

### MISSING PERSON

December 5, 2013  
Kalamazoo, Michigan

### TELEKA CASSANDRA PATRICK



Multimedia: Images

Alias:  
Teleka Cassandra Calderon

#### DESCRIPTION

Date(s) of Birth Used: September 18, 1983  
Height: 5'7"  
Weight: 160 pounds  
Occupation: Doctor (medical resident)

Hair: Black  
Eyes: Brown  
Sex: Female  
Race: Black

Remarks: At the time of her disappearance, Dr. Patrick was wearing a black full-zipper hoodie, black pants, and black shoes.

While millions enjoyed the joys of Christmas surrounded by friends and family this past December, many families of missing persons had to relive the agony of “the empty seat” at their dinner tables. The physical void created by a loved one’s absence cannot be filled by any other family member and becomes a constant reminder of the uncertain and dangerous world we live in. The numbers surrounding missing persons are astounding, as an average of 2,300 Americans are reported missing everyday. This number includes both adults and children. Yet, the allocated resources, and media air time granted to each story depends largely on race.

In 2013 Seong-Jae Min and John C. Feaster conducted a study that shed light on this racial disparity. While black Americans are more than one third of disappearances every year, fewer than 20 percent of these cases make the national news. Compare that with white missing persons who make up two thirds of the cases, but 80 percent of their stories become national headlines.

Natalie and Derrica Wilson, founders of Black and Missing Foundation Inc. (BAMFI) suggest that the sooner a missing person’s face appears in the media or in the halls of police precincts, the more likely that person will come home safely. For people of color, they say that neither the media nor the police come soon enough.

In fact, it has become more evident that being an active member of a community can mark the difference between keeping a case alive or having it filed away as an unsolved mystery, a cold case. The longer a case remains in the media the better chances of keeping law enforcement on its tracks until it's solved. Public involvement has a lot to do with where the human and financial resources will be invested for the solving of cases.

Up to the date of publication of this article, Dr. Teleka Cassandra Patrick (30) has been missing from her home in Kalamazoo, MI. On December 5<sup>th</sup> Patrick, a first-year student in Western Michigan University’s residency program, was last seen in the parking lot of Borgess Medical Center where

she worked. After ending her shift at 7:00 PM she asked a male co-worker to drop her off at the Radisson Hotel downtown. There she is seen on surveillance footage trying to get a room. She had no identification, no credit cards and not enough cash. She was not able to get a room and left, after 14 minutes, in the hotel shuttle that took her back to her car still parked in the hospital's parking lot. At 10:00 PM her car, containing her wallet, driver's license and a few items of clothing but no car keys was found 100 miles away in Indiana. According the local authorities and the FBI, Patrick vanished without a trace.

Dr. Patrick, the daughter of a retired minister and nurse was raised in Queens, New York. An active member of her community of faith, she was known as the sweet and intelligent girl who wanted to be a doctor. Upon completing high school, she had the opportunity to attend Harvard but opted to attend Oakwood University in Alabama, staying close to her Seventh-day Adventist roots and network. After completing her Bachelors degree, she then left for Loma Linda University in California, another Seventh-day Adventist institution, where she completed a medical degree and doctorate in biochemistry. Six months ago, she moved to Michigan to begin a 4-year residency program in psychiatry.

Life paths lead Dr. Patrick away from her childhood hometown with even her parents moving to Florida after retirement. Yet, over the years Patrick kept in touch with her network of friends. The importance of that contact with her community manifested itself during this time of great need. Her community of origin responded by pulling their financial resources together and using social media to rally support for her family.

*How does a resident medical doctor just disappear in thin air?* There are still many unanswered questions about the details surrounding her disappearance that remain haunting as days go by. One thing is clear from this case, individually we are only as strong as our communities. Furthermore, how we network within these communities has exponential growth power. For weeks following her disappearance, Dr. Patrick's community has kept her case alive. The power of her community forced the media to pay

**attention and give her story the necessary air time.**

**According to the FBI's website, the poster of Dr. Patrick's disappearance has been shared more than 3,500 times on Facebook. A Twitter account, @FindTeleka, has garnered more than 1,000 followers. A fundraiser titled #FindTeleka on gofundme.com has raised nearly \$35,000 from almost 500 separate donations that will go toward search efforts. The case has been featured on Nancy Grace, Good Morning America, CNN and several local Michigan and New York affiliates.**

**On Sunday December 22<sup>nd</sup> , I attended a benefit concert on behalf of Dr. Teleka Francis in Laurelton, Queens. All 1,200 seats of the Linden Seventh-day Adventist Church were filled with dozens more bodies lined up against the wall. The concert in its great majority was attended and lead by young adult gospel groups, choirs and artists. The program was an outpouring of prayers and songs mingled with tears of hope and faith. In 4 hours the attendees reached the \$10,000 goal and surpassed it on the Internet. It was the powerful voice of a community mobilizing in support of one of its own.**

**While #findteleka has become the daily rallying social media cry of thousands, it is also a daring reminder that we are only as strong as our communities. This is the irony of our technologically driven world. Technology, often seen as an alienating factor of our existence, used strategically can pull people together and build stronger communities. Yet, Twenty-first Century survival still mandates that we reach out and touch. Therefore, using social media and the Internet to stay in touch, impersonal as it may seem to some, is critical. These are our new social survival tools. They can become our saving grace for they can unleash the power of our communities to mobilize and cry out for help. Until the questions surrounding Dr. Patrick's**

**disappearance are answered we keep hope alive.**

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