

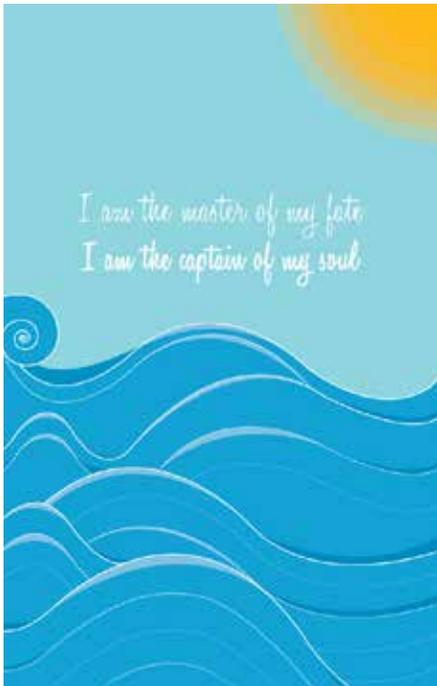
2014/15 Worldstudio AIGA Scholarships

AIGA DC Continuum + The Rebecca Marco Award



YATHRIB RAGSDALE

Graphic Design
Graduate Student
George Mason University



"Mrs. Ragsdale, your biopsy results have come back positive with invasive ductal carcinoma." On an ordinary Tuesday afternoon, while sitting alone in my 6x6 work cubicle, I got the extraordinary message that at 28, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. I sat there for a moment, holding back tears as I quietly packed up my things and left the office. I can still hear the sound of my sobs as I walked to my car. I was overcome with grief. The only coherent thought in my mind was, "I just want to live."

Further testing confirmed multiple cancerous areas inside and outside of the breast, leaving me with one option. On January 24, 2012, I underwent a full mastectomy of the right breast and, over the next nine months, I endured six rounds of chemotherapy, followed by 33 sessions of radiation therapy. Now, I'm a cancer survivor!

During this time, I channeled my myriad of emotions into my art. I chronicled my journey to health and recovery in a six-part design series that delved into the psyche of a cancer patient, exposing my raw emotions of sorrow, heartache, inner-strength and survival. A complementary piece is my self portrait, which dispels conventional notions of beauty by portraying my asymmetrical, post-mastectomy body and exposing the viewer to the source of my emotions. My art was instrumental to my recovery and self-acceptance, and I believe my art can be a source of empowerment



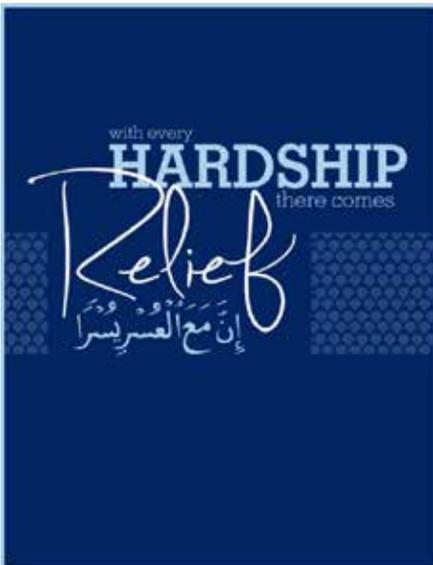
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for other minority women battling cancer, too. I want to inspire them to use their creativity to alleviate their mental anguish as they battle their demons, embrace diversity and reinforce their sense of self-esteem and self-worth.

After facing my own mortality, I feel an urgency to act on my desire to help others realize their full potential and use life's challenges as a catalyst for art, healing and change. I no longer want to wait for tomorrow; I must act today. I draw on my experience as a mentor/tutor for the Early Identification Program (EIP) at George Mason University. EIP is a multiyear college preparatory program for minority, first generation, college bound students. As an EIP alumna, I found importance and meaning in heightening the academic aspirations of future generations. As I mentored future college students with EIP, I now seek to touch the lives of future designers through the pursuit of a master's degree and by becoming a graphic design professor.

I look forward to becoming an agent of positive change and motivation by influencing the lives of future designers. My unique life experiences and cultural background will enable me to encourage students to step outside of the known and develop designs that test boundaries and invoke change. I long to pull from my experiences as an EIP mentor, igniting my passion for instruction, touching the lives of future designers and helping them harness their creativity.

