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Stepping onto the grounds of St. Agnes Hospital, you can almost hear the ghosts of the abandoned building calling out to you. Its derelict form, complete with glass-less windows and a brick structure, stands tall and imposing. Despite the building's outward appearance, it holds a beautiful amount of history and meaning to the city of Raleigh. Built in 1896 by Saint Augustine University students, the hospital served as one of the only places where black students could learn medicine and the black community could receive medical care (Leah). Although the hospital is no longer in use due to desegregation, the fact that these students and doctors pioneered a way to help their community and strangers from far and wide is an impressive accomplishment, one that deserves to be explored from a theoretical lens.

Theoretically, if a time capsule from beneath St. Agnes were to be opened, very little artifacts it contained would be shocking on the surface. Perhaps there would be a medical record here, a stray drawing from the children's unit there, or possibly letters from loved ones. However, it is the nuances of these artifacts that would elicit surprise. Most likely, the records for the patients would have little to no information because, before the completion of St. Agnes, African-Americans were not welcome at other hospitals. The drawings from kids in the children's unit would convey the optimistic wishes and desires of children. Other kids that had the same complexion as them would be drawn playing on the streets of the flourishing Oberlin community, which was founded as a freedmen's village near the hospital ("African American History"). These drawings would represent the joy of seeing others like you in a world where life was black and white. Lastly, letters addressed to patients from loved ones would have been postmarked from many different states to reflect the fact that people traveled from far and wide across the South to reach this hospital. While no one can tell for sure what these artifacts would have been like if they were real, we can take a guess that they would convey the experience of segregation in the South.

The city of Raleigh, and the country as a whole, has progressed immensely from the time that St. Agnes opened up. However, we still have miles to go in terms of racial equality which is precisely the message that the creators of the capsule would want us to know. When the hospital was in its prime, I imagine its staff and patients would want to say to the world, "If we can do it, you can too." They would want people of the 21st

century to know that, in a world where segregation and discrimination were commonplace, they managed to do the unthinkable. Due to that reason, we should not let anything hold us back from challenging the norms of our day and age. They would also want to share their reasoning with us. In their eyes, if more African-Americans are being saved as a result of the hospital, then there will be more people who can testify to the importance of it. Perhaps, even more hospitals for African-Americans would be opened or more African-Americans would want to become doctors. They would want us to share the same idea of continuing the fight for racial equality and share the same hope for a better outlook for African-Americans in the United States.

Although it is impossible to visit the past, we can still imagine what we think it would look like. In order to properly address the history of Raleigh, it would be remiss of us to ignore the rampant racial inequality. This inequality is what makes the accomplishments of the African-American community that much more admirable. From the artifacts that would have been found to the ideas that they would have wanted to convey to us, every facet of St. Agnes Hospital points toward hope for a brighter future. As a young African-American girl who witnesses racial injustice on a daily basis, I choose to join the spirit of St. Agnes in believing in this brighter future but also look back upon the past to never forget how far we have come.



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