



Pink Ribbon Blues: How Breast Cancer Culture Undermines Women's Health

By Gayle A. Sulik

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Medical sociologist Gayle A. Sulik reveals the hidden costs of the pink ribbon as an industry, one in which breast cancer functions as a brand name with a pink ribbon logo. Based on historical and ethnographic research, analysis of awareness campaigns and advertisements, and hundreds of interviews, *Pink Ribbon Blues* shows that while millions walk, run, and purchase products for a cure, cancer rates continue to rise, industry thrives, and breast cancer is stigmatized anew for those who reject the pink ribbon model. Even as Sulik points out the flaws of "pink ribbon culture," she outlines the positives and offers alternatives. The paperback includes a new Introduction investigating Susan G. Komen for the Cure and a color insert with images of, and reactions to, the pinking of breast cancer.

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Pink Ribbon Blues: How Breast Cancer Culture Undermines Women's Health By Gayle A. Sulik Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #227341 in Books
- Published on: 2012-10-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 5.50" h x 1.00" w x 8.20" l, 1.20 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 480 pages



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Editorial Review

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In this eye-opening story about the ubiquitous pink ribbon, medical sociologist Sulik reveals the dark side of the “breast cancer awareness” movement. She argues that breast cancer has become a “brand,” complete with its own logo and self-serving corporations. Zeneca, which makes the treatment drug tamoxifen, has, for instance, always put money into the 25-year-old National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Sulik—no fan of the October celebration—calls it “the official platform for pink ribbon culture to advertise treatment, promote early detection, encourage fundraising, and promise eventual eradication.” Despite the sea of pink, no cure is in sight and treatment and detection efforts remain flawed. The Institute of Medicine reported that 75 percent of positive mammograms are, upon biopsy, false positives, and that mammograms miss 25 to 40 percent of tumors that actually are cancerous. Americans don’t even know how much of the money they spend on pink products goes toward legitimate breast cancer research. In the end, this well-reported book (Sulik interviewed hundreds of sources) will make readers think twice before they shell out extra bucks for a pink mixer. --Karen Springen

Review

"You may never think pink again about breast cancer after reading Sulik's sobering and lucid critique of what she calls 'pink culture'.... Sulik's call to 'take a road less pink' demands to be heard." --*Publishers Weekly*

"In this provocative and eye-opening critique, medical sociologist Gayle Sulik makes the case that breast cancer culture is increasingly frivolous and commercialized--with patients paying the price." --Catherine Guthrie, *Better Homes and Gardens*

"Breast Cancer Awareness Month has become a distracting sideshow, a situation that sociologist Gayle A. Sulik explores in compelling depth in her new book, *Pink Ribbon Blues*." --Katherine Russell Rich, *Slate*

"Treads an interesting middle ground between the academic and the journalistic as she analyzes giant hunks of information and opinion, and also interviews patients to illustrate her points." --Abigail Zuger, M.D., *New York Times*

"Well-written and extremely well researched, *Pink Ribbon Blues* demonstrates how pink consumption has transformed breast cancer from a stigmatized disease and individual tragedy to a market-driven industry of survivorship." --Sukari Ivester, *Sociology of Health and Illness*

"Gayle Sulik takes us behind the pink curtain to a peculiar culture where sentimentality takes the place of

scientific evidence, personal transcendence fills in for political action, and lofty platitudes replace actionable goals. *Pink Ribbon Blues* is the Frommer's travel guide to the country of breast cancer." --Sandra Steingraber, author, *Living Downstream: An Ecologist's Personal Investigation of Cancer and the Environment*

"An excellent book that sheds new light on the construction and implications of breast cancer culture in American society. Her extensive research and thought-provoking analysis challenge current beliefs of what breast cancer means for diagnosed women, survivors, and advocates. This book is a must-read for all players in the breast cancer culture and anyone interested in women's health."--Kathy Charmaz, Professor of Sociology, Sonoma State University

"In *Pink Ribbon Blues*, Gayle Sulik has brought sociological, feminist and media theory together for a deep and broad analysis of the consumer world of breast cancer. She has complimented all of that with a deeply humane and personal engagement with the women who are living with breast cancer in a world where the pink ribbon culture constantly needs disruption and questioning. BRAVO!!!!"--Janet Gray, Director, Program in Science, Technology and Society, Vassar College; Board Member, Breast Cancer Fund

"In this thoughtful, eye-opening and searing examination of the pinking of breast cancer, Sulik shows how pink culture lurches from selflessness to selfishness, giving new meaning to the ferocity of survivors and she-roses."--Devra Davis, National Book Award Finalist, author of *Disconnect: The Truth about Cell Phone Radiation and Your Health* (2010), and *The Secret History of the War on Cancer* (2009), Founder, Environmental Health Trust, and Visiting Professor, Georgetown University

"It's about time! We've been needing this book--a smart, critical, thoughtful analysis of pink ribbon culture and the damage it is doing. Thank you Gayle Sulik!"--Barbara Katz Rothman, Professor of Sociology at the City University of NY

"Provocative." --*Library Journal*

"Many of [Sulik's] insights are striking and she pulls together a wealth of historical material and data.... Recommended."--*Choice*

"This is the first book to provide a comprehensive ethnographic analysis of breast cancer culture in American society. It presents a thought-provoking and probing argument against the industry of awareness-raising and describes real ways to help breast cancer patients and their families. This book will be valuable for all those interested in breast cancer management and in women's health."--*Anticancer Research*

"Sulik takes us behind the pink curtain to a peculiar culture where sentimentality takes place of scientific evidence, personal transcendence fills in for political action, and lofty platitudes replace actionable goals. *Pink Ribbon Blues* is the Frommer's guide to the country of breast cancer." -- Sandra Steingraber, author, *Living Downstream: An Ecologist's Personal Investigation of Cancer and the Environment*

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From the Author

Pink Ribbon Blues is not the first book to offer an understanding and critique of breast cancer advocacy, culture, history, or survivorship in the United States. It is, however, the first book to bring it all together. *Pink Ribbon Blues* shows how breast cancer culture and industry work as a system and reveals the consequences of that system, both positive and negative. The book:

- Details the history of breast cancer advocacy, showing hard-won successes, splits within the movement, and ties between industry and advocacy.
- Situates breast cancer within the broader cancer culture.
- Shows the crucial role of mass media in promoting particular versions of the cancer story and restricting others.
- Synthesizes scientific controversies within the medical system that impact the decisions of those who are diagnosed, those who face recurrences, and those who are at risk for breast cancer.
- Shares voices that fall within and outside of the pink mainstream as the diagnosed work within the culture and/or resist it.
- Offers a clear argument and a plea to consider the effects of pink culture on public health.

Having lost too many people to this disease, it is my hope that *Pink Ribbon Blues* will encourage compassionate critique of this system and a roadmap for fixing what is broken.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Joshua Ricker:

The book *Pink Ribbon Blues: How Breast Cancer Culture Undermines Women's Health* can give more knowledge and information about everything you want. So why must we leave the great thing like a book *Pink Ribbon Blues: How Breast Cancer Culture Undermines Women's Health*? A number of you have a different opinion about guide. But one aim this book can give many info for us. It is absolutely right. Right now, try to closer using your book. Knowledge or details that you take for that, you can give for each other; you are able to share all of these. Book *Pink Ribbon Blues: How Breast Cancer Culture Undermines Women's Health* has simple shape however, you know: it has great and big function for you. You can appear the enormous world by open and read a reserve. So it is very wonderful.

Shelly Rodriguez:

Nowadays reading books become more than want or need but also become a life style. This reading behavior give you lot of advantages. The huge benefits you got of course the knowledge the rest of the information inside the book that will improve your knowledge and information. The data you get based on what kind of book you read, if you want send more knowledge just go with training books but if you want really feel happy read one together with theme for entertaining like comic or novel. The actual *Pink Ribbon Blues: How Breast Cancer Culture Undermines Women's Health* is kind of reserve which is giving the reader erratic experience.

Christy Brodersen:

Are you kind of active person, only have 10 or perhaps 15 minute in your moment to upgrading your mind proficiency or thinking skill even analytical thinking? Then you are having problem with the book than can satisfy your short time to read it because all this time you only find reserve that need more time to be go through. *Pink Ribbon Blues: How Breast Cancer Culture Undermines Women's Health* can be your answer since it can be read by an individual who have those short free time problems.

Sylvia Kirby:

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