



# Memory, Thought & the Conversations Communities Can No Longer Avoid

A Community Reflection on Brain Health, Awareness, and Early Conversations

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For generations, conversations surrounding memory loss, Alzheimer's disease, and cognitive decline have too often remained private, delayed, or avoided altogether—particularly within Black and Latino communities where stigma, misinformation, fear, and limited access to culturally responsive resources continue to shape how families navigate brain health.

But avoiding the conversation does not reduce the impact.

It increases the likelihood that individuals and families are left unprepared, unsupported, and disconnected from education, early intervention, and community-based resources that could significantly improve quality of life and long-term outcomes.

That is what makes initiatives like Memory & Thought Conversations, facilitated by AlzInColor, so important.

Rather than approaching brain health strictly through a clinical lens, the conversation creates space for culture, lived experience, family dynamics, public health, caregiving, and community awareness to intersect in a way that feels honest, accessible, and actionable. It reframes brain health as not only a medical issue, but also a community issue—one deeply connected to equity,

education, trust, advocacy, and long-term wellness.

It also highlights the importance of bringing healthcare professionals into these conversations earlier. Too often, families do not begin talking about memory concerns, brain health, or cognitive changes until a crisis occurs or symptoms have significantly progressed. Earlier conversations between communities, caregivers, and healthcare professionals can help normalize discussions surrounding brain health, encourage prevention and healthy lifestyle habits, improve trust, and connect individuals and families to support, education, and resources sooner rather than later.

As part of this discussion, Rachel Coney-Bowles participated as a guest representing the Healthy Brain Virginia Program through the Virginia Department of Health, contributing perspectives on public health approaches to brain health awareness, risk reduction, community engagement, and the importance of increasing access to education and resources across underserved communities.

The broader conversation surrounding Alzheimer's disease and related dementias is shifting nationally. Research continues to show that Black Americans are approximately twice as likely and Latino Americans approximately 1.5 times more likely to develop Alzheimer's disease compared to white populations, while still experiencing disparities in diagnosis, care access, and culturally responsive support systems.

AlzInColor was created to help change that narrative by encouraging earlier conversations, increasing representation in brain health education, and helping communities engage with the topic before crisis becomes the entry point.

At its core, this conversation is about more than awareness. It is about how communities prepare, communicate, support one another, and build systems that allow people to age with dignity, information, and connection.

Learn more about AlzInColor and the Memory & Thought Conversations initiative at [www.alzincolor.com](http://www.alzincolor.com).

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