

# KNOWLEDGE CENTRAL

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## B O O K S

**Breaking the Silence: Inspirational Stories of Black Cancer Survivors.** Karin Stanford. Chicago: Hilton Publishing, 2005, 196 pages, \$16.95.

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Although African Americans have the greatest burden from cancer, the literature examining the cancer experience from the perspective of this population is limited. In fact, the author, also a cancer survivor, was motivated to write *Breaking the Silence* because of her own difficulties in locating information relevant to the African American cancer experience. The author cites her inability to relate to traditional cancer support groups that primarily consist of older and Caucasian women, whose experiences and prognoses differed from her own. The purpose of the book is to give voice to the experience of African Americans who have been diagnosed with cancer. The author's intent is to provide a series of narratives from African American cancer survivors, caregivers of cancer survivors, and family members of cancer survivors that will inform and inspire others. The narratives are a collection of e-mails, letters, and edited oral narratives. Individuals responded to a request to tell their story and answered questions related to their experiences about being diagnosed with cancer, how others have responded to their diagnosis, how they coped with the diagnosis, and their experiences with changes in physical appearance. Respondents were at different stages of the cancer trajectory (i.e., recently diagnosed, completed treatment, or long-term cancer survivors).

The book is organized around several themes. In the first chapter, the author dis-

cusses her personal journey and details the emotions she experienced when first diagnosed. The chapter also provides valuable information on support groups and dispels several cancer myths that exist in the African American community. For example, one myth relates to cancer being a punishment for a misdeed. According to the author, that myth is probably the basis for the stigma toward cancer among African Americans. Furthermore, the myth contributes to the late diagnosis of the disease and discourages many African American cancer survivors from sharing their illness experience with others.

Other chapters are organized around the experience of being diagnosed with cancer, the timing of the diagnosis, and decision making. The narratives poignantly describe the emotions patients experienced when initially diagnosed with cancer, the reactions from others about the diagnosis, coping mechanisms, and treatment decision making. A chapter titled "What's Race Got to Do With It?" contains narratives from survivors who discuss the effect of being African American on the cancer experience. Another chapter titled "It's All in the Family" contains narratives that describe how a cancer diagnosis for several family members affects the family as a whole and how members of the same family respond differently to the disease when it affects more than one member. The chapter was especially revealing because some prevailing literature suggests that African Americans tend to lack support after a cancer diagnosis and treatment. However, survivors' narratives describe tremendous support from their families. The final section of the book is an extensive resource guide, listing organizations for cancer issues, support groups, and information for family members of cancer survivors.

*Breaking the Silence* was written especially to provide a resource and inspire African Americans who may be faced with a cancer diagnosis or who need information to better support a loved one or friend suffering from the disease. However, the book also is

appropriate for any healthcare professional wishing to understand patients' perspective of cancer. The strengths of the text are its collection of narratives that chronicle the cancer experiences of African American cancer survivors, the inclusion of factual information about cancer, an extensive resource guide, and a writing style that is easy to read by individuals of various educational levels. The only weakness is that some of the narratives appeared overly edited or not in the voice of the survivors. However, the book is a valuable contribution to the cancer literature and an excellent resource for African American patients with cancer.

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**The Feel-Good Society: How the "Customer" Metaphor Is Undermining American Education, Religion, Media and Healthcare.** James G. Hutton. West Paterson, NJ: Pentagram Publishing, 2005, 224 pages, \$24.95.

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The purpose of the *Feel-Good Society* is to examine the effect of marketing and consumerism on how major segments of societal institutions, including health care, serve their constituent groups. The author's intent is to assist readers in critically assess-

ing the results of what the author views as the misapplication of marketing principles that have turned discrete groups such as patients, students, and worshipers into consumers of products. The very well-reasoned case set out by the author is intended to encourage readers to reflect on the effect of a fundamental conceptual shift. The message of the book is appropriate not only for healthcare professionals but also for people in every aspect of society. The author has an extensive background in the practice and study of marketing in diverse roles.

The text begins with a comprehensive discussion of the history of how the customer

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🕒 Quick, on-the-spot resource	✓ Basic	📖 Pocket size
🕒🕒 Moderate time requirement	✓✓ Intermediate	📖📖 Intermediate
🕒🕒🕒 In-depth study	✓✓✓ Advanced and complex, prerequisite reading required	📖📖📖 Desk reference

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