

National Award-Winning Psychologist Addresses Anxiety Disorders among African-Americans

By Teri Miller Barker

As a child, she found it quite interesting when people talked about someone who had ‘bad nerves’ or someone who had suffered ‘a breakdown.’ But no one had ever explained what it meant. “The interest in childhood *really* became an interest as an adult,” said Dr. Angela Neal-Barnett, Ph.D., a national award-winning psychologist, and leading expert on the subject of anxiety in African-American women. The Dayton Heart Hospital in collaboration with Women’s Radio Network, Ltd., presented the first in a series of interactive enrichment seminars at the Schuster Center Mathile Theatre on February 11, 2005. In celebration of Black History and Heart Health Month, Dr. Neal-Barnett was the premier speaker for the *When Women Speak* seminar series kick-off. Women of various ages, ethnicities and social backgrounds were in attendance to hear what she had to say about anxiety and fear among African-American women.

While studying to become a psychologist, she worked in an anxiety clinic and noticed that she never saw any African-Americans at all. When she questioned it, the experts in the field at that time surmised that African-Americans don’t get anxious. Discontent with that answer, Neal-Barnett set out to prove their hypothesis wrong. Not only did she conduct research that proves African-Americans do get anxious, she has written several articles on the subject and a book that tells how to overcome it.

“We don’t admit we’re anxious because we think we have to be strong Black women,” stated Neal-Barnett. “We just keep on keeping on, even though we know that something is wrong. We’re ashamed to admit that we’re anxious because we think that we’re the only one.” Admitting that you feel vulnerable or need help is often seen as ‘weak’ in the African-American community, but Neal-Barnett wants people to realize that seeking help is actually a sign of strength, not weakness.

In her new book, *Soothe Your Nerves*, Neal-Barnett addresses the factors that contribute to anxiety, panic, and fear and recommends healing methods that will help people with those types of disorders reclaim their lives.

Dr. Angela Neal-Barnett, a tenured faculty member at Kent State University, is also the CEO and Founder of Rise, Sally, Rise®, a company that is committed to helping women and children overcome anxiety and fear from a psychological, spiritual, and Black perspective. For more information, go to www.risesallyrise.com.

Women’s Radio Network’s executive producer, Patricia Griffin, and co-producer, Tammy Calvert are dedicated to the unification, empowerment and sisterhood of women. At their seminar, women were encouraged to interact with the speaker, and share their personal experiences. Before the seminar ended, women exchanged names and phone numbers as they invited each other into their Sister Circle. “The seminar was a huge success,” said Griffin. “Women were enriched with useful information that will impact their lives.” Women’s Radio Network is planning the next *When Women Speak* interactive seminar for midsummer 2005.