



FEATURE ARTICLE FROM ALWAYS BEST CARE

“Encore” Career Helps Latinos Fight Cancer

In 1999, during a cervical checkup, San Francisco TV anchorwoman Ysabel Duron found out she had Hodgkin lymphoma. Not one to be daunted, she filmed her treatment, interviewed cancer patients and visited support groups. Her resulting three-part documentary, *Life With Cancer*, won a Radio Television New Directors Association award.

After Duron recovered, she was haunted by how few other Latinos she had seen receiving treatment. Questions about how and where Spanish-speaking cancer victims got help plagued her. She had survived, but how many had not? When the Cancer Prevention Institute of California asked Duron to work with a group of Latino women around issues of breast cancer, she leapt at the chance. She helped establish the 501(c)(3) nonprofit *Las Isabellas*, which organized the first Mother’s Day Walk Against Cancer.

Duron wanted to do more. In September 2003, she founded Latinas Contra Cancer (Latinas Against Cancer, or LCC), based in San Jose, which is committed to educating, supporting and providing essential services to low-income Spanish speakers suffering from the disease.

Duron says dispelling the myths and misconceptions about cancer—that it’s a punishment from God, that it’s contagious or that it means an automatic death sentence—remains a challenge in the traditional Spanish-speaking community. Poverty, language and cultural barriers also keep many Latinos from seeking preventive screening, which translates into later-stage diagnoses and disproportionately high mortality rates. The goal, says Duron, is “to activate a conversation—at schools, at their workplace, at churches—because these facts get people talking.”

Since its inception, LCC has offered a range of programs that support and teach more than 2,700 men, women and children about cancer, resulting in more than 300 preventive screenings. The group has provided psychological and social support to several dozen patients per year. Out of 50 who suffered terminal cancer, LCC helped 35 of them into hospice—a novel and important success rate in a community unfamiliar with this kind of care.

The call to action Duron answered has had an impact far beyond the Bay Area. Her passionate commitment is helping Latino communities across the United States gain access to cancer support, information and treatment. For her efforts, Duron, now 66, was one of seven winners of the 2013 Purpose Prize, which gives \$100,000 to people over 60 who, in their encore careers, are creating new ways to solve tough social problems. The prize was created in 2005 by Encore.org, with funding from the John Templeton Foundation and The Atlantic Philanthropies.

Duron’s long history as a minority woman in broadcast journalism, working in a white, sexist and male-dominated industry, prepared her to build this movement in the second stage of life. She helped launch the country’s first minority news magazine show, *All Together Now*, and Oakland KTVU’s *Minority Report*, where she “started to shape what people know about minorities.”

After her own experience fighting, surviving and “putting a human face on the big C,” Duron’s great empathy for cancer patients has made her utterly clear on her bigger purpose in the second

stage of life. “I was meant to do this—to be a voice for an underserved, underrepresented population without a voice.”

Adapted from “Ysabel Duron,” encore.org, where you can see the other winners of the Purpose Prize. You can watch a [video](#) of her work and visit her [website](#).

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