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To whom it may concern,

Please accept this letter as a nomination for Rwenshaun Miller to receive the Clifford W. Beers Award for his efforts towards stopping the stigma that revolves around mental illness. It is truly an honor to submit my colleague and friend for this outstanding award.

Rwenshaun goes by many different titles; he is a teacher, mentor, counselor, advocate, coach, leader, and speaker. However, today, I want to take the time to acknowledge him as a good man and a better friend. You see, Rwenshaun has this ability to reach people and challenge them to see things from an alternative perspective. This is something I saw in him from the moment we met.

Before meeting Rwenshaun, I was one of those people who thought men aren't supposed to cry or "be weak", sadness was reserved for girls and women. That's what I was raised to know. But, from the moment I met Rwenshaun, I've been forced to change my perspective. He looks like my father, my uncles, my brothers, my friends - but he differs in the fact that he has taken time to acknowledge his mental health, and to accept that it's okay to get help. He has completely transformed my idea of what it means to be a "strong man".

Over the past year of knowing Rwenshaun, I have watched him impact our community in a way that I haven't even seen the larger mental health organizations try to do. He does the work, and he's genuine about it. This is reflected in every single engagement I've watched him do.

Shaun uses non-traditional methods for reaching the community like his series, "Lets Talk About It". He hosts a call with the intention of creating a safe space for men to call in and talk about what's on their minds. These men get a chance to discuss things that pertain to their mental health and the feedback from people I know that have attended has been outstanding.

I'm constantly seeing people send so much gratitude towards this man for opening their eyes to the bigger picture. Rwenshaun shows us that mental illness doesn't have a face, or a zip code, a socio-economic status, or a race. Everyone should be cognizant of the importance of acknowledging and taking care of their mental health.

What I respect about this man the most is his willingness to be so bold in his approach to spreading mental health awareness. Here you have a college educated former athlete, who is African American, stepping up on this platform to openly discuss his struggles with being diagnosed as Bi Polar to a community who's most common response is to pray it away. It's truly a powerful initiative that literally grabs your attention and makes you *want* to have this conversation.

Most recently, I recall a speaking engagement where someone decided to call Rwenshaun a "psychopath" in front of a crowd of people. The way that he handled himself and articulated the importance of being mindful of the way you use these terms and casually mis-diagnosing people was incredibly profound. He leaves the whole room with something to digest and talk about at the dinner table for the first time.

What I really want to highlight here is not only the expertise and amazing work that Rwenshaun does for his community, but how truly human he makes this conversation. Rwenshaun makes you drop the stigma and see him for who he is. A human being. He allows you to truly see that he could be any one of us, and with that, develop a sense of compassion and welcoming for conversation about the importance of mental health.

Clifford W. Beers and Rwenshaun L. Miller have a few things in common; they both have suffered psychological distress, acknowledged the seriousness of taking care of their mental health, and used their stories to bring others to awareness and acceptance. I truly know no better candidate for this prestigious award and appreciate you taking the time to consider this nomination.

Warmly,

Amanda S. Muhammad, M.A.

A Peace of Yoga, Owner