

Voices of FORCE

LaDonna A.

Illinois

BRCA1+ and an uncertain variant in BRCA2. Breast cancer survivor. Prophylactic oophorectomy and mastectomy. Reconstructive surgery - tissue expanders and the new 410's (Gummy Bear implants)

My favorites:

Song: Superstar by Luther Vandross. This song just speaks to my heart. The melody and vocals are superb and I am the biggest Luther fan. Unfortunately as I battled breast cancer Luther battled a massive stroke and passed away in 2006.

TV Show: House. I love House because it deals with a different subject matter each show and the cast is great.

Celebrity: Oprah Winfrey. She has always been an inspiration. She is like a second mom. Through watching her shows over the years I have learned a lot of life lessons.

Person: I am a big fan of Sue Friedman. The energy, drive, and dedication she gives everyone and to FORCE is amazing. When I grow up I would love to be just like her.

My Stats

I'm 37, African American, married with twins.

My Journey

I tested at the recommendation of an oncologist. He did not recommend counseling and I know nothing about BRCA so I did not know what to ask. My mother was diagnosed with breast cancer at the same age I was and died at 37...so I knew there was something going on.

What has been the hardest part of your journey?

Dealing with the emotions of not knowing if another cancer might occur. Knowing that I have two children that might have to deal with all that I have in the past 6 years. The journey was hard and long but by God's good grace I made it through.

Would you have done anything different?

I would have had a baseline mammogram at 25 years old and been more proactive in doing breast self-exams and educating myself on breast cancer as a whole.

Anything else you'd like to share with our community

That I am an energetic person with a great will. I love meeting new people, traveling, and photography. I am a huge Oprah Winfrey fan and was once a guest on her show!!!

How did FORCE Help Your Journey?

When I was newly diagnosed...it felt as if a rain cloud had set above my head. That is the way my day felt not knowing if it would ever go away. After finally meeting up with a genetic counselor she told me about the FORCE website and once I logged on and read the threads and received a personal email from Sue, it was like that rain cloud turned into a beautiful rainbow. Sue and the others helped me to understand what the BRCA positive status meant and how to deal with it. FORCE was a reigning force in my battle with breast cancer.



Look behind Oprah for LaDonna!