
A Note From the Battlefield

Loretta F. Jones, ThD, MA, with Chandra L. Ford, PhD, MPH, MLIS

The nicest statement anybody had ever said to me.

—Loretta F. Jones

FORD: You did not get to be as wise and strong as you are without having challenges over the years. Can you talk about this?

JONES: I grew up in Massachusetts, and we all know Massachusetts is racist. I had thyroid disease, and I would go to the emergency room . . . and I would tell them that I was having heat flashes, and I was shaking and that my pulse rate was really high. And they would tell me that I was psychotic and that I had mental health issues, and I need to go see a psychiatrist.

And I kept telling them that, “Okay. I’ll go see a psychiatrist, but can you make me better?” And they wouldn’t do it. And then finally this young doctor . . . actually listened to my heart and realized that my heart was going at 150 beats a minute. And, they had to stop that. So she put the needle in my chest to stop my pulse from running so fast. That didn’t work so well, so she had to use the paddles . . . And, when I woke up and asked why did she do it, she said, “You’re my patient. You’re like my sister. And I need to take care of you.” And I was like, “Take care of me? [Do] you like me?” And she said, “You have a right to live and to have the best life possible. And don’t let anybody give you anything less.” And I thought that was like the nicest statement anybody had ever said to me.

And then, because [of] the doctor-care relationship and because I was struggling real hard, I was able to get a group of people together afterwards. They had the same symptoms. So, . . . before I opened up this agency [Healthy African American Families] or anything I started getting people that I knew that had the same kinds of problems, and we would talk. And that’s how we—that’s how I started.