

NARRATOR:

The Disability & Philanthropy Forum presents Heather Watkins, disability advocate, author, and speaker.

HEATHER WATKINS:

In terms of resiliency, I always think about how our response to something that's adversarial or trauma-based and then your ability to rebound. But when I thought about it a little further, I'm like, a beautiful scar is still a scar. It's still something you carry with you. And so many black women are tasked with that trope, the stereotype of strong black women. But we break too. And we're not everybody's mule for movements. We're not tasked for saving everyone. And we take the cape off. We need consolation, we need that self-care.

And often, we have to pull from reserves that end up depleting us so much. And I'm mindful of my grandmother, my paternal grandmother, who hailed from Greenwood, Mississippi, grew up during the Jim Crow era south, as well as my father. And then they migrated up in the 1970s here to Boston. And she had 10 children, eight survived. And she was totally a powerhouse who short-circuited at 68 years old from diabetic complications. So I just think if she'd had have had that support in getting care and respite, how much longer she would've lived and lived with joy.

So I just always think about how we are not being given the proper support systems to live a really comprehensive life that is not just a narrative filled with trauma and showing up all the time for everyone else but ourselves. So to me, that's the story really, is to really show our lives in this really 360 degree way and not just show up last minute at the end when we're haggard and tired and given up to everyone else but ourselves.

NARRATOR:

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