

## 2022 Conference Committee on Literature

**ITEM H:** Review progress report regarding update of the pamphlet “A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic.”

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### Background Notes:

*Excerpt from the January 29, 2022, trustees’ Literature Committee report:*

The committee **agreed to forward** October 2021 progress report to the 2022 Conference Committee on Literature.

The committee acknowledged the working group's innovative outreach efforts and approach to story submissions.

*Excerpt from the July 1, 2021 trustees’ Literature Committee report:*

The committee discussed the 2021 advisory action regarding the pamphlet “A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic” stating that the pamphlet be updated to include fresh stories and a new title that is respectful and inclusive.

The committee noted considerations of inclusivity such as French and Spanish language black communities, as well as the limited scope of population defined as “African- American,” such as the black community in Canada and the Caribbean.

The committee noted the importance of participation from members of A.A. from the primary target audiences in the process of updating this pamphlet. The chair requested that committee member, Vera F., establish a working group and lead the implementation of a process for the pamphlet update.

The scope of the working group on the update of the pamphlet “A.A. for the Black and African-American” pamphlet is as follows:

- 1) Include a diverse group of A.A. members from the target audiences who can bring perspectives from a variety of ethnic, geographic, linguistic and age perspectives.
- 2) Solicit broad input on the current pamphlet and needed improvements, to inform the development of priorities for new stories from these diverse cultural perspectives.
- 3) Develop a method of outreach to foster significant amounts of submitted material.
- 4) Develop a process for selecting received stories.
- 5) Work toward development of a respectful and inclusive title.

The committee requested that the staff secretary support Vera’s efforts and that a working group progress report be provided at the October 2021 meeting.

### *2021 Conference Advisory Action*

The pamphlet “A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic” be updated to include fresh stories and a new title that is respectful and inclusive and that a progress report or draft pamphlet be brought back to the 2022 Conference Committee on Literature.

NOTE: A paragraph from the committee recommendation was moved to considerations by rule of the presiding Conference chair and is below:

### *2021 Conference Committee on Literature consideration*

The committee expressed appreciation for the tentative plans outlined by the trustees’ Literature Committee to foster expedience with moving forward on revision of the pamphlet “A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic.” The committee noted the importance of involving members of the community from the intended primary audience of the pamphlet in the development of the pamphlet, including providing input for a title that is respectful and inclusive of members throughout the U.S. and Canada.

### *Excerpt from January 30, 2021 TLC Meeting Report:*

The committee reviewed a draft memo to the Conference Literature committee related to the request to update the pamphlet “A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic.” The committee **agreed to forward** the memo as part of the background of this committee which is already being forwarded for the agenda item under consideration by the 2021 Conference Committee on Literature.

### *Excerpt from the October 31, 2020 trustees’ Literature Committee report:*

The committee reviewed reports related to informing discussions on the request that the pamphlet “A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic” be updated to include fresh stories and a new title that is respectful and inclusive.

The committee reviewed the Publishing department’s report related to potential updating of the pamphlet which included input addressing content relevancy as well as approaches that might be most effective for attracting numerous personal stories.

The committee also discussed a progress report from the Subcommittee on the Possible Updates to the Pamphlet “A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic,” including that the subcommittee has also explored approaches which might be most effective for fostering significant amounts of submitted stories.

The committee noted the subcommittee’s highlighting of working groups which are comprised of primary target audiences to inform discussions on updating pamphlets for those audiences. The committee agreed with the subcommittee’s suggestion that for any prospective update, the consideration of an appointed consultant on the trustees’ Literature Committee might be appropriate.

The committee noted that the unique procedures of the 70<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference resulted in this agenda item also being forwarded from the 70<sup>th</sup> Conference to the 71<sup>st</sup> Conference. The committee **agreed to forward** the report and background of this committee as background to the agenda item under consideration by the 71<sup>st</sup> General Service Conference.

*Excerpt from the August 1, 2020 trustees' Literature Committee report:*

The trustees' Literature Committee discussed the 2020 Conference Committee on Literature's recommendation that the pamphlet "A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic" be updated to include fresh stories and a new title that is respectful and inclusive. This item did not receive enough time for a vote during the abbreviated 70th General Service Conference. The committee also discussed the placement of this item on its agenda as a result of a 70th General Service Conference Floor Action and subsequent forwarding of the item from the trustees' General Service Conference Committee to the trustees' Literature Committee. The committee discussed that the recommendation and Floor Action were both impacted by agreed-upon procedures adopted for the unique, abbreviated 70th General Service Conference.

The committee agreed that while the recommendation was not voted on at the 70<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference, significant support was present for the pamphlet to be updated. The committee noted that the pamphlet in its entirety has not been updated since 2001. To inform discussions on the possible updating of this pamphlet, the chair appointed a subcommittee comprised of Nancy McCarthy, chair, Mike L. and Amalia C. to:

1. To explore what approaches might be most effective for reaching out to foster significant amounts of submitted stories for when the pamphlet update may be approved.
2. Gather shared experience to inform discussions for updating stories and making the pamphlet as relevant as possible.

The committee suggested that the subcommittee make use of working groups comprised of primary target audiences to inform discussions on possibly updating the pamphlet. The committee requested the subcommittee provide a progress report at the October 2020 meeting.

The committee also requested that the Publishing department review the pamphlet for relevant potential updating and provide a report at the October 2020 meeting.

*Excerpt from June 26 memo regarding trustees' General Service Conference Committee Report*

The trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference discussed the process it would follow for considering the floor actions. Most of the committee determined that the next stop for these items was the appropriate trustees committee to discuss. The following was agreed upon by the Conference to be considered:

Floor Action #4: The committee considered and **agreed to forward** to the trustees' Literature Committee the 70th General Service Conference floor action that "the pamphlet 'A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic' be updated to include fresh stories and a new title that is respectful and inclusive."

NOTE: Agreed upon practices for the handling of Floor Actions at the 70th General Service Conference resulted in the following item being placed on the August 2020 Conference Literature committee agenda (see agenda item 28):

Consider an item related to request to update the pamphlet "A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic."

*Excerpt from 2020 Conference Literature Committee Report*

Consider updating the pamphlet "A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic."

The committee recommended that the pamphlet "A.A. for the Black and African American Alcoholic" be updated to include fresh stories and a new title that is respectful and inclusive.

NOTE: Because the full 2020 Conference did not have sufficient time for discussion and vote on the committee's recommendation, the item was forwarded to the 71<sup>st</sup> General Service Conference. This action was based on agreed upon practices for the 70th General Service Conference.

*Excerpt from November 2, 2019 TLC Meeting Report:*

The committee reviewed additional background and discussed the 2019 Conference floor action which resulted in an Advisory Action:

That the proposed floor action that "The pamphlet 'A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic' be updated and a progress report and/or a draft be presented to the 2020 General Service Conference" be committed to the trustees' Literature Committee.

The committee **agreed to forward** to the 2020 Conference Committee on Literature a request that the pamphlet "A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic" be updated. The committee recognized the need for the pamphlet to be updated and looks forward to discussion at the 2020 General Service Conference.

*Excerpt from July 27, 2019 TLC Meeting Report:*

The committee discussed the 2019 Conference floor action which resulted in an Advisory Action:

That the proposed floor action that “The pamphlet ‘A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic’ be updated and a progress report and/or a draft

be presented to the 2020 General Service Conference” be committed to the trustees’ Literature Committee.

The committee requested the staff secretary explore additional background information to provide for the committee to review the topic further at the November 2019 meeting.

### *2019 Conference Advisory Action*

#### **Note: The following FLOOR ACTION resulted in an Advisory Action:**

The proposed floor action that “The pamphlet ‘A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic’ be updated and a progress report and/or a draft be presented to the 2020 General Service Conference” be committed to the trustees’ Literature Committee.”

NOTE: A motion to commit or recommit a recommendation (or floor action) is a procedural action. It does not approve or disapprove the recommendation under debate, nor does it mean that the recommendation will be implemented. The motion to recommit moves the discussion of the recommendation from the floor of the Conference to a trustee’s committee or corporate board.

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#### **Background:**

1. October 2021 Progress report working group on the update of the pamphlet “A.A. for the Black and African-American”
2. Compilation of background items from July 2019 to July 2021 related to the consideration to update the pamphlet, “A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic” to be considered from trustees’ Literature Committee for the Conference Committee on Literature
3. Current pamphlet “A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic” available on G.S.O.’s A.A. website: [https://www.aa.org/assets/en\\_US/aa-literature/p-51-aa-for-the-black-and-african-american-alcoholic](https://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/aa-literature/p-51-aa-for-the-black-and-african-american-alcoholic)

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**LITERATURE****Item H****Doc. 1**

Oct 2021 Progress Report: Workgroup for update of the pamphlet: *AA for the Black & African American Alcoholic*

**Process:**

In Aug of 2021 the Workgroup for the update of the pamphlet: "AA for the Black & African American Alcoholic" was formed. The workgroup consists of 7 AA members representing a variety of ethnic, geographic, linguistic and age perspectives. These members are well acquainted with the pamphlet's target audiences. The workgroup met via zoom on 9.7.21 & 10.6.21.

**9.7.21**

- welcome, introductions, the group reviewed the scope of the workgroup
- Identified who the pamphlet is for: Black Alcoholics, Black people who are potential alcoholics or questioning if they are alcoholics. Black professionals who come in contact and/or work with black alcoholics, AA members who work with/sponsor black alcoholics.

The work group used the following set of questions for discussion and feedback:

**Questions to consider regarding the pamphlet, *A.A. for the Black & African American Alcoholic*:**

- What general or specific types of experience or expression are missing from the pamphlet?
- Are there any specific issues or topics that are not adequately addressed in this pamphlet that would be helpful to include in a revised version?
- Does the pamphlet provide the kind of identification necessary to relate individually to Black alcoholics and to resonate within the Black community in general?
- Does it adequately reflect the experience of Black alcoholics/members of AA?
- Is the pamphlet relevant to today's AA audience?
- Does it adequately reflect the experience of Black alcoholics/members of A.A.?
- Are there any specific issues or topics that are not adequately addressed in this pamphlet that would be helpful to include in a revised version?
- New title? Any suggestion for a new title?

**10.6.21****Outreach for stories beyond the service structure:**

The workgroup members discussed broadly the topic of outreach for stories beyond the service structure and recognize that to reach a broader segment of Black AA members nontraditional methods of communication may be necessary. The group discussed strategies for outreach to AA members beyond the service structure. Some of these include attending meetings and events in BIPOC communities, outreach to the eight national and longstanding fraternities and sororities at the alumni level and through their corporate offices, and Black churches

The workgroup agreed that the call for stories should also include local and area PI, C.P.C., Accessibilities, Archives, Treatment-Remote Communities and Corrections committees, Local A.A. Central Offices/Intergroups and Grapevine/LaVina Magazine.

Workgroup leader will contact Regional Forum Chair to see how to go about getting a couple of writing workshops for the revised pamphlet AA for Black and African American Alcoholic on the schedule of these local forums. This method was used in gathering stories from Spanish Speaking women in AA in the creation of that pamphlet. We would like to do the same thing.

**Call for stories**

Responses from the questionnaire helped in creating a list of the type of diverse stories and broad background that reflect the Black communities

The workgroup looked at a few examples of call for stories

The workgroup agreed on a tentative date to initiate call for stories in January 2022.

The workgroup expresses its gratitude to the trustees' Literature committee for this opportunity to serve.

2022 Compilation of Background Material related to updating  
the pamphlet "AA for the Black and African American Alcoholic"

**LITERATURE**  
**Item H**  
**Doc. 2**

**Final Report**

"Reaching Out to African-American Alcoholics"  
October 28, 2018

**Background:**

On two separate occasions in two separate locations, Rich P., Northeast regional trustee and Carole B., general service trustee, were approached by A.A. members asking that the General Service Board do something to help suffering African-American alcoholics. (The most recent 2014 Membership Survey estimates that only 4% of A.A. members are black, while white membership is estimated at 89%.) Rich and Carole discussed their separate conversations and decided to conduct a conference call with a number of African-American members within the service structure, reaching out to black members currently serving as delegates, G.S.O. staff, trustees, past trustees, and including Ed and Mac, the members who approached Rich and Carole. Conference calls were held on June 12, June 24 and July 22, 2018.

Some of the findings of this group dovetail with the G.S.B. Strategic Plan. Within this report, the group suggests actions that will help reach African-American alcoholics. When these actions are in line with actions outlined in the G.S.B. Strategic Plan ("Strategic Plan"), it is so noted. The actions of the Strategic Plan that are related to this work are listed at the end of this document.

[Item P1.2 of the Strategic Plan relating to contacting Area delegates to identify underrepresented sectors of the A.A. population in their Areas was exercised relative to the African-American A.A. community by the formation of this informal work group.]

**Within the Fellowship:**

In some places, meetings are segregated. In others, there are very few black members in meetings. Comments from the group covered a number of perspectives:

1. "In many meetings, including service events, I'm the only black person in the room."
2. "I got sober in an all-white group."
3. "We focus on white professionals and don't consider black professionals."
4. "The G.S.B. membership reflects what the fellowship looks like."
5. "There have only been eight black trustees in A.A.'s 80 years."
6. "I was so happy to meet Elaine McD. when she was chair. I went home and told my home group that a black woman was chair of the General Service Board. I was so excited."
7. "I was shocked that my area elected a black person as their delegate."
8. "As a black area delegate, I have not been invited to districts to give my report because of my color."



Racism exists within the meetings of A.A. When it is brought up, people often say it is an outside issue; yet members being mistreated, called names based on their skin color, is an inside, not outside, issue.

### **Reaching Newcomers:**

Some things were noted that could be done to reach out to African-American alcoholics, some as simple as welcoming black people at all A.A. meetings, trying to make them feel more comfortable.

Additionally, many African Americans are lifelong members of sororities and fraternities. There are eight national and longstanding black fraternities and sororities. At the alumni level, these groups, through their corporate offices, historically have involved themselves in matters of deep concern to black people. (P1.4).

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity: <http://www.apa1906.net/> Alpha  
 Kappa Alpha Sorority: <http://www.aka1908.com/> Kappa Alpha  
 Psi Fraternity: <https://kappaalphapsi.org/> Omega Psi Phi  
 Fraternity: <http://www.oppf.org/>  
 Delta Sigma Theta Sorority: <https://www.deltasigmatheta.org/> Phi  
 Beta Sigma Fraternity: <http://phibetasigma1914.org/>  
 Zeta Phi Beta Sorority: <http://zphib1920.org/>  
 Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority: <http://www.sgrho1922.org/home>

This would be a natural resource for sharing information about Alcoholics Anonymous.

### **Reaching Professionals (CPC) & Using Public Information (PI) Sources (Items P1.4 and 4.2 of the Strategic Plan):**

Alcoholics Anonymous needs to build ongoing and consistent relationships with black pastors and social workers, working with the following organizations and others:

National Bar Association  
 National Associations of Black Social Workers National  
 Medical Association  
 National Hispanic Medical Association Association of  
 Black Psychologists

Reaching out to black media outlets, e.g., radio, TV, and print, to carry the A.A. message, would also provide greater contact and awareness of A.A. within the African-American community.

Here are examples of the top ten African-American Influenced Radio and TV Stations:

<https://www.cision.com/us/2012/06/top-10-african-american-influenced-radio-stations/>

<https://www.steveharveyfm.com/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom\\_Joyner\\_Morning\\_Show](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom_Joyner_Morning_Show) <https://www.bet.com/>

<http://www.oprah.com/app/own-tv.html>.

Getting involvement from Class A trustees, especially but not exclusively the African-American and other minority members of same (both past and present) is vital in the CPC/PI context.

### **Conventions:**

The Hispanic membership and YPAA conventions are enthusiastic. Some thought has been given to having a convention for African-American A.A. members. On a broader scale, however, efforts should be made at all A.A. events to include black A.A. members and nonalcoholic friends of A.A. as speakers/panelists.

### **A.A. Literature:**

As part of the current initiative to ensure that A.A.W.S. Conference-approved literature is accessible to all (i.e., those with visual, auditory and learning challenges), G.S.O. staff is looking at how our literature could be more inclusive. For example, the pamphlet “A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic” has not been revised since it was originally published in 2001. Additionally, a number of CPC, PI, and other pamphlets could be updated to be more inclusive.

It was also discussed that the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, is in part disconcerting to many black people. (Some use the Akron Central Office pamphlet “A Guide to the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous” rather than the Big Book.)

### **Regional/Special Forums:**

Much discussion has been had about Special Forums and it is not clear that this is the best option for expanding the discussion of diversity and inclusivity. The G.S.O. staff suggested it might be better to have ongoing inclusivity workshops at Regional Forums. (Item P1.6 of the Strategic Plan)

### **Spotlighting the Topic of Diversity and Inclusivity within the Fellowship:**

Use *Box 4-5-9* and *AA Grapevine* to include ongoing columns on diversity and inclusivity, specifically stating that this is not an outside issue and affects us reaching the still-suffering alcoholic. Racism, gender identification, sexism, religion and related barriers are outside issues except as they relate to Twelfth Step work.

AA Grapevine has run stories from African-American members, some of which do speak of issues of fitting in or inclusion. In the last few years, Grapevine has run at least two special issues dealing specifically with diversity which included African-American members. The editors are very conscious that African-American members be pictured as often as possible in photos and illustrations. (Item P1.7 of the Strategic Plan)

Another action step would be to ask for presentations or workshops at the General Service Conference to discuss the topic of inclusivity.

Additionally, text could be added within the pamphlet “The A.A. Group” to discuss how groups could be more inclusive (i.e., add to suggested questions under group inventory).

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### **From G.S.B. Strategic Plan**

*Goal 1: The A.A. Fellowship will become more inclusive and accepting, and thereby A.A. will experience an increase in membership as more people are introduced to recovery.*

- P1.1: The G.S.B. will bring an inclusivity focus to all aspects of our services. The G.S.B. will suggest each service committee and the two affiliate boards will first undertake an inventory of its materials and services with an eye toward inclusion and acceptance.
- P1.2: The G.S.B. will contact Area delegates to identify underrepresented sectors of the A.A. population in their Areas.
- P1.3: The G.S.B. will suggest to A.A.W.S. that it make electronic versions of select foreign-language pamphlets available on aa.org and allow them to be made available on Area websites (or linked from).
- P1.4: The G.S.B. will pursue relationships with professionals who work with ethnic/cultural groups that are underrepresented in A.A. as a proportion of population and will encourage the Fellowship to do likewise.
- P1.5: The G.S.B. will suggest to the General Service Conference that they utilize Conference time to focus on how the fellowship can engage in sustained outreach with diverse populations as part of doing service.

*Goal 4: Identify new places and audiences to bring the A.A. message of hope:*

- P4.2: The G.S.B. will request management and staff to analyze staffing and responsibilities, and suggest to G.S.B. a list of potential events that a trustee or nontrustee director might attend. This should include identifying and contacting leadership of professional organizations.

*9.13.19 Memo with member letter from G.S.O. Executive Editor regarding the pamphlet "A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic"*

I wanted to pass along the attached commentary regarding the pamphlet "AA for the Black/African American Alcoholic." It was provided by one of the freelance copyeditors (an A.A. member and an African American) who worked on the editorial review and reprinting of this pamphlet a year or so ago when we redesigned the cover.

It would seem to be pertinent background material as the trustees' Literature Committee grapples with the question (per Conference request) of whether or not to revise and update this pamphlet.

If you need contact details or any other information, please let me know.

Many thanks,  
Ames

*February 27, 2018 Letter from member to G.S.O. Executive Editor regarding the pamphlet "A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic"*

Hey Ames,

I have two concerns:

1) Style for African Americans many publications hyphenate this when it's an adjective, and they leave it open when it's a noun.

African=American, adj.  
African American, noun

2) And here, I hope I'm not overstepping. When it comes to racism, AA is better than most American institutions. But it is part of the system and does reflect society at large.

For instance, look at AA governance: NTIG, no people of color. And I don't know the minutes at GSO, but I don't recall seeing many on my Friday tour.

And sometimes Black folks do face discrimination in white meetings: They are ignored, made to feel unwelcomed, or sometimes a speaker will make snide remarks about race (this actually happened to me on the East side).

Black folks don't allow racism and discrimination to run us away, but we have to deal with these issues in the Fellowship.

My two cents' worth –  
Jamie

<b>Distribution Numbers</b>  <b>P-51 AA for the</b> <b>Black/African- American</b> <b>Alcoholic</b>	
<b>2005</b>	
<b>2006</b>	27,140
<b>2007</b>	27,238
<b>2008</b>	28,801
<b>2009</b>	24,319
<b>2010</b>	23,421
<b>2011</b>	19,000
<b>2012</b>	26,580
<b>2013</b>	23,987
<b>2014</b>	21,677
<b>2015</b>	19,359
<b>2016</b>	16,869
<b>2017</b>	18,800
<b>2018</b>	18,612
<b>2019 - July</b>	10,012
<b>Total Distribution 2005 - 2019</b>	<b>305,815</b>

*November 2, 2019 email from CPC assignment regarding request to update the pamphlet "A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic"*

This year, I visited several C.P.C. exhibits: American Society of Addictions Medicine, Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice, American Society of Addiction Medicine, and The American Corrections Association. I also attended The Bridging the Gap Weekend Workshop in Sacramento, CA. I took the opportunity to ask people their thoughts on if updating this pamphlet would be helpful. The answer was yes:

- Professionals familiar with the pamphlet felt it was long overdue, and asked for strong examples of successfully staying sober in A.A. One professional said that anything we can do to give hope. A.A. does come to a facility, but most of them are white but most of the people in my facility are not.
- An A.A. member, also an African-American, who volunteered at a C.P.C. exhibit said that we are not pushed out, but not welcomed in either, and new stories sharing how to get through all that would be great. I retired here and know what I have to do to stay sober, but what about the new guy or gal?
- One C.P.C. chair shared that new stories would be a great opportunity for participation. She told me that she **wanted** to ask African-Americans in her district, (following the Box 459 article) but could not find anyone in the area to talk to. Instead she had to go to N.A. meetings in her district, and there were many African-American and Hispanic people. She learned that most African-Americans felt they were Alcoholics, but were going mostly to N.A. because people were friendlier and helpful.

In my experience on the C.P.C./TF assignment, I believe that the heart of A.A. is in our handshake. I share this pamphlet with the professional community. This one is woe-fully out of date, and could send a mixed message to professionals from underserved communities.

*Diana L.*

Diana L., Coordinator

Cooperation with the Professional Communities

212-870-3107 [cpc@aa.org](mailto:cpc@aa.org)

<https://www.aa.org/>

[https://www.aa.org/pages/en\\_US/information-for-professionals](https://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/information-for-professionals)

## **Part I:**

### **Trustees' Literature Committee History and Actions: "A.A. for the Black and African Alcoholic" Pamphlet**

#### **January 29, 2000 Trustees' Committee on Literature:**

##### **Pamphlet for the Black/African American Alcoholics**

Jim C., chair of the subcommittee, reported that the subcommittee received 34 stories for the proposed pamphlet and was pleased with the wide variety of experience reflected in term of gender, age, location and background. The subcommittee agreed to forward 15 stories to the Publications Department for editing. The subcommittee will probably receive the edited stories in May for review. The trustees' Literature Committee anticipates seeing a rough draft of the pamphlet at the July meeting. A progress report will be prepared for the Conference Literature Committee for their consideration in April.

#### **July 29, 2000 Trustees' Committee on Literature:**

##### **Pamphlet for the Black/African American Alcoholics**

Jim C. reported that the subcommittee working on a pamphlet for Black/African American alcoholics met by conference call on Tuesday, July 11 to discuss the 14 edited stories they had received for review. They discussed the stories in a general way and agreed that the stories are in need of additional editing. Some specific suggestions were passed on to the Publications Department. The subcommittee looks forward to receiving reworked stories in September which will allow time to study the stories and discuss them through another conference call prior to the October meeting of the trustees' Literature Committee.

#### **October 28, 2000 Trustees' Literature Committee:**

##### **Pamphlet for Black/African American Alcoholics**

David S., subcommittee chair, reported that the subcommittee working on a pamphlet for Black/African American alcoholics met by conference call on Monday, October 23, 2000 to discuss reworked stories. There was agreement that the stories are vastly improved. The subcommittee will forward suggestions for some additional and minor copy editing and for cutting some proposed stories to the Publications Department. The Publications Department will present a manuscript including the final stories and introductory text which will reflect the content of the final selected stories for discussion at the subcommittee's next conference call.

The committee chairperson will send a letter to Tony H. thanking him for his incredible contribution to the reworking of these stories.

**January 27, 2001 Trustees' Literature Committee:**

Pamphlet for Black/African American Alcoholics

David S., subcommittee chair, reported on committee activities to date and the time sequence involved in presenting a draft manuscript to the trustees' Literature Committee.

The committee agreed to forward the draft pamphlet for the Black/African American Alcoholic as presented with one revision, deletion of the section titled "You're Needed Here" in the proposed introduction.

This draft manuscript will be forwarded to the 2001 Conference Literature Committee on a "for-their-eyes-only" basis adhering to the principle of the "right of decision," and not brought forward for any other general distribution until publication.

Three letters expressing opposition to this pamphlet received before January 15, 2001 will be forwarded to the Conference Literature Committee.

**January 27, 2007 Trustees' Literature Committee:**

"Can A.A. Help Me Too? Black/African Americans Share Their Stories"

The committee discussed and agreed to forward a suggestion that the title of the pamphlet "Can A.A. Help Me Too?" subtitled 'Black/African Americans Share Their Stories' be changed to "A.A. and the Black/African American Alcoholic" to the 2007 Conference Committee on Literature for consideration.

**July 28, 2007 Trustees' Literature Committee:**

2007 Conference Advisory Actions and Additional Committee Considerations: The committee reviewed the 2007 Conference Advisory Actions and Additional Committee Considerations from the Conference Committee on Literature. Publications director, Chris C., reported the following:

- The pamphlet title "Can A.A. Help Me Too?" has been changed to "A.A. for the Black and African American Alcoholic," and is available.



## **Part II**

### **Conference Literature Committee Advisory Actions and Committee Considerations: “A.A. for the Black and African American Alcoholic” Pamphlet**

**1999**

It was recommended:

A draft copy of a pamphlet directed to the Black/African American alcoholic be developed and brought back to the 2000 Conference Literature Committee for review.

**2000**

Additional committee consideration:

The committee reviewed the trustees' Literature Committee's progress report on the development of a pamphlet for Black/African American alcoholics, expressed appreciation for the wide net cast to obtain stories and looks forward to reviewing a draft of the proposed pamphlet at 2001 General Service Conference.

**2001**

It was recommended:

The pamphlet “Can A.A. Help Me Too?- Black/African Americans Share Their Stories” be approved.

Additional committee consideration:

In order to give the General Service Office Publications Department adequate time to collect releases from the authors of the stories in the pamphlets “Can A.A. Help Me Too?- Black/African Americans Share Their Stories” and “A.A. for the Older Alcoholic- Never Too Late,” the committee agreed that these pamphlets remain confidential until publication.

**2007**

It was recommended that:

The title of the pamphlet “Can A.A. Help Me Too?” subtitled “Black/African Americans Share Their Stories” be changed to “A.A. for the Black and African American Alcoholic.”

*1.30.21 Memo with attached background from the trustees' Literature Committee to the 2021 Conference Literature Committee*

**MEMO**

January 30, 2021

From: The trustees' Literature Committee (TLC)

To: The 2021 Conference Literature Committee (CLC)

RE: Consider update to the pamphlet "A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic"

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This correspondence is to provide additional context to the background submitted for the 71<sup>st</sup> General Service Conference related to the consideration of whether or not to update the pamphlet, "A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic."

The trustees Literature Committee in 2020-21 agreed that while the update was not voted on during the 70<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference, significant support was present for the pamphlet to be updated. The unique procedures for the 70<sup>th</sup> Conference, developed to contend with the global pandemic, resulted in a lack of time for a vote.

Support was reflected, in large part, by the 2020 Conference Literature Committee's recommendation to update the pamphlet to include fresh stories and a new title that is respectful and inclusive. Conference support was also demonstrated in the floor action to update the pamphlet not being declined, which resulted in the proposed agenda item returning to the TLC.

Following the Conference, the TLC agreed to continue exploring the need and approaches for a possible update of the pamphlet. These efforts were undertaken without any presumed outcome of the 71<sup>st</sup> General Service Conference. Also, the TLC moved forward with full understanding and acknowledgement that the decision of whether or not to update the pamphlet lies within the purview of the Conference.

To support the informed group conscience discussions for the 71<sup>st</sup> General Service Conference, the TLC is forwarding background from its efforts during the past year. This background includes reports with input gathered to address content relevancy of the pamphlet, as well as approaches that might be most effective for attracting numerous personal stories in the event that there is a Conference Advisory Action for an update.

Thank you for your consideration and service!

### **10.31.20 Progress report from the 2020-21 Subcommittee regarding the possible update of the pamphlet “A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic”**

*Excerpt from the subcommittee’s September 10, 2020 meeting report*

The subcommittee discussed its scope and the general context of the agenda item under consideration.

The subcommittee discussed practices and possibilities for approaches to attract more voluminous sharing of experience, strength and hope. The subcommittee reviewed the development process for the pamphlet for Spanish-speaking women in A.A.

Once stories were submitted, sixty in total, Amalia C. envisioned Spanish-speaking women from each region in the U.S. and Canada to serve on a working group to review and suggest stories for selection to include in the pamphlet.

Amalia reached out for participation, including by attending an A.A. Conference for Spanish-speaking women, in order to attract eight women to serve the working group. Ultimately, four women helped with reading and suggesting stories for selection. Amalia developed a rating grid with relevant categories which was reviewed used a rating grid with review categories which was developed by Amalia and agreed upon for use by the working group.

The working group compared ratings and discussed in a group conscience which stories to forward as suggestions to the trustees’ Literature Committee. Some of the stories were fully agreed upon to forward, while others were partially agreed upon and forwarded so more stories than likely will be in the pamphlet at publication are being forwarded. Amalia noted that art work was also submitted and forwarded but not noted for inclusion.

The subcommittee discussed the consideration for A.A. members from the pamphlet’s target audience to be involved in each part of the update process.

The subcommittee discussed next steps including the need to identify a process in terms of how we would get a request out for shared experience in more effective ways for the audience intended to be reached, as well as eventual formats in which the content might be published. The subcommittee discussed possible avenues and platforms that might be specific to members in the African American community for attracting their sharing of stories. The subcommittee agreed to continue discussions at the next meeting.

The subcommittee chair requested the staff secretary forward the A.C.M. nominating procedure to her and the subcommittee agreed to consider the nominating procedure for appointing and A.C.M.

Subsequent conversations were held with David N., Chair of the Literature Trustee Committee and Michele G., General Service Board Chair, and it was suggested that the subcommittee review the Nominating Committee procedure on Consultants. The subcommittee chair requested the staff secretary forward the procedure as background for the subcommittee’s next meeting.

*Excerpt from the subcommittee’s September 30, 2020 meeting report*

The subcommittee discussed nominating procedures for selecting consultants. The subcommittee agreed that a consultant for the possible updating of the pamphlet would be helpful for:

- Researching and identifying processes and platforms for requesting shared experience to attract more voluminous sharing of experience, strength and hope from within the identified population for the pamphlet.
- Developing ideas to obtain relevant content that may include written stories as well as additional tools for effectively carrying the A.A. message
- Identifying a diverse working group (by age, gender, geography, etc.) to review content which eventually will be gathered as shared experience.

The committee noted that any possible selection of a consultant would be pending the decision by the 2021 General Service Conference of whether or not to update the pamphlet.

The subcommittee discussed next steps and agreed to present a progress report to the trustees' Committee on Literature for discussion and suggestions for the process going forward.

*10.31.20 Pamphlet review report from the Publishing Department regarding the possible update of the pamphlet "A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic"*

### **"A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic"**

#### **Editorial Review and Commentary**

Submitted by Ames S. GSO Executive Editor  
October 2020

This pamphlet, now under consideration for revision, has been a part of A.A.'s collection of literature focused on special populations since 2001. It was first introduced to the Fellowship under the title, "Can A.A. Help Me Too? -- Black/African Americans Share Their Stories" in 2001 and was retitled in 2007 to the current version. It follows a practice of special-interest pamphlet production, covering different segments of the A.A. population such as women, young people, Native North Americans, LGBTQ, those with mental health issues, older alcoholics, agnostics and atheists, those with accessibility issues, inmates and members of the armed services.

In order to effectively update this pamphlet, a review of its current status and relevance to the community it is intended to serve was informally undertaken, with responses offered by a number of A.A. members, among them GSO staff and administration and a freelance editor working for the Publishing department. All of the respondents are people of color.

In summary, the principal points that should guide the revision:

- The pamphlet needs new stories, reflective of the broad diversity of experience within the black community -- preferably shorter and in greater number;
- The stories need to speak to today's Fellowship in language that is forthright and accessible to "modern day" readers;
- The stories should not shy away from the difficulties often faced by black A.A. members in attending A.A. meetings, service events and other aspects of the Fellowship.

Below are responses from three readers, and attached are a Grapevine story that is referenced in one of the responses and an historical look at "Carrying the Message in the Black Community" (a GSB General Sharing Session presentation from 1986).

Some other comments provided by readers:

The pamphlet needs to underscore these main ideas:

1. Alcoholic Black people have the same emotions as alcoholic white people. Alcoholic Black people have the same disease of alcoholism as do alcoholic white people.
2. A.A. members can carry the message and work with Black people who are new to A.A. Instead of letting a pamphlet stand on a rack, or maybe just a handshake, the majority of the A.A. fellowship needs to give a hand that remains extended out, one day at a time.
3. The Fellowship needs to demonstrate that we get there is a problem and need to do more.
4. The stories need to impart personal experiences getting sober and staying sober even when white people were not welcoming or ignored them. If white people were welcoming and inclusive, how did they deal with that? Did they go to meetings where everyone looked like them or were they the only one? or few?
5. There is a reluctance of some Black /People of Color A.A. members to affiliate in the service structure. The uneven Triangle - Although we have Traditions and long-term sobriety, we do not approach all newcomers from different skin tones, cultures and backgrounds to make sure they are involved in all aspects of the Fellowship.

As progress develops on the revision of this pamphlet, we need to make sure to reach out broadly within the Black A.A. community for additional input and shared experience. As noted in the comments, it has been a long time since this pamphlet was updated and much has changed, both within the A.A. community in general and the Black community in particular. We need to reflect those changes and offer Black alcoholics a meaningful and enduring pathway to recovery.

***Submitted by B.B.***

A.A. for the Black and African American Alcoholic

- Is the pamphlet relevant to today's audience?

The stories are real and may reflect the disease of alcoholism. I am not sure if these stories would resonate with today's audience.

- Does the pamphlet provide the kind of identification necessary to relate individually to Black alcoholics and to resonate within the black community in general?

The pamphlet does provide identification to me. Being an African-American woman mid-sixties from Southwest Tennessee. The era I was raised in was the sixties/seventies. My story is very similar to most stories in the pamphlet. The younger generation may not relate to those (dated) stories. The younger generation's experiences internally might be the same. The experience itself (identification) may differ.

- Does it adequately reflect the experience of Black alcoholics/members of A.A.?

The pamphlet does not reflect a wide range or broader diversity of Black/African- Americans in A.A. Such as, Professionals, Ministers, Inmates, Sexual orientation, ethnic -- a wider range of the culture who found sobriety.

- Are there any specific issues or topics that are not adequately addressed in this pamphlet that would be helpful to include in a revised version?  
The stories always end similarly. Many come being dually addicted. Some found A.A. through Detox, Treatment. Correctional, jails. Some were offered other fellowships.

- Any suggestion for a new title?

People Like Me (from the Grapevine Issue August 2019)  
Experience, Strength and Hope: People of Color

**Submitted by C.C.**

African American Alcoholic

- Is the pamphlet relevant to today's AA audience?

*Although the themes of the stories are real and many of the stories might be reflective of alcoholics who are older, I do not know if these stories would resonate with today's AA audience.*

- Does the pamphlet provide the kind of identification necessary to relate individually to Black alcoholics and to resonate within the Black community in general?

*This pamphlet provides identification to me. I'm a 68 year old, Midwestern (southern), heterosexual, product of the sixties who attended both segregated and integrated institutions. I found exact pieces of my story in almost every one of the stories in the pamphlet. I question whether younger alcoholics would have the same external experience although the core experience might be the same.*

- Does it adequately reflect the experience of Black alcoholics/members of AA?

*A number of the stories appear similar. The pamphlet doesn't have stories about blacks who have a non-conforming sexual orientation, racial view, profession, age, ethnic, geographic or cultural background. Also blacks who got sober in prison, black upper middle class drunks, blacks who were going to church, mosque, etc. In general, a wider diversity of background.*

- Are there any specific issues or topics that are not adequately addressed in this particular pamphlet that would be helpful to include in a revised version?

*Experiences of black alcoholics always end well in the pamphlet.. Many black alcoholics are not welcomed in AA and are rerouted to Narcotics Anonymous, especially in the prison system.*

- Any suggestions for a new title? *Working on some suggestions.*

**Submitted by J.B.**

**Is the pamphlet relevant to today's AA audience?**

I hadn't thought of this before, but "relevant to today's AA audience" is a notion that should be applied to all AA literature. And this pamphlet probably is not relevant to anybody under 60. We Baby Boomers all had similar experiences: boys singing on the street corners, girls giggling and anxious about going to parties, parents having weekend parties that allowed us to cadge drinks the next morning—and in some cases, even while the party was going on. I'm not sure that my 40- and 50-year-old friends had similar experiences growing up. My 44-year-old son grew up with the drunk parents, but his social life was waaay different from his older sister's and from his parents. Those electronic games, their music—almost a different culture.

Since the early 2000s, this world *really* has changed. And I think technology has changed us: We no longer live the way we used to. This pamphlet doesn't speak to how computers and technology have increased our isolation. I don't know if it's appropriate to bring this up, but to me there's one important, sad, and destructive aspect of technology that's seldom spoken of openly: I'm pretty sure drinking/drug use, computers, and pornography comprise the "social" lives of many, many people. I have two male friends whose lives have been emptied of nearly anything else. One of them surely has issues with alcohol (I know because I used to drink with him), but any mention of AA ends the conversation. I'm willing to bet that this particular illness (?) with technology applies to men of all races—I just wonder if it's affecting Black guys more. Usually everything does. As I said, this probably isn't the place for me to have brought this up. But it's true.

So. How can the harmful side of technology and its influence on us be conveyed in our literature? I have no idea, especially because things are changing so fast. I just know that I (at 73) identified with several of the pamphlet's current stories. My early drinking years had similar features to theirs. But I wonder whether my younger friends in AA would be interested in them. [Hope you're getting responses from some younger Black people.]

**Does the pamphlet provide the kind of identification necessary to relate individually to Black alcoholics and to resonate within the Black community in general?**

**Does it adequately reflect the experience of Black alcoholics/members of AA?**

I think the personalities and backgrounds were varied and did cover many of the ways we live the "Black experience."

What did not resonate for me was their collective AA experience. I can only speak for myself, but I have attended all-White meetings where I encountered a general lack of interest. And then there were times at a couple of (East Side) meetings that I have felt a coldness and a stand-offish attitude, not-quite-open hostility. I have been stared (glared) at and treated as an outsider. But that does *not* happen often. The White folks I have met over the years nearly always have been welcoming and have tried to make sure that I felt comfortable. They seemed genuinely interested in me. (It's just that after five years in the program, I had the urge to be around people who look like me. My sponsor [who is White] sent me to St. Nicholas.)

I think, however, that if the pamphlet is supposed to represent our real experiences, the issue of discrimination and non-acceptance has to be addressed.

I know I'm not the only person who has had not-so-wonderful AA encounters. Seems disingenuous not to acknowledge that they exist. And at some point, somewhere (probably not here though), we have to address the scarcity of African Americans in General Service. We Black AAs cannot place all the blame on our fellow White AAs. We need to be doing a lot more as well.

**What general or specific types of experience or expression are missing from the pamphlet? Are there any specific issues or topics that are not adequately addressed in this particular pamphlet that would be helpful to include in a revised version?**

Would it be a good idea to include the experiences of gay Black men and women? I've never thought to ask my gay friends whether they were ever made to feel "less than" after they joined the fellowship. Which is weird, because I just lost a very dear friend, a gay man—we often talked about racism but I don't recall discussions about racism within AA. And he never said anything about discrimination because of his sexuality. Wish I had thought of it....

**New title?**

No ideas. If I get one, I'll send it to you. Quick.

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