

Why I Study Black Family Caregivers

A Reflection from a Nurse and Daughter

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“My goal is simple: that families like mine will one day feel seen, supported, and understood.”

IT BEGAN AT HOME

My interest in dementia care began long before I entered doctoral studies. It began at home. My father lived with dementia, and although my family had a strong caregiving tradition shaped by our Jamaican heritage, we struggled to navigate the healthcare system in Ontario, Canada. Even with nurses and physicians in our family, we encountered delayed diagnosis, limited culturally aligned support, and a sense of invisibility that many Black families quietly endure. Watching my father decline while my mother, siblings, and I carried the burden of care taught me how deeply social support, or the lack of it, shapes the caregiving journey.

IN OUR CLINIC TODAY

As a registered nurse working in a family practice clinic in the Greater Toronto Area in Ontario, Canada, with my two sisters, both Family Doctors, I hear similar stories from Black families every week. Caregivers describe exhaustion, isolation, and the challenges of advocating for loved ones while facing racism or stereotyping in healthcare settings. Their experiences echo what I witnessed in my own family: the emotional weight, the cultural expectations, and the sense of having to navigate systems not built with them in mind.

WHY THIS RESEARCH

When I began my PhD in Nursing at York University, located in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, I knew my research would need to address these realities. My doctoral work focuses on understanding how Black caregivers in the Greater Toronto Area access, construct, and mobilize social support while managing dementia care. My interviews are now underway, and the early conversations only deepen my conviction that these stories must be heard. Black families remain underrepresented in dementia research, and their voices are often missing from the programs and policies meant to support them.

WHAT I HOPE FOR

This reflection represents the beginning of a longer journey. I hope my research will contribute to a better understanding of Black caregivers' experiences and help inform culturally safe, equitable approaches to dementia care.

MY FATHER



Lloyd Albert Black

May 3, 1944 – June 22, 2022

My father, photographed on his birthday in 2022. By then, he no longer remembered me, yet he sat with intention so I could take it. He rarely smiled for a camera, and this is him exactly as he was. He was gone within weeks.