

Diallo's death reminder of police brutality's toll

By *Nayaba Arinde*

Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — "It's tough," Kadiatou Diallo told the *AmNews* on the eve of the 10th anniversary of her son being gunned down in a fusillade of 41 bullets outside his home in the Bronx. "...An event [was held] on the 5th of February at Bronx Community College, where he was a student, to remember him and commemorate his passing."

This woman, a picture of quiet dignity and unrevealed, steady pain, seeks to offer inspiration to others with her work: by comforting other mothers who have lost children to police bullets; with her building of a school in Guinea; with her granting scholarships to African students studying at the Bronx Community College; and with her profusely thanking those who call to greet her and ask how is she doing?

It is like a paradox to begin Black History Month with this solemn commemoration, but it seems like it was yesterday that New York was rocked on its heels as news spread that four White cops had gunned down an unarmed Black man on his way home just after midnight on Feb. 4, 1999.

"The memory is so fresh. It's not easy," said Ms. Diallo. "For the whole week I have been going through that day every day. It has been 10 years. Babies have been born; people have moved on. Me? I'm not moving on. I keep living that day.

But we can move on by keeping Amadou's memory alive and working for positive change. On the anniversary, we will pray, give some food and remember him. We have five African students to whom we will present scholarships in his name.

We have given scholarships to students from all over Africa: Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Togo — every country has been represented." In the decade since the world first met Kadiatou Diallo, she has not wavered in her mission to ensure that her son did not die in vain.

"I have been touched by the love and support of so many people," she told the paper. "I want to thank everyone who marched and protested — I mean everyone: those young men who were arrested for the first time protesting for Amadou; the mothers, the sisters, the fathers and the brothers.



Kadiatou Diallo and her son, Amadou, who needlessly died.

Amadou is a mountain now for the community, for all the people. His name lives on in all our memories."

Ten years ago on Feb. 4, 1999, Amadou Diallo, 22, was shot at 41 times by four New York police officers as he stood at his front door at Webster Avenue at his Bronx home. The names of Kenneth Boss, Sean Carroll, Edward McMellon and Richard Murphy became synonymous with police brutality.

The Guinean immigrant street vendor was a regular, unarmed man when the cops unleashed the deadly barrage, which was to be repeated eight years later in Queens, when Mike Oliver, Michael Cooper and Giscard Isnora fired 50 bullets at an unarmed Sean Bell, Joseph Guzman and Trent Benefield, killing Bell mere hours before his wedding day.

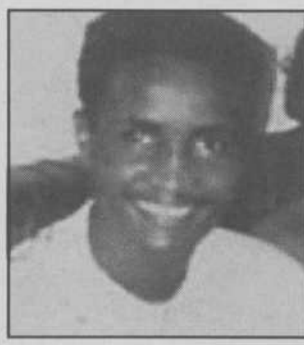
A city of activists, residents, elected officials and the like joined Rev. Al Sharpton and the National Action Network in immediately taking to the streets. There were marches in the Bronx, in Manhattan and across the Brooklyn Bridge, and what Sharpton determined "was the most successful New York civil disobedience in National Action Network's history."

The reverend organized 1,200 protesters to march outside NYPD headquarters at One Police Plaza over a series of days. The community demanded arrests and prosecutions of those responsible for the "murder" of Amadou Diallo.

Those lining up for the plastic cuffs included former mayor David Dinkins, Rev. Jesse Jackson and actress Susan Sarandon.

The hundreds of arrests by appointment caught the attention of the world stunned by the killing and the sight of noted celebrities and New York officials handing themselves over to be arrested for civil disobedience in the vein of Dr. Martin Luther King.

According to Rev. Sharpton, "It was probably



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the greatest multicultural act of civil disobedience in New York since the 1960s. We perfected a non-violent movement in New York. In fact, we did more than that. New York showed that mayors and cops, like everyone else, must have a dose of decency, common sense and willingness to communicate."

But underlining the whole period was the polarizing, racially insensitive — and some say "ignorant" — attitude of Mayor Rudy Giuliani, who habitually defended cops involved in numerous unprovoked shootings of young Black men.

A glorious motorcade ac-

companied Diallo's coffin to Newark International Airport in New Jersey, where Sharpton would go with the family to the burial in Guinea.

The murder had become an international incident. Two months later, cops arrested the serial rape suspect whom the four Street Crime Unit officers claimed they were on the lookout for when they killed Diallo. Despite the global spotlight shining on the case on Feb. 25, 2000, all four officers were acquitted. Amidst the outrage, Sharpton demanded a U.S. Justice Department investigation.

Eric Holder has become the nation's first Black attorney general. In 2001, the Justice Department announced that it would not pursue federal civil rights charges against the acquitted officers, with then acting Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. saying that they "could not prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the officers willfully deprived Mr. Diallo of

his constitutional right to be free from the use of unreasonable force."

So, the feds did nothing. The family moved on — both Saikou and Kadiatou set up educational and humanitarian foundations in memory of their son.

With famed attorney Johnnie Cochran representing the case, the family settled their civil suit with the city and the police department for \$3 million. In April 2002, Commissioner Ray Kelly said that he would disband, or some say reconfigure, the controversial Street Crime Unit.

There have been many police shooting deaths since Diallo, such as Malcolm Ferguson, Patrick Dorismond, Ousmane Zongo, Timothy Stansbury, Sean Bell, Ronald Battle and Jason Tirado.

"Forty-one bullets did not send a message to Giuliani or Bloomberg. We got 50 bullets next with Sean Bell," said Councilman Charles Barron.

"They still did not get the message because from Diallo to Bell, there have been countless police killings. We don't want to go from Giuliani time to Bloomberg and Kelly time, but the police are still out of control, and the mayor should know that the community will not tolerate it."

Meanwhile, Kadiatou holds gratitude and faith as her pillars on which to build. Of a recent meeting of mothers in an unfortunate club, Diallo told the paper, "I was with Mrs. Bell and other mothers whose children were killed by law enforcement. One lady's husband was a police officer killed by another police officer when he was in plain-clothes [Nathaniel Gaines, 26]. We bonded."

Kadiatou Diallo and Rev. Al Sharpton spoke at a press conference in the President's Conference Room at Bronx Community College last week.

"As the president of the (See Diallo, Page 11)

Your Horoscope Says...Feb. 12-18

ARIES

Even if you can't be with someone you care for, call that person or send a soul vibration to let them know you care. You'll feel better and so will the person. Take time to meditate on the good things life has in stored for you.

Soul Affirmation: The success of others is the investment I make in myself.

Lucky Numbers: 35, 41, 50

TAURUS

A person is only as good as their word. If you have made any promises recently remember to follow through. People will be counting on you. Any dissatisfaction you feel might come from not doing what you told someone that you would do.

Soul Affirmation: Superficiality is often the best route to clarity.

Lucky Numbers: 12, 18, 36

GEMINI

If you're not sure about a business deal ask someone who knows. Asking questions now can help avoid mistakes in the future. The love that you have been looking for is right in front of you. Your ability to see it improves this week.

Soul Affirmation: When I am clear about who I am, the world becomes clearer.

Lucky Numbers: 9, 14, 22

CANCER

Your ability to display enormous grace under enormous pressure will be tested this week. Use your gifts this week to transcend petty criticism. Consider the source and know that

you are doing just fine.

Soul Affirmation: I enjoy the love that others have for me.

Lucky Numbers: 8, 19, 41

LEO

You can expect a message from a distance to arrive this week and you'll be happy to hear it. The spirit is easily lifted if you remember that you only have to imagine your world the way you want it to be. Create a happy reality tonight!

Soul Affirmation: I let worry fly away.

Lucky Numbers: 24, 25, 30

VIRGO

You're likely to be efficient and productive this week. Even if you work hard you'll get satisfaction from a job well done! Use your talents to create some free time for yourself.

Soul Affirmation: With spirit I co-create my week.

Lucky Numbers: 7, 17, 21

LIBRA

Educate those around you in the area of personal growth. Their improvement will bring benefits to you. Humor in communication is the key. Humor in introspection is a must.

Soul Affirmation: Success that has been following me is trying to catch up.

Lucky Numbers: 16, 30, 39

SCORPIO

This week romance begins to percolate. Enjoy your feelings and let your brain relax. Suspend all judgments of others. Being stern won't work for you this week.

Soul Affirmation: I go along to get along.

Lucky Numbers: 1, 6, 19

SAGITTARIUS

Romance will find you this week. Don't be looking the other way. Your "rap" is especially strong. Make as many of those important phone calls as possible.

Soul Affirmation: Friendships are shock absorbers on the bumpy roads of life.

Lucky Numbers: 11, 13, 20

CAPRICORN

Don't take any big gambles this week, the time is not right for a flight into the unknown. A newfound harmony is in store for you and your mate. Your mate will understand your fears.

Soul Affirmation: New insights create new directions and a new cast of characters.

Lucky Numbers: 6, 48, 51

AQUARIUS

The air can be cleared easily. Admit your need for help. Seek understanding. You'll help another by seeking help from them. Communication problems will smooth themselves out.

Soul Affirmation: Moving slowly might be the fastest way.

Lucky Numbers: 33, 52, 54

PISCES

This week should bring an opportunity to further your education, don't pass it up. Pay special attention to details at work. A friend need your support. Find joy in giving it.

Soul Affirmation: All things work together for good.

Lucky Numbers: 26, 35, 43