



MENTAL HEALTH IN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

A FIRST HAND ACCOUNT BY CAROLYN MCKENZIE

MY DEAR FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES, I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH YOU THE TALE THAT LED ME TO FOUND THE ORGANIZATION, "MENTAL HEALTH IN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY". THIS STORY WILL STAY WITH ME FOREVER AND HIGHLIGHTS THE IMPORTANCE OF ACTIVELY ADDRESSING AFRICAN AMERICAN MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES; A SUBJECT TOO OFTEN IGNORED, SWEEPED UNDER THE RUG AND OVERLOOKED. PLEASE TAKE A DEEP BREATH BEFORE YOU READ THE EVENTS THAT TOOK PLACE ON JUNE 14, 2011 AND KNOW THAT I AM DOING WELL BECAUSE I AM IN GOD'S HANDS.

My precious niece, really more like a daughter (she and I being closer than "two peas in 1/8 of a pod," as we used to say), was experiencing a lot of stress, due to being overworked in her new business. The stress resulted in acute insomnia. When she told me that she had not slept in five days, I was shocked and advised her to seek medical attention right away. She immediately went to the ER where the doctor gave her a shot. She went home and slept all night. She called the next day and said that she felt so much better.

A couple of days later, she called me around midnight. She was crying and saying she needed me. I told her husband to pack her

bags and meet me in Macon, GA so she could come and stay with me for awhile, get some rest, and get away from the environment that was causing the stress. She came to my home and with each passing day, she was feeling better.

Four days later on June 14, 2011, around 5:00 a.m., I was getting ready for work. She and I were talking and hugged before I got into the shower. Minutes later, she opened the shower door with a large butcher knife in hand. Needless to say, she was having a schizophrenic break with reality, and I became her target of attack. She stabbed me on the left side of my head and other areas of my body. I struggled to take the knife.