



**A Nurse First | Season 3, Episode 6**  
Helper of mankind

**[Sandra Garmon Bibb]:** I remember asking my mother how she decided to name me. And she told me that she got my name out of a baby book. And so one day, coincidentally, I found this old tattered baby book that said that my name meant “helper of mankind.”

Now, by the time I found it, I already want it to be a nurse. Because life was kind of rough when I was growing up, even my home life, I used to escape to this field way in the back of our house. And I can still see the pine trees and lots of pine straw. And I would go there with bottles and then use the straw to make little baby dolls and so on and so forth.

And my siblings will also talk about how when I would come back from that place, I would say that I had been there caring for my people. I recognize that even there, that young girl who was trapped in places where she needed to escape to that field, knew that she wanted to care for people, that she wanted to make a difference, that it wasn't about her, it was about service to others. Somewhere I arrived at the conclusion that the best way to do that would be a nurse. And so finding that meaning of my name at that time really spoke volumes to me in terms of who I was created to be, what my purpose in life was meant to be.

**[Welcome to A Nurse First. This is Sigma's new president, Sandra Garmon-Bibb, telling her own A Nurse First story.]**

**[Sandra Garmon Bibb]:** I love to read. I love to understand. And there are many, many things that drive me. I do an awful lot of processing of what's going on around me and, of course, what's going on inside of me. And I remember it wasn't long after I became president-elect, and I knew that there was going to need to be an organizational call to action, that I felt that it was my responsibility to jot down a few notes. So in the notes section of my iPad, I jotted down a few notes of what I thought I might want to focus on.

Because I'm a scholar and a teacher, and of course, every word that I wrote, I went right to the dictionary. “Well, what does that mean?” I went right to the literature. “What's being said about that out there?” And it was spending time there that got me started. And it was important for me to share a call of action that would be relevant for the times and everything that's going on. But I also wanted to have an opportunity to encourage, to inspire, to celebrate.

**[Knowing this organizational call to action would set the tone for the next biennium and help guide members in chapters as Sigma strives to fulfill its mission, Sandra dedicated countless hours to research and introspection. She's known since she was a little girl what her purpose was, but how should that play out in her new role as Sigma president?]**

**[Sandra Garmon Bibb]:** The thing that I feel most strongly about is that I'm a servant leader. What I aspire to do is to model, you know, to be a model or to serve as someone that people can look to and say, OK, not that, OK, I want to be like Sandra, but I see her representing what she says she stands for. I see her representing what Sigma stands for.

I had distilled it down to three main points I wanted to make or three main areas. And I was really focusing on these areas in terms of how to absolutely communicate what I was trying to say and how I was applying it to me and how I wanted to encourage others to apply to me. And so once I got to that point, then in working with the team, we were able to move forward.

So when I heard that word, it just, it was like, "Oh my goodness, oh my goodness!" And I thought, so maybe that should be one of the words, until I recognized through conversation that it was the overarching theme.

And when the draft of the script came back to me, it was very emotional. I teared up because the essence of what I wanted to communicate, but more importantly, who I was, even though I never said who I was, but the essence of who I was as a person came through so loud and clear.

To me, represent means walk your talk. It means find your purpose and focus on being and becoming who you were created to be. It also represents standing for something, having values that stand for something and living true to those values no matter what's going on around you. It's about, for me, integrity and honesty, but that's why Sigma's love, courage, and honor resonates with me because that's what representing is all about.

But I think what I would say the most important part of represent is to find out who you are and what your purpose is and to live that. Not to live somebody else's purpose or somebody else's dream, but to live your purpose. Because I believe we all have a purpose, and we all have value to add. We all can make a difference.

**[Though "Represent" is the overarching theme of Sandra's call to action, she also included three ways Sigma members can portray the best of their individuality and shared contributions to nursing: reflect, respect, and respond.]**

**[Sandra Garmon Bibb]:** The three parts of represent are, first of all, reflect. And reflect in terms of how it's used as an action verb. It could be like reflect; you look in the mirror. But it's like to have and to be an image or to have character of something that reflects what you're standing for. Reflect then focuses on us as Sigma, us as nurses, us as individuals and collectively, reflecting a caring culture, communicating a caring culture, and that caring culture starts first with care of ourselves, then care of others.

One of the things that's exciting about Sigma is that we focus on both the art and the science of nurses, and we integrate that in terms of how we care for others and then caring for the environment. Not just our environment in terms of the planet we live on, but also the environments that we work in and are part of and what we can do to help create healthy environments representing what should be.

The second point is about respect. And this was the point that came to me first of all, and this idea of cultivating cultural humility, where first we listen to ourselves. We learn about who we are culturally,

learn about who others are, but we learn and we accept who people are. And we lead, which goes back to that representing piece. No matter what anybody else is doing, we lead by cultivating that culture humility.

And then the last point is respond. And it's respond by championing contemporary nursing practice. But despite what's going on around us, I'm encouraging people to adopt and represent professionalism, perspective, and perseverance because there is hope. Be present in what contemporary nursing practice is about and take advantage of the resources that Sigma has to help us navigate the waters in terms of professionalism, in terms of perspective and perseverance.

**[All these points relate so perfectly to your commitment to authentic leadership. Beyond rising to your challenge to represent, what other ways can Sigma members support you in the next biennium?]**

**[Sandra Garmon Bibb]:** The best way for you to support me is to get involved at your local chapter. Hear the stories of the leaders in your chapter. Hear the stories of the members in your chapter, how they are making a difference, how they're moving forward. Start there. Because the best way to find out about what Sigma is all about and what it can offer to you, I believe, is hearing what is offered to other people.

Secondly, go to the members benefit section of the webpage and find out exactly what your benefits are and make sure that you're taking advantage of these benefits.

And then the third point was, whenever you have opportunity or occasion, participate in events at the local level, the regional level, and the international level. I've done things at the local level, at the regional level, and at the international level with Sigma. A lot of different activities, most of it behind the scenes and committee work, but it's all been very fulfilling. And even now, I'm like, OK, I'm in the role. I'm in the job. I've had so much experience, never been president-elect or president of Sigma, but there are so many wonderful opportunities that I've had. I have the skill set in terms of challenging experiences. I have the challenging experiences, but for me, what is so important is I want to be that model that exemplifies Sigma excellence.

I think the president's role is to represent, to be an ambassador that is out in front, to be visible, to be connected to the membership, hearing what the membership is accomplishing, hearing what the membership is doing, but also hearing what the membership is saying that they need. I want to be that person that people can look to and point to and say, "Okay, this person's about serving the organization. This person's about serving Sigma, and that's where the value is, that's where the passion is, that's what this person is about." And so I'm very intent on continuing my self-reflection, my introspection, and more importantly, my self-examination, because I don't take this role lightly at all.

And for me, it's important for me as president to make sure that I use every opportunity to celebrate and connect people. I see that as a very important role. I want to be out there as much as I can with people. I want to be approachable so that I can communicate to people that we're colleagues, you know, we're all making a difference, perhaps in different ways. I want to be sure that everybody that I come in contact with, Sigma members, prospective Sigma members or other people that who may not be even eligible for Sigma, that that time that I'm with them, I've learned something from them, but more importantly, I've imparted something that's making a difference in their life in some way, not necessarily connected with me or my accomplishments, but connected with who I am as a person and

my desire to demonstrate to them that I appreciate who they are as a person and want to celebrate that with them.

But that's what I see the role of the president as, is to help move Sigma forward in a strategic way, and to be that ambassador that's out there representing Sigma. The power, the position of recognition, I recognize that that's there. And I know that for a lot of people, that's important for them. For me, and I'm not discounting it in any way, when I come to my own quiet time and I'm reflecting, am I making a difference? That's what I really want to do. That's what my goal is because that is what I'm convinced my purpose is, is to make a difference. To be that helper of mankind in whatever way I can be that helper of mankind.

**[Thank you for listening to *A Nurse First* from Sigma. If you loved this episode, do us a favor and subscribe, rate, and leave us a review. It is very much appreciated. For more information about *A Nurse First* and Sigma, visit [sigmanursing.org](http://sigmanursing.org). Until next time.]**