



MICHELLE LEE WHITLOCK

Advocate, Author, Motivational Speaker, Survivor

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Michelle developed her keen sense of leadership, resilience, drive and survivorship early in life. She was born in 1975 and raised in Silver Spring, Maryland just outside the Nation's Capital. Abandoned by her mother at age three, Michelle and her two sisters were raised by her struggling single father. He suffered a serious injury in 1986 and was never able to work again. As the middle child, Michelle emerged as the leader and care-taker (with the help of her grandmother) for her two sisters and often her father, as he was in and out of the hospital.

During high school, Michelle watched as her father battled bouts of depression and drug abuse. Determined to have a better life, Michelle began working her senior year. Her father died when she was just twenty-one. While her sisters fell into the devastating clutches of addiction, Michelle remained the family anchor against the storm.

After taking a few years off from school to save money, Michelle went back to school where she learned the delicate balance between full-time work and full-time school. A member of The Phi Theta Kappa Society, she earned an Associates of Arts in Business Administration in 1997 from Montgomery College. She went on to Columbia Union College and graduated 'Cum Laude' in 2002 with a Bachelors of Science in Organizational Management.

Michelle was busy climbing the corporate ladder; giving no thought to motherhood in late 2001, when at just 26 her world came to a screeching halt—she was diagnosed with cervical cancer. The GYN-oncologist told Michelle she needed a radical hysterectomy immediately, which would leave her unable to bear children. Having no children, Michelle in her feisty way, set out to find other options. She researched treatments, sought out a second opinion and challenged her doctors with the difficult and often uncomfortable questions. In the end, she opted for a radical trachelectomy—a fertility saving procedure.

Although this procedure has good success rates, Michelle is not one of them. Just two short years later, at 29 her cancer returned, only days after her boyfriend proposed. Doctors urged her to undergo a radical hysterectomy once again. Michelle refused, determined to find a way to save her fertility. Again, she researched, asked questions and sought additional medical opinions. None of the answers she found were different, however the delivery of the message varied greatly between doctors. Wanting to be seen as more than a cancer patient, Michelle carefully selected doctors who recognized her as a young woman fighting for her future and the life she envisioned.

In a matter of eight weeks, Michelle with the help of her team of doctors harvested eggs, created 7 embryos—'maybe babies', flew to Jamaica, got married, and ten days later checked into the hospital for treatment. Michelle underwent the radical hysterectomy, a partial vaginectomy and removal of some lymph nodes; followed by 5.5 weeks of radiation and chemotherapy.

Today, she has worked for the same company for over sixteen years. She climbed her way from a part-time sales associate to an executive, who has achieved many successes and awards along the way. Determined no other women should suffer from this preventable disease the way she did, Michelle started sharing her story. She has combined her years of leadership with her passion for education to help thousands of women across the Nation.

Michelle is available to speak to your group/organization about:

- HPV and Cervical Cancer Awareness & Prevention
- Patient Advocacy: Getting the Care You Deserve
- Reclaiming Your Sexuality After Gynecological Cancer
- Victim Impact Statement
- Overcoming Life's Challenges to Achieve Your Dreams
- Design a Key Note Address for your group

Michelle believes in giving back to the community and holds the following volunteer positions:

- Director, Mid-South Chapter TN/AR/MS of the NCCC (National Cervical Cancer Coalition)
- Board Member & Survivor Spokesperson, Tamika & Friends Inc
- Member, Tennessee Comprehensive Cancer Control Coalition (TC4) and Women's Subcommittee
- Spokesperson for Qiagen, the manufacture of The HPV Test, which discovered Michelle's cancer after a Pap Test missed it.

She has participated in the following conferences/events:

- Life Beyond Cancer, Arizona—Dec 2008
- The 7th annual Women in Government conference, Washington, DC—Nov 2008
- LIVESTRONG Young Adult Alliance Conference, Austin, TX—Nov 2008
- The NCCC annual conference—Sept 2007 & Oct 2008
- Guest Speaker at the "Beat the Clock Walk," New York City—Sept 2008 and Wash, DC—May 2008

Michelle in the Media (her published articles, stories featuring Michelle and interviews):

- The Stupid Cancer Radio Show, Jan 12, 2009
- The Group Room Interview, Nov 2008
- Redbook Magazine, Sept 2008
- The West Clinic's Wings Newsletter, Fall 2007. Her Article, "Breaking the Silence"
- Documentary, Break the Silence, Fall 2007
- MAMM Magazine, May 2007. Her Article, "That Girl"
- John's Hopkins Physician Update, Fall 2002

Michelle's memoir, "Reframing a Tragedy: a memoir of enduring love, loss, infertility & cancer," is currently unpublished. It is her compelling journey through cancer to find her true authentic self and life purpose. Quotes from some who have read Michelle's book and heard her speak:

- "I'm continually impressed every time I come into contact with you. Not just because you are this obviously 'awesome author', but for many other reasons: your talent, creativeness and vulnerability are nothing less than admirable. I loved your book! I laughed; cried, got goose bumps, felt motivated, felt weak...everything a great book should make you feel!"
-Kristi, cervical cancer survivor
- "Michelle, your book was amazing! I was so glad to have it for my 4 hour bus ride. Little did I know I wouldn't be putting it down for the entire ride and then in the cab to finish the last few pages. I laughed and I cried (what a cliché—but it is true)! I think it's wonderful how candid you were about everything you experienced. I felt like I got a better sense of how my mom was truly feeling by reading your book. You said all the things she was afraid to say, afraid to admit. I feel your book is going to prove to be an amazing tool for young women!" -Robin, lost her mother to cervical cancer
- "I didn't tell you this when we first met at the National Cervical cancer Coalition's Conference in Washington, DC but girl, from the moment you stood up and spoke I thought, this girl has got it going on! First by sight, you captivate with your willowy height, pretty face, and stylish dress and then with your words which were wrapped in passion and delivered so articulately. I had a similar experience reading your work. Your message resonates and goes much deeper than cancer. You are powerful. You communicate with approachable authority. Women with and without cancer will be equally compelled to read your story. You have a natural way of bringing your story to life. I saw everything as you laid it out on the page. I hung on your every word, and wanted more."
-Jane, Executive Producer FLASH