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# THROUGH THEIR EYES

PHOTOGRAPHS SHINE LIGHT ON BREAST CANCER IN BLACK COMMUNITY

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by Lisa Spellman



We R Family.  
You need to start with the education of your own family.



A one-night gallery show featured the Photo Voice images at Hot Shops in Omaha. From left, photographers Deborah Dailey, Jackie Hill, project leader Adrienne Marinkovich and Jimmie Johnson.

The photograph shows a beautiful woman in her early 20s with a metallic scarf wrapped around her head.

Her strong presence defies the fear in her eyes.

Jackie Hill took her picture to share her story, which goes like this:

Two years ago, she found a lump in her breast and went to a doctor. “Don’t worry about it, you’re too young to get breast cancer,” she is told.

But, the feeling of dread doesn’t go away. So, the young woman goes to another doctor.

This time her lump is tested. “I’m sorry, you have stage four breast cancer.”

Jackie Hill took her picture so every woman knows: no one is too young to get breast cancer.

The photograph is one of many Hill took for “Breast Health Inclusion Initiative: Closing the Gaps in Breast Health in North Omaha,” the capstone project of Adrienne Marinkovich, a student in the UNMC College of Public Health.

Marinkovich got the idea and funding for her project, nicknamed Photo Voice, from the Nebraska Affiliate of the Susan G. Komen for the Cure, where she’s worked for the past two years. She also received funding from the Dr. Robert D. Sparks Research Award.

“The whole idea behind the project is to empower women to become advocates in their community,” said Marinkovich, who, with the help of Hill, recruited 13 other women to photograph their north Omaha community.

Through pictures, the women identify the resources in their community that promote breast health. Loved ones, books about dealing with breast cancer and parks are just a few of the images that reflect this idea.

They also took pictures that represent barriers to breast health, such as cigarette stores, empty bus stops and dilapidated houses.

Yet, the most startling images aren’t the pictures but the predictors for breast cancer mortality.

In 2009, the American Cancer Society reported:

- African-American women have higher rates of breast cancer before age 40.
- African-American women are more likely to die from breast cancer at every age.

Similarly, a report released this year by the Nebraska Affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure states that African-American women have a disproportionately higher mortality rate than other women in the state.


- In Nebraska, African-Americans make up only 4 percent of the state’s population, but African-American women are 1.7 times more likely to die from breast cancer than Caucasian women. The report found that between 1996 and 2005, 40 out of 100,000 African-American women died from breast cancer compared to 24 out of 100,000 Caucasian women.

The reports strike at the heart of Photo Voice participant Deborah Dailey.

“Something has to be done to educate our community, especially our women,” Dailey said. Not enough women in her community talk about breast health, she said, or why screenings are needed or where to access those screenings.

“Do we need to put something on the grocery sacks at the store to remind women to get their mammogram? How do we get the word out?” Dailey asks.

She and other participants in the Photo Voice project have formed a group, North Omaha Voice, to tackle those and other questions.

“If we want change in our community, WE have to do it,” said Photo Voice participant Jimmie Johnson. 

**For information about North Omaha Voice contact Jackie Hill at 402-595-3807. View the photos at [www.kommenbraska.org](http://www.kommenbraska.org)**