Sickle Cell: Khadijah's Story

From stem cell transplant recipient to transplant nurse, Khadijah’s life has come full circle.

Khadijah Jackson has transformed into a superhero! No, she doesn’t wear the iconic superhero costume and cape. Instead, she dons scrubs and a stethoscope. From stem cell transplant recipient to transplant nurse, Khadijah’s life has come full circle.

This sickle cell warrior roller-skated into our hearts when she was profiled in BMT InfoNet’s 2008 Celebrating a Second Chance at Life Calendar. Khadijah was just 13 years old, four years after her transplant. Her big smile and enthusiasm for school, dance, and her friends charmed us from the start. At the time she was a budding journalist, conducting the morning announcements at her school and dazzling her teachers with her favorite school activity, class presentations. It was easy to see that this young woman was empowered and fearless in her pursuit of a big future.

Khadijah still reflects on her transplant experience, which shaped her adolescence. She will never forget completely losing her appetite during treatment or the cruelty of her classmates when she lost her hair and her skin darkened. But she now says that “none of that really mattered because what child would understand how hard of a battle I was fighting?”.

She fondly recalls the love and support from her parents which carried her through transplant. Her parents “cried and laughed with me every step of the way”, says Khadijah. Khadijah’s not the only one with memories of this time, her older brother was her donor, and she says with a wink, “he never lets me forget he saved my life.”
Her current life, as a transplant nurse in Atlanta, was inspired by the nurses who cared for her through her transplant and
scary complications. “I had many nurses who were so caring and took some of those fears away. I told myself that if I make it out of this, I want to provide the same comfort for other patients,” says Khadijah. She recalls dreaming of being a nurse working alongside her hematologist as part of a medical team. Even as a precocious teenager, she was keenly aware of the vital role nurses play in patient care. True to her aspirations, she completed her masters in nursing this past summer. Today, 18 years later, she is paying it forward by caring for transplant patients with the same compassion, respect, and expertise which were so instrumental in her own recovery.

Outside of the hospital, Khadijah is a wine enthusiast, hosting a blog on YouTube entitled The Wine Aesthetic. From sipping bold reds to comparing celebrity wines and even competing in hilarious wine games, her blog is informative and very entertaining. Khadijah continues to learn one glass at a time, and she is taking classes towards a certification in wine education. Raise your glass high and toast to this amazing woman!