies.



From her adolescence during the civil rights movement to her current role as vice dean of the School of Medicine, **Ann Thompson** has noticed an uncomfortable truth: Very little of her education in social justice came from formal schooling.

"The more stories I hear, and the more I read, the more that I realize what I didn't learn in high school, college, medical school," Thompson says, "and the more I feel it needs to be incorporated into everyone's learning."

Thompson, an MD, MCCM Distinguished Service Professor of Critical Care Medicine and professor of pediatrics, was deeply involved in the establishment of pediatric critical care medicine as a subspecialty and the use of extracorporeal life support in pediatrics in the 1980s. As chief of pediatric critical care at UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh from 1981 to 2009, she presided over growing clinical and fellowship programs and helped to define the entire field along the way.

Since becoming vice dean in 2014, Thompson has focused more and more on addressing barriers to success for women and underrepresented communities in academic medicine and helped establish an annual celebration that brings these groups together. Thompson has continually advocated for the school's curriculum to focus on health disparities and social determinants of health; she herself is a certified unconscious bias educator.

Confronting such issues, she says, is integral to the health of the country—which she compares to a patient on life support: "I've come to see racism and social injustice as the chronic critical illness of America."

Thompson will step down from her vice dean role in fall 2023; her legacy will endure. She recently endowed a new professorship for social justice in medicine. The recipient will explore what it takes to equitably serve those whom the medical system has left behind—and put findings into action. Collaborating with community members to establish and maintain new services in underserved areas will be key.

Thompson would like to see more opportunities for her colleagues to identify "not just the challenges but the best ways of working with communities."

"If we could have more people focused on this work and bring them together," she says, "we would get farther faster."

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Thompson