On Monday, August 24th, 2009, Community Service Officer Philip Eegbara Kara was killed in an automobile crash on his way home from work, leaving EPD and the rest of Campus Services in shock. The following is an attempt to commemorate the life of a dedicated husband, father, activist, coworker and friend.

Philip Kara started at Emory in 2001, and at the start, he pretty much kept to himself. “He was so private when he came to work here, almost withdrawn.” said Lieutenant Connie Corpening. “Philip was a political refugee from Nigeria. It took him several years and a lot of help to bring his family here from a refugee camp in Benin. After a while he came to trust us, and so many of us worked together to help him reunite his family. His wife and two sons came here about six or seven years ago, and they had two more sons and a daughter since they were reunited. He was always smiling and had a strong faith in God. He is truly missed.”

Officer Marvin Poulson recalls, “He didn’t have a bad bone in his body. He was always very supportive, encouraging everyone he talked to. In fact, our last conversation – he pulled me out of my office to give me words of encouragement. The very last thing he said to me was that I needed to encourage myself. He loved God, loved his family and he loved his country.” Former Emory employee Portia Allen, now living and working in Rwanda, included these sentiments in her latest email update: “The night before Brother Kara died, he and I conversed briefly-this phone call is very precious to me. Similarly, the "chill out time with his family" via a traditional Nigerian dinner and Nollywood movie is quite special...when I reflect on these afternoon/evening moments in early August 2009, there was so much that Brother Kara shared with me then that has strengthened me now.”

Detective Craig Christian “knew” Philip before any of us. “I was fortunate to have conducted the preemployment background for Philip and was absolutely blown away with what I found out. At one point I could not figure out why this guy with so many credentials and worldly experience was applying for an entry level position with Emory. No one I spoke to during the background investigation had anything negative about Philip. In fact a couple of employers asked for his contact information so that they could offer him a position with their organization. Once he joined our team, Philip quickly impressed his co-workers with his enthusiasm and diligence to get the job done. No task was too big and no assignment was too little. If you needed his help he was there. I took pleasure in the years following getting to know the man who was not only a good friend, but a devoted husband and loving father. He spoke of his role as a family man often with me, even helping me through the tough time with my divorce. What I remember most about Philip is that no matter what your differences were, no matter how spirited the debate he would always leave me with that big bright smile, a hand shake and in that beautiful Nigerian accent ‘Chris, I’ll see you tomorrow’.”

But fellow CSO Barifiaa Kponi knew him best, having grown up with Officer Kara in Nigeria, where they were both members of the Ogoni tribe. Reunited many years later by their fervent political activism, they resettled in the US together, where they continued to struggle for the rights of their people. “Philip was well respected; a warm and caring person who always put the welfare of others before his own. He was very kind, compassionate and generous to people. He never allowed pride to overtake his personality. He was a man that was passionately committed to making things better for his people, and did not forget where he came from. He was a strong leader in our community, and it will be hard for anyone to fill his shoes.”

Philip leaves his beloved wife, Leton, four sons: Barinaadada, Dumbari, Barinaale, and Bariate; and his daughter Bariture to continue his legacy. He will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

Rest in peace, Friend.