



**“I THINK HE WOULD HAVE  
TAKEN ME MORE SERIOUSLY  
*if I was white.*”**

**Shaleta Smith  
Riverside County, CA**

About a week after Shaleta Smith gave birth to her third child, she started to bleed an unusual amount. She reached out to her OBGYN, and eventually, her husband made the decision to take her to the emergency room. There, doctors were unable to stop her bleeding for hours, but Shaleta also worried her condition wasn't being taken seriously.

“I continued to bleed but the Emergency Room doctor wanted to discharge me,” she said. “A nurse came in to discharge me, and I told her I was scared. She said she was scared for me too.”

“I heard him tell the nurse, ‘Please discharge her,’ and he came into the room himself and he said he was going to discharge me. I said ‘I’m still bleeding,’ and he said ‘You’ll be ok, we’re going to discharge you,’ he said there’s nothing more we can do for you.”

The nurse was eventually able to get in contact with Shaleta’s OBGYN who was able to have her stay extended. Shaleta underwent surgery and multiple blood transfusions and ultimately needed a hysterectomy to stop the bleeding.

“Luckily they were able to stop the bleeding and I’m here today, I’m blessed to have three beautiful girls, but I know that if I had been discharged by the ER doctor, who was white, I would have died, I would have bled to death,” she said.

“I don’t have any proof that it was blatant racism, but hindsight looking at it, that’s how I’ve always felt, because he was adamant he wanted to send me home. I think he would have taken me more seriously if I was white.”

Shaleta felt that with the creation of a bill that required hospitals to track maternal health data by race, this could provide tangible data to back up her experience, which ultimately could lead to greater change.

## **AB 3161 (Bonta): EQUITY IN HEALTH CARE ACT**

**Every patient deserves dignity and respect in healthcare. AB 3161 is a step towards ensuring that racial bias and discrimination have no place in California's hospitals.**



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***“If I were straight,  
I DON’T THINK I WOULD HAVE  
BEEN TREATED LIKE THAT”***

**Wadie Mahar  
San Mateo, CA**

When Wadie went to the doctor with some stomach issues, he expected his visit to be relatively straight-forward. He was having trouble with taking some medication, and he had been referred to a specialist to look into if he had some issues with how his body was metabolizing medicine. But when the doctor asked about his sexual orientation, Wadie said the tone of the conversation shifted.

“I went to the doctor for GI problems, they were asking regular questions, then they asked about sexual orientation,” he said. “I think that when I disclosed my sexual orientation, the male doctor seemed to become extremely uncomfortable.”

He said the doctor’s tone changed and he became very curt with him. He also said that the doctor seemed to feel that his stomach issues were related in some way to his sexual orientation, even though he is HIV negative and had been referred for an issue that did not have to do with his sexual orientation.

“If I were straight, I don’t think I would have been treated like that,” Wadie said. “It made me feel invalidated, discriminated against. It made me feel uncomfortable and unseen and it made me feel that the way I show my care for a partner is flawed.”

“In the end the doctor told me he didn’t know what was going on. The bloodwork came back fine, he tested me for common disorders or viruses common for people from North Africa [where I am from], and he said he didn’t know what was going on.”

Wadie said while the doctor ultimately said he didn’t have any answers, he thinks he might have been treated differently if he was straight.

“I do think his interactions with me would have been more respectful if I was not gay,” Wadie said. “He sighed at me loudly, when he asked me about my sexual orientation, he was speaking in a normal voice but then his voice tone changed once I told him. It’s micro aggressive.”

Wadie ultimately did file a complaint with the doctor’s supervisor, but he felt that if there was better state data collection around health outcomes of gay and non-binary patients, doctors could be better trained at how to treat them in a less biased way.

**AB 3161 (Bonta):  
EQUITY IN HEALTH CARE ACT**



California Pan-Ethnic  
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BLACK WOMEN  
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