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Journey of the Fearless Woman

By Tiffany Carter

There is an enormous power in the word Fearless and there is a true strength in every Woman. The Tigerlily Foundation (Tigerlily) helps develop a Fearless Woman in many of its members who are fighting breast cancer. This foundation is the canvas to which many breast cancer diagnosed women illustrate their stories. It is a place where women seek understanding, hope and help while facing the different obstacles of this disease. founder, maimah Karmo, is a woman of sheer will and power, who has reached beyond the depths of fear to encourage others. maimah is a woman who has exemplified strength and courage in order to overcome the devastation of breast cancer. With the help of the Tigerlily foundation, many of the diagnosed women are given strength to live a life fulfilled. "When I received my initial diagnosis, I was stunned", explained maimah. Six months earlier, she began to experience extreme fatigue and night sweats. Little did maimah know these could be signs of cancer.

Performing a breast self exam, she felt a lump and immediately called her doctor, who told her to get a mammogram and referred her to a breast surgeon. During the visit with the breast surgeon, the doctor performed an unsuccessful aspiration, yet assured her that it could not be breast cancer, explaining that she was too young and being that maimah had no family history of breast cancer it was not of concern. The doctor said the lump was merely a "cyst", not to worry and to come back for a checkup 6 months later. Before the sixth month, maimah's "cyst" had doubled in its size. Revisiting the same doctor, maimah insisted on a biopsy, even though the doctor was against it, and wanted to schedule a re-aspiration. maimah scheduled the appointment. The next day, February 28th, 2006, maimah was diagnosed with Stage 2 breast cancer at the age of 32. Moving forward her life would never be the same. With prayer and comfort from family, maimah finished chemotherapy. This systematic treatment is administered in an effort to kill cancer producing cells just as fast as they are produced. Chemotherapy ("chemo") is a life altering treatment, which maimah and many others have endured.

Common side effects include fatigue, vomiting and nausea. Being that chemo is unable to distinguish the difference between the cancer cells and other rapid growing cells (i.e.: hair, skin and blood cells) many patients experience hair loss. Cancer patients undergoing chemo are typically on cycles or schedules to effectively target the growth patterns of different cancerous cells. Due to the variety of cancers, there are many different levels and ways of receiving chemo. Although it is deemed inhumane, chemo is a treatment that many cancer survivors have to undergo until a more humane treatment is designed. Once completing her treatment, maimah had a new spirit. Her determination to enlighten other women about breast cancer was her primary goal. With pure determination the Tigerlily foundation was founded. "Cancer can be a lonely thing, because ultimately, it's scary and isolating", explained maimah. Using what could have been a setback, she pushed forward to motivate, encourage and educate women. According to BreastCancer.org, "Besides skin cancer, breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer among U.S. women". Developing the Tigerlily was an effort to "connect the dots" and to ensure breast cancer awareness and connect diagnosed women with one another. Promoting and empowering women to be fearless is a core value of Tigerlily. A vision inspired from God, maimah's foundation warmed many hearts. Along with the expansion of her foundation was the growth of her reputation. The benefit to educating women (and men) around the world about breast cancer is rewarding because it's about revealing their individual power. Not long after developing the Tigerlily, maimah became a sought after speaker, published writer, breast cancer and women's rights activist dedicated to advocating for breast cancer awareness. Tigerlily founder maimah has been featured on shows, such as: Good Morning America with anchor Robin Roberts (breast cancer survivor) and she has also appeared on the Oprah Winfrey Show along with breast cancer survivors Christina Applegate (actress) and Nancy Brinker (founder of Susan G. Komen for the Cure). Aside from enlightening others, maimah has produced two websites (www.maimahKarmo.com; www.Tigerlilyfoundation.org) and written a book titled "How Breast Cancer Saved My Life". Tigerlily is dedicated to providing breast cancer education and hands-on support, including chemotherapy buddy support, meals, providing financial assistance, and inspiration for women touched by this disease – during treatment and beyond. The Tigerlily foundation strives to empower, improve and promote living life abundantly. maimah lives by the quote, "love the moment, and the energy of that moment will spread beyond all boundaries"—Maimah Karmo, Founder of the Tigerlily Foundation



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