

*"The greatest gift is the ability to believe in others and yourself"*

## FOUNDER'S MESSAGE:



**I** found that every final product like, The Gem Project, in this world has its own story before it became the “final product”. In the upcoming two paragraphs, I give you insight into my life and to the one woman who inspires me for this creation, my mother. I then begin to discuss the actual development of The Gem Project and what we stand for.

I am the oldest out of the three children who my mother, Patience Onuoha, has proudly taken care of as a single parent. My two younger brothers Brian Ebokosia (19 years-old) and my youngest brother Michael Ebokosia (14 years-old), who has been diagnosed for Atypical Autism since the age of four, know firsthand the struggles she has persevered through as well as the accomplishments she has achieved. We grew up not having much at all but my mother never made it seem that way. As a child I would watch her study feverishly at a desk in our living room. She would then leave home frequently because she was working full-time as a nurse while going to medical school at the same time, we needed healthcare and income. My mother also escaped a physically and emotionally straining relationship with our father and regained her spirit as a woman. She managed to save money to get all my uncles and aunts over from Africa to get a stab at what they thought were the “American Dream”, which also meant starting over.

When I graduated high school in 2004 my mother graduated her residency program at UMDNJ. She was determined to finally practice as a physician while I was eager to start my first year in college. She traveled that year, with my grandmother Virginia Onuoha, and two brothers to start a new life and practice as a physician in a small town in Missouri. It was a great year for her, despite the fact that my grandmother suffered from a sensory stroke after a bad fall. The purpose of moving was a job opportunity and aide for my youngest brother, Michael, who needed benefit from the ARC and Judavine centers of Missouri with his Autism. They come to our home after my brother's schooling to help him with daily tasks and his speech. We always see how a mother's love is so strong daily. However, I feel it is proven stronger for those mothers who have a child with a disability, especially raising one as a single parent.

Photo: Our Autism Awareness Luncheon



*Turn Side* 

When I was nine-teen and a sophomore at Rutgers University-Newark I developed a non-profit organization, **The Gem Project**, it was a beautiful beginning to something that was developed at a time where I felt that I was in amidst of tragedy. My mother, my rock and the woman who gave me life, was diagnosed with invasive breast cancer. It ultimately resulted in her leaving work for about a year as a newly practicing physician, and now she was the patient. Reflecting back, she continuously said to me on multiple occasions that it was a humbling experience and how she was overwhelmed with empathy for the patients who she has now.

The development of The Gem Project was a long road of challenges and smiles. We are the voice of the youth, educating them through our innovative programs and visual showcases, which display information about various issues which affect our world.

The individuals who comprise The Gem Project are each very unique in their own way. They all have something different to offer to the organization, which is why it is able to function and run smoothly while accomplishing amazing tasks. Our goal is to expand and bring awareness of various issues that affect many people within our community, not just Breast Cancer and Autism. We can and will do so by our awareness luncheons /galas, college campus walks, benefit photo shoots, and our signature awareness showcase displays which travel to various institutions for up to one week.



**Photo:** Bashira Brown, Breast Cancer Survivor, from our Breast Cancer display showcases. 24'' by 36''



**Photo:** The Autism Quilt Project (6 ft x 5ft)Co-Founded by: The Gem Project & The Guardian Fellowship.

We are currently also working with various other organizations to help execute certain plans for the future. The Gem Project is now founding a project with a fellow friend and colleague, Jason Khurdan, who has also launched his own non-profit organization, The Guardian Fellowship. They work to help mentor and tutor children in our community.

My take home message and daily mantra I live by is: Inspire those to aspire. I am sure I did not coin the phrase, but it is true. A magazine clipping from my vision board states, "Share your inspiration with virtually everyone". If you let your desires, achievements, and inspirations be stowed away somewhere unreachable in your heart it will never be attainable.

Best Wishes,

Amanda Ada Ebokosia

*Turn Side* ➡