

The Race For The Cure

It was my fifth anniversary at the Komen Race for the Cure, and for the first time I journeyed solo. I had in the past coordinated a small group of walkers. It was my way to pool women—of whom some are my closest friends—together to support finding a cure for a disease that affects and claims the life of millions of women. It was also my way to advocate that strength comes in numbers. But that day, I walked alone.

On June 3, 2006, I woke at around 6:15 AM and began to prepare for the race. I turned on the TV to catch News 8's live broadcast of the Pre-Race Rally, and, as a customary in the program, Nancy Brinker, founder of the *Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation*, was delivering a heartfelt and bittersweet tale of losing her sister, Susan G. Komen, to breast cancer. Komen was only thirty-six when she died. To fulfill a promise to her dying sister, Nancy began a foundation that would for over twenty years continue to provide cumulative knowledge and awareness of the dreadful disease. Condoleezza Rice was up next, and as she told her poignant tale of the loss of her mother many years ago to breast cancer my heart sunk. In the five years that I had participated in the race, it was my first time as someone who has a family member that was diagnosed with breast cancer. I closed my eyes and said a small prayer for both of my aunts who are doing well.¹

Minutes later, WUSA 9's local news anchor, Andrea Roane, called for a moment of silence, which preceded the Parade of Pink. Thousands of breast cancer survivors walked a few blocks onto the National Mall, representing their journeys of life and resilience. The sea of pink and smiling faces rendered an emotion that filled my eyes with tears, more so when one of the

¹ In memory of Essle Davidson and Hazel Rogers-Dick. RIP

survivors told her story of being diagnosed twice and losing both breasts while struggling not to lose her battle with breast cancer.

I dried my eyes and hustled out the door. At about 7:50 AM, I got up to Union Station. I rode the Metro a few station stops to the National Mall. At 8:00 AM sharp, the runners were off, followed by the walkers at 8:15 AM. I walked briskly down Constitution Avenue along with thousands of men and women. Sixty-five degrees, slightly overcast with no rain in the forecast, was a great incentive to journey to the end of the 5K race. I was gaining on the halfway marker at a steady pace when my old ballet/modern dancing ankle injury started to kick in. Nonetheless, as always, I was determined to complete the race.

More than halfway to the finish line, I passed a woman who was walking briskly and, astonishingly, aided by a long white cane. Yes, she was legally blind but physically able to show her support.

When I crossed the finish line at about ten minutes over an hour, I felt pleased to have yet again participated in an event that focuses on helping to find a cure for millions of women who have been and will be diagnosed with breast cancer.

To all of you women, please remember to perform a monthly breast self-exam. Remember, early detection can save your life.

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