

The photographs and quotes on these pages are from *Nothing to Hide: Mental Illness in the Family*, a traveling photo-text exhibition. It is the most recent project created by a unique nonprofit organization, Family Diversity Projects. The mission of the Amherst, Massachusetts-based organization is to help eliminate prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination based on mental or physical disability, race, sexual orientation, gender, age, religion, and ethnicity.

*Nothing to Hide: Mental Illness in the Family* has also been published as a book by New Press in New York City. The book features 44 families including photographs and in-depth interviews with all of the family members.

Presented here is a small sample of photographs by Gigi Kaeser and interviews by Jean Beard and Peggy Gillespie from the *Nothing to Hide* book and exhibit. All of these families have a member, or members, who have been diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Their lives demonstrate strength, courage, integrity, and accomplishment in the face of adversity and the stigma of mental illness.

The exhibit, *Nothing to Hide*, travels nationwide to high schools, colleges, hospitals, mental health centers, statehouses, houses of worship, community centers, libraries, medical schools, museums, and conferences.

For information about how to bring this exhibit to your community to help fight stigma and educate the public about mental illness, please contact Family Diversity Projects, P.O. Box 1246, Amherst, MA 01004; phone: 413-256-0502; email: [info@familydiv.org](mailto:info@familydiv.org); or at their Web site: [www.familydiv.org](http://www.familydiv.org).



*The McDowells: Andrew, Bill, and Debbie; in the air, Jake; standing center, Luke*

# NOTHING



**McDowell Family** “Our youngest son, Luke, was recently diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Luke had to leave school four months ago, and be tutored at home. His teachers have not called, sent a note, or communicated with him at all. I told the principal that if Luke had a broken leg, pneumonia, or cancer, he would have been inundated with cards and phone calls. I’m sure this happens all the time because of the stigma of mental illness.”

—Deborah McDowell, Waltham, MA

**Norma Abbey** “My son Tony and I have a nice relationship and he knows I have bipolar [disorder]. When I’m manic, I have about thirty projects going on at the same time and I never finish any of them. When I’m depressed, I just sit on the sofa and I can’t get up. Other people might think, ‘Well, I can get up. Why can’t you?’ Well, I can’t get up because there are things going on in my mind that don’t allow me that freedom.”

—Norma Abbey, Hadley, MA



*Norma Abbey, with son Tony Linfield*

# TO HIDE

## Mental Illness in the Family



*Carol, Celeste, Antoine Chapman (Carol's great-grandson) and Wilma Sirmons*

**Chapman/Sirmons Family** “My problem was this bipolar thing. I couldn’t accept that I had a mental illness at first. I can’t say enough that if you take your medication, work with your therapist, and stop all the lying and cheating and hiding, the door to recovery will open up for you. I have recovered. I thought I’d never ever be happy again, but look, I’m getting ready to get married and I have a job. My life is working out real good!”

—Celeste Chapman, Pittsburgh, PA

**Cisco/Avery/Paul Family** “Last year the doctors told me that I have bipolar disorder. I can go through both mania and depression in the same day. My life has calmed down now and I feel at peace for the first time. I take my medication religiously, see my therapist often, and surround myself with people who accept me. All of me! I know who and what is important to me.”

—Molly Cisco, Wauwatosa, WI and Madison, WI



*Karen Avery, Molly Cisco, and Bill Paul*



Standing: Diana Wong and Dan Nanas. Seated: Ruth and George Wong

**Wong/Nanas Family** “Manic depression is an overwhelming mix of highs and lows. I’m getting better because they have all these good medicines out there. I live independently now, and I’m more hopeful than I ever was before.” Diana and Dan, who is also diagnosed with bipolar disorder, met two years ago at a treatment program. They now share an apartment where, Dan Nanas says, “we are doing okay.”

—Diana Wong, Fullerton, CA



Pearl Johnson, Audrey Jarrett, and Theodora Johnson

**Pearl Johnson/Audrey Jarrett/Theodora Johnson Family**

“I was seeing a doctor when I was a little girl who told me I’m bipolar-schizophrenic. I wound up going to prison way back when. The whole time I was in jail, nobody did nothing to help me. I think that’s why I was so crazy in there. I went through a lot of days of depression. When I was suicidal, the doctors took me off my meds. They told me, ‘You don’t need the medication. You just need to grow up.’ I thought, ‘What kind of place is this? It’s crazy.’”

—Audrey Jarrett, Compton, CA



Juan Iniguez

**Juan Iniguez** “Four years after my diagnosis with bipolar disorder, I met a social worker named Susan. If I felt like I couldn’t do something, she was there to say, ‘Yes, you can do it.’ I’ve found out that I’m very good with people who have mental illness because I understand their pain. I realize I was put here on earth to do something. I’m meant to help people.”

—Juan Iniguez, Monrovia, CA