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My Experience Making History

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On April 25, 2004, the March for Women's Lives drew over 1.15 million people. I never dreamed so many people would hear my voice— or even want to listen to what I had to say. I was blessed to speak on the morning program. Among the speakers were an African American sister who has been infected with HIV for over 15 years, Congresswoman Maxine Waters, Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, actress Linda Carter, and me!

The whole weekend was an awesome experience. I arrived Thursday and spent time with some of the March organizers. I got a sneak peek at the behind-the-scenes frenzy as the finishing touches were put in place. Saturday, I headed over to the Armory and watched all the volunteers get ready for the next day. The dedication and excitement of everyone was a heart-warming sight. It was truly a learning experience.

Early Sunday morning, I remember getting ready. It was just like any other engagement – I prayed, asking God to speak through me and allow the right message to come out. The magnitude of the forthcoming event didn't quite hit me. When I arrived, I watched as hordes of people descended upon the mall. It was like magic. The press, security, the sea of women and supporters were overwhelming. History was in the making and I was going to be apart of it! Little ole me!

As I sat waiting for my turn to speak, I kept going over my notes. What do you say to all those people in two minutes? There is so much to say about women and HIV. The nervousness started to set in, and then—it was my turn! I stood on that podium representing women who are infected with HIV. My message was the importance of research for microbicides, the elimination of stigma around the issue of HIV, and how every woman is at risk.

When it was over, I received a round of applause. There was such a high walking off the stage...I could never put it into words. I was overcome with tears and emotions. People approached me, requesting autographs and pictures, and telling me how I did a great a job. A few of them were also emotional, showing me their goose bumps. I kept thinking to myself, "Someone heard ME! MY message. MY voice." Like many women, I had something worth saying and we have the right to be heard. That morning, it was proven by the amount of women participating and attending the March.

It was such a beautiful morning. A morning I will never forget!