



## BLACK WOMEN WIDOWS EMPOWERED

### **ANDRE COX, SS**

Andre Cox is currently a Senior Underwriter with Seneca Insurance Company in Jersey City, NJ. Originally from Brooklyn, NY but grew up in Freeport, NY, he currently resides in Teaneck, NJ with his children. He attended Rutgers University on a full football scholarship where he majored in Recreation Management (BS). There he met his late wife Vikki, who was full of life and free-spirited, began dating years later, reunited in 1992 and was married on May 22, 1993. During their marriage, they had three children and decided to settle in Teaneck.

Vikki was an English major (BA) and was also an avid reader who wrote numerous songs and poems and one of her songs was eventually recorded. Vikki also explored writing and was in the process of writing a children's storybook based on her daughter. She loved to travel throughout her life and spent an entire summer on an archaeological dig while in high school.

Unfortunately, Vikki discovered she had breast cancer in October 2012, which did not stop her from living life to the fullest. She regularly stayed positive while dealing with her cancer and tried very hard to shield her kids from her suffering. Vikki chose to spend her remaining time quietly with her husband and kids at home. She routinely watched crime shows with her mother during the day. In the evenings, she wanted her husband and kids to be by her side so they all could watch movies together and have dinner. Vikki finally succumbed to complications of breast cancer on March 28th, 2014.

Andre's prior volunteer work included volunteering as president and coach of both his township's youth football and wrestling league for 13 years. He was also an NJ State wrestling referee and was heavily involved with his township's proposed recreation planning for a new youth football field, which was finally built in 2013. Andre benefited greatly from recreational sports during his youth and as he became an adult, he wanted to give back by volunteering as much of his free time as possible to youth sports. Andre lives by, "hey, someone did it for me so it's my turn."

His hobbies include bike riding, weight training, cooking and trying new recipes, attending his son's college football games and his daughter's annual piano recitals. Additionally, he enjoys attending her arts and science events at her school. Andre also loves traveling and cruising. He has vacationed in various places such as Punta Cana, D.R.; Cancun, Mexico; Bahamas; Miami; Hoover Dam; Hawaii; Maryland's Eastern Shore; Mardi Gras (New Orleans); and Walt Disney World many times. Andre also loves NYC and what it has to offer in culture, dining, entertainment and the diversity of people.

Andre's mantra, "today will be a great day!" provides him the outlook he needs while living life to the fullest during his remaining journey without Vikki. Like others, Andre struggled with dealing with his wife passing but knew he needed to go on for the sake of his children and eventually himself. For almost eighteen months, he sought personal counseling and belonged to various bereavement groups.

Initially, he was reluctant to participate but came to realize that in order for him to get help, he needed to open up about his ordeal.

"I felt more comfortable dealing with my personal therapist. I was seeing two therapists at different days of the week. One hour a week with just one therapist wasn't good enough for me. I couldn't stop crying while home alone in my bedroom hiding from my children. I wanted that pain to end."

Andre, through various grief therapy and bereavement groups, learned in order to move on, he needed to be able to comfortably tell his story over and over; it just made it easier for him. Also, he discovered that it was acceptable to laugh and enjoy life. He recalls one of the counselors in the bereavement group stressing, "we all have permission to have fun." In time, Andre learned what that really meant.

His grief journey has been extensive. To his surprise, his strength was drawn from his children, who surprisingly dealt with their mother's death better than he. As each day goes by, Andre is making new memories and becoming a "new Andre." He now knows that will require him living life without his late wife.

He feels he has come a long way from that horrible morning on March 28, 2014, and beyond. Andre stresses to others, especially men of color who are having issues dealing with their loss, to seek professional help or personal friends to talk to. Additionally, Andre is willing to make himself available through online access to those men who want to know more about how he dealt with his wife's passing or who may need a listening ear.

Andre is also an active member of [Black and Widowed: A Unique Journey](#), a private online group for widows and widowers and a sister group to our [Black Women Widows Empowered private Facebook group](#) (for women only).