

Wholistic Health Edu-Care News



Afiya Madzimoyo, column editor

Walking For Our Freedom

One morning during my usual 3 mile walk around the track, it occurred to me that our people have always walked and marched for our freedom. I decided then that the Fayetteville Walking for Wellness program would launch the "Walking for our Freedom" Walkathon.

Still walking, I could see it all: In September five hundred Black women, men, children and elders walking together to celebrate our commitment to continue on our road for freedom, dedicated to keeping ourselves healthy and strong. It was very important to me that our walkathon not consist mainly of "ceremonial" walkers who come out and walk just for the day. No, I saw individuals and whole families who had made walking an integral part of their lives.

I then decided that "when the next skeptic tells me or hints at the notion that Black people won't walk for our health and well-being," I will smile and remember that we walked in the rain, cold and scorching heat for over 365 days for miles and miles for our freedom in 1955 in order to break the back of Jim

Cheer

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squad. A letter was sent to the squad members informing them of their suspensions, vaguely describing the condi-

Crow's segregation. I then decided that we will do it again, this time for increased health, strength and vitality.

I continued thinking further back to the 1800's, and I saw Harriet Tubman and thousands of us again walking for freedom by way of the Underground Railroad. We risked everything - including our lives - to escape our captors who had forced us to labor under gun. And indeed, many of us did make it. We said, "we must have a better way," and we took off, walking mainly by night, sometimes in the rain and the snow. We walked for our freedom.

In the "Walking for our Freedom" program, we walk and tell the stories of our triumphant walks for freedom from Harriet Tubman to Nelson Mandela. We support each other to continue making the decision to free ourselves from our mental and emotional enslavement. As our ancestors knew, we too know there is a better way.

In the "Walking for Wellness" program those of us who walk regularly have reported good results. We feel better. We eat and sleep better. We have lowered cholesterol and blood sugar levels.

tions of the suspensions.

Since the suspensions were issued without conferring with Cheer-Phi, the squad appealed their case to Interim Chancellor Dr. Benson to air their grievances. In the end, the sus-

We have reduced our chances for heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke, cancer and aids. We get the boost and support we need to continue making liberating choices. Our ancestors didn't walk for social freedoms so we could die of poor health, drug addiction and hopelessness. Their spirits remind us that health is not just a blood pressure reading, a glucose level, but a matter of holistic well-being.

In the "Walking for our Freedom" program we challenge each other to walk through the conflicts of all areas of our lives, to make healthy choices and to keep on waking down the road of self-love, self-knowledge and self-empowerment. We continue to make these steps to freedom for our health and well-being, socially, mentally and physically.

We started up the Fayetteville "Walking for Wellness" program in October of 1995 with technical assistance from the National Black Women's Health Project. Deciding to walk on a regular basis has been difficult for many of us. Even when we have felt committed to our walking regimens, we have often found ourselves slipping back into notions of "I just don't have the time." "I've got to do so and so." "My children need me." "My house needs cleaning." "My spouse or

empty, we don't have a whole lot more to give. It is most definitely time to fill our own cups, to rejuvenate, to cherish, nurture and nourish ourselves, and, in turn, each other. It is time that each of us became the most important person in our own lives.

Those of us who understand that you can't give what

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you ain't got, and that neglecting yourself doesn't mean that you help others, understand what time it is. It is time that Black sisters drink from a revitalizing, reenergizing stream, pull on the strength of our mothers and fathers who have walked before us so that we can continue this walk to freedom.

In our group right now approximately 10 of us have made walking an active part of our lives. We walk at least three to five times per week. Now, we want to get all of us involved, the whole family walking and talking and stronger to continue on.

Black women, Black men, Black children, Black elders: I invite all of you to join us in walking to keep yourselves strong and motivated; to keep us ever cognizant of our health and well-being. The fight

against oppression is a hard one. We live in a hostile world that repeatedly sends messages that we are worthless, criminal, cheaters, apathetic, reverse discriminators, etc. We must nurture ourselves to optimal health and well being to insure that we can continue this fight against the ever-

pressing hand of oppression. The boycotting, the walking, of the Montgomery Bus Boycott began a movement that meant increasing, geographical freedoms for all of us. As a result of those walks,

we can now go out to any public restaurant, check in to any

hotel that we can pay for. It is my belief that those old souls did not risk it all for us to be living so miserably. No, not for us to have all these high blood pressures, high blood sugars, cancers and weakened immune systems. Consider the scenario of an individual exercising his/her freedoms by voting, attaining a graduate degree, getting a "good job" only to be wracked with stress and strife, never taking time

for self, rarely eating nourishing food, never exercising, and having a stroke or heart attack between age 45 and 50. No, our loved ones did not do all that walking and marching for that.

Harriet Tubman,

Marcus Garvey, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr., Winnie and Nelson Mandela all worked and walked for our freedom, triumphing over the notion that our place was at the "back of the bus," in the white man's shadow. The Fayetteville "Walking for our Freedom" program is inspired by them. Listen to the words of Nelson Mandela:

"I have walked that long road to freedom. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can rest only for a moment, for with freedom comes responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not yet ended". (Nelson Mandela, 1994).

We believe we can walk ourselves right into the light of this new freedom for health and vitality and good feelings about ourselves and each other. Join us.

The "Walking for our Freedom" program provides structured support to individuals who wish to establish or maintain a regular walking regimen.

The program will celebrate its success in September with a Walkathon. We need Lead Walkers to help with the organizing and coordinating.

Call Afiya today at 630-1267.

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friend just doesn't support me in doing this." I have concluded that Black women have been depended upon to take care of our families, our parents, the church and community, and anyone else who needs to be taken care of. Often we find ourselves worn out, feeling very enslaved to expectations that are "just too much for any one woman to carry out."

With our cups running

pensions stood.

A new air of hope arose with the arrival of FSU's new chancellor, Dr. Willis McLeod. His anthem of "put the student first" offered a fresh and objective perspective to a very

painful, tense, and frustrating situation. At their initial meeting, Dr. McLeod appeared visibly shocked by what Cheer-Phi revealed to him. He assigned Special Assistant Mr. James Scurry to investigate

the matter. The end result of the "investigation" was to remove three suspensions and to uphold all other suspensions.

This left six cheerleaders

see "Cheer," pg. 14