

Black Americans with Aphasia Conversation Group

**Michael Obel-Omia
Angie Cauthorn
Aphasia Access Summit
April 2025**

Introductions

Michael Obel-Omia



Angie Cauthorn



Agenda

Michael's story & Angie's story

The genesis of the group

The mission

The routine- what it looks like

Underlying themes

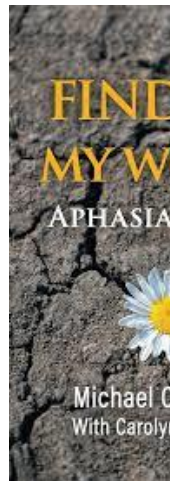
Questions & Answers



Michael's story



- Ischemic stroke in 2016, leading to aphasia
- Rhode Island Hospital (3 days)
- Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital (37 days)
- Recovery journey
 - Cycling (Stroke Across America)
 - Poetry (Finding my Words: Aphasia Poetry)
 - Friends and family



Angie's story



- A 20 year finance professional experienced two strokes in 2017.
- Aphasia Advocate & Community Builder:
 - Co-founded ARCH (Aphasia Resource Collaboration Hub):
 - Host of the Brain Friends podcast:
 - Founder of ROSA Resource Orientation for Stroke and Aphasia
 - Promotes resources and research about stroke and aphasia
 - Co-leads The BAAAC Room aphasia support group.
 - National Aphasia Association.- Board Member
 - National Aphasia Synergy.- Befriending Comm
 - Temple University's Saffran Lab. - Ambassador



The idea

- Darlene Williamson of the NAA reached out to Michael and connected him with Roy Hamilton, Neurologist and Professor at UPENN
- Michael and Roy Hamilton met to discuss the need for this online community and to do initial planning
- Discussed the need for support, advocacy and community for Black individuals with aphasia



THE WHY

- Black stroke survivors are less likely to receive effective treatments and therapies than white survivors.
- This disparity can result in more severe and persistent aphasia, necessitating specialized support that understands and addresses these systemic barriers.

Unique Communication Challenges and Cultural Understanding

A support group with shared cultural experiences can provide a more comfortable and understanding environment, reducing the pressure to navigate communication differences.

Minority Stress in Groups:

Black individuals may feel marginalized in general aphasia groups which is why this space is essential

The routine

- 1. Meditation**
- 2. Prayer**
- 3. Welcoming of all- everyone has a chance to share**
- 4. Activity**
 - **Question**
 - **Game (Black jeopardy, e.g.)**
 - **Activity**

Themes of the group

- **Welcoming community-** open to all who support the mission of creating an emotional refuge for Black persons living with aphasia
- **Supportive community-** words of encouragement, resources offered freely
- **Safe Community-** members share setbacks and accomplishments, ask questions of one another
- **Faith**
- **Humor**

Q&A

