

A Letter to My Sisters from **KAREN E. JACKSON**

31-YEAR, 4-TIME BREAST CANCER SURVIVOR



To my beautiful sisters,



I WRITE TO YOU TODAY NOT JUST AS A 4-TIME BREAST CANCER SURVIVOR BUT AS A WITNESS TO THE REALITIES THAT TOO MANY OF US FACE. FOR OVER 31 YEARS, I'VE STOOD AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE BLACK BREAST CANCER MOVEMENT, WATCHING AS BREAST CANCER HAS STOLEN AWAY OUR MOTHERS, OUR DAUGHTERS, OUR SISTERS, AND OUR FRIENDS. THIS DISEASE, WHICH IS CLAIMING BLACK WOMEN'S LIVES AT AN ALARMING RATE, DEMANDS OUR ATTENTION NOW MORE THAN EVER.

*A*s Black women, we take pride in our appearance—our hair, our clothes, our nails, our lashes. We are meticulous about our beauty, but when it comes to our health, particularly our breast health, too many of us are silent, uninformed about family history and don't make breast health a priority. Sisters, I am pleading with you to change this mindset. We must understand that our beauty and our health are not mutually exclusive. They are intertwined, and one cannot thrive without the other.

I've seen too many of our sisters die. I've walked with them, talked with them, cried with them, and mourned them. After three decades of working in the breast health advocacy space, the numbers are still dire. Black women are 42% more likely to die of breast cancer. Even more alarming is young black women under 35 are three times more likely to die from breast cancer than our white counterparts. While we have made some progress, but it's not enough. These statistics should be your personal call to action!

WE NEED YOU TO STAND WITH SISTERS NETWORK INC., TO STAND UP FOR YOURSELVES, AND TO MAKE YOUR HEALTH A PRIORITY.

Early detection is not a slogan, it can save lives—your life. But you must start somewhere. The silence that plagues our community is deafening, and it's killing us. Too many women carry shame about being a survivor, but there is no shame in survival. There is strength, there is courage, and there is hope. Let's break this silence together.

Sisters Network Inc. is the pioneer in the black breast cancer movement since 1994, and we're not going anywhere. We're here to help you, but we need you to help us normalize talking about breast cancer in our community. We need our sisters to take action. I love my sisters deeply, and I worry about our future. I have two granddaughters, and I fear for them, which is why I am committed to growing our Young Sisters Initiative. We must reach young Black women in their 20's and 30's. We need to arm them with the knowledge and tools they need to protect themselves.

As an organization, we are receiving more phone calls and seeing more young women—some as young as 21—speaking out on platforms like Instagram and TikTok. This is powerful, and it's a start, but we need more. We need to destigmatize breast cancer in our community. We need to demand better care and more comprehensive screening. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force may recommend starting screenings at age 40 for women at average risk, but for us, that's simply not enough. Any woman, at any age, should be able to get a 3D mammogram and ultrasound when she feels it is necessary. This should be a right, not a privilege.

Research shows that Black women have nearly a three-fold increased risk of triple-negative breast cancer, an aggressive breast cancer with a poor prognosis that's less likely to be detected by screening.

As Black women, our breast density, our genetics, our very bodies put us at greater risk, yet we're still too often overlooked and under served in the medical system. **THIS CANNOT CONTINUE. WE DESERVE BETTER.**

Here is what I want you to know: You are not alone, and finances should never be a barrier to your health. If you are uninsured, Sisters Network Inc. will cover the cost of your 3D mammograms and ultrasounds.

WE HAVE BEEN HERE FOR 30 YEARS, AND WE WILL CONTINUE TO FIGHT AND ADVOCATE FOR OUR YOU.

Sisters, it's time to take control of our health, our bodies, and our futures. It's time to speak up, to get screened, and to demand the care we deserve. I've seen too much, but I've also seen the power of our community when we come together.

*In Unity There is Strength, In Strength There Is Power,
In Power There is Change.*

Let's use that power to protect ourselves and the generations to come.

In Sisterhood, with love and solidarity,
KAREN EUBANKS JACKSON

CEO/FOUNDER, SISTERS NETWORK® INC.

Four-time, 31-year Breast Cancer Survivor

Author, "In the Company of Sisters, My Story, My Truth"