

## BIOGRAPHY DENISE ROBERTS

**WE DO** not always have the opportunity to meet a person who is able to light up dark tunnels with their enormous passion for life, love and family. Sometimes that passion is born or resurrected out of ill-fated traumas; illness, hopelessness and/or death, which we have to sometimes face in life. Denise is a woman who is lighting many tunnels. After surviving one of the most brutal blows to womanhood, she is living proof that women can win the battle of Breast Cancer, if their symptoms are detected and treated during the early stages of the deadly disease.

**IN 1987** and at the young age of 35, as a part of a routine gynecological check-up, Denise choose to have a mammogram. With no cancer-related symptoms, and against her doctor's advice, she forced the issue because of the strong and dreaded cancer-related history in her immediate family. Cancer had visited her maternal grandmother, who died two years after having a mastectomy in 1972. Her brother was only three years old when he died from Leukemia. Also, her father's sister, is a breast cancer survivor in her 20th year.

**BY KNOWING** the seriousness of her families medical background, Denise went to great lengths of attempting to prevent her body from attracting this deadly disease by not smoking and drinking. Due to these precautions, she never felt at risk for cancer. Due to her small breast size, she also thought that there was no room for this deadly disease to live in her body. She even went a step further and tried to do the right thing by breast-feeding her two children as another attempt at prevention.

**TWO DAYS LATER** after the mammogram, the physician told her that "something" had shown up. A biopsy procedure was mandatory. The results came back negative, but through divine intervention, Denise and her husband, Dr. Antoine Roberts, an orthopedic surgeon, wanted to be sure. Therefore, he had the tissue samples sent to another laboratory for testing. After the doctors confirmed the test results, her nightmare began. This awakening caused her to have her entire right breast removed. After the removal, the surgeon informed her that they had



found seven more carcinomas (tumors) in her breast tissue, which were not detected by the mammogram. There were also, fifteen lymph nodes removed, which had not been attacked by cancer cells. In 1997, she decided to have breast reconstruction, which took three surgeries to get it right.

**DENISE EXPRESSES** that we as parents pass on so many things from one generation to another from; genetic coding, excess baggage, to undying faith. She thinks about the concept "From A Mother to A Daughter/Son" and stands ready, should her own daughter and/or son need the knowledge and strength to deal with a doctor explaining the effects of Radiation/Chemotherapy treatments, monsters who impersonate doctors and the cold factual description of removing a breast or two.

**TODAY DENISE IS** a happy, healthy and productive cancer survivor who is committed to getting the word out, "Mammograms can save lives". Her battle scars have become medals in this war against Breast Cancer and Ignorance regarding health care. She is committed to being a voice to the voiceless. In 1999, her experience and struggles inspired her to establish "The Denise Roberts Breast Cancer Foundation" which is dedicated to all women, but specifically for women of color, who do not have the same encouragement or opportunities to receive professional health care testing. "The Denise Roberts Breast Cancer Foundation" is based in the Freeman Medical Towers, Inglewood, CA. TDRBCF provides mammograms, referrals to Physicians, a support line, support materials, videos and an educational library for supporting families.

