R.I.P. Deloris Dockrey, HIV Activist and Leader Lost to COVID-19

A fighter for other women living with HIV, she worked at the Hyacinth Clinic in Newark, New Jersey.

April 28, 2020 By Trent Straube

Deloris Dockrey, a champion and mentor for women living with HIV, died April 27, 2020, due to complications of COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus. The news was announced by the Hyacinth Foundation, the New Jersey organization where she worked as the director of clinical services.

> Our hearts are broken as we share the news of the passing of one of Hyacinth's and our community's most cherished individuals, Deloris Dockrey. Deloris passed away this afternoon due to complications of COVID-19. pic.twitter.com/WtLgcUbgul
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> — Hyacinth Foundation (@HyacinthNJ) April 27, 2020

HIV positive since 1994, Dockrey participated in numerous HIV advocacy groups. Her activism was known across the nation and internationally, and Dockrey's Facebook account lists her as being from Kingston, Jamaica. In 2013, she was a POZ 100 honoree.

At the time, POZ noted that Dockrey "holds a master's in public health and has a wealth of experience and knowledge of the Ryan White Program legislation and HRSA mandates. Deloris serves on numerous boards, councils and committees and was the first woman to chair the Global Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS. She's also a member of the Positive Women's Network and represents North America on the International Steering Committee of the International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS."

In announcing her death, Hyacinth Foundation wrote that Dockrey “has been part of the Hyacinth family for 15 years. Most recently, she worked tirelessly to help us grow the Hyacinth Health & Wellness Clinic in Newark. It was the first time that she worked directly with clients, and she loved and took much pride in everything that the clinic has accomplished. Deloris helped to create Leadership Hyacinth and trained many advocates to find their voice and to fight for others in need.… Our deepest condolences go to her son Philip and to her extended family.”

Many in the HIV community took to social media to express their love and appreciation for Dockrey. Sean Strub, POZ founder and executive director of the Sero Project, which fights HIV stigma and criminalization, described Dockrey as “a patient, kind and generous person, always willing to help teach and enable others to understand.… Many PLHIV may not have known Deloris personally, but they have benefited from her steadfast activism over many, many years, including as a founding steering committee member of the U.S. PLHIV Caucus. R.I.P.”

In 2013, Dockrey participated in a POZ roundtable about whether people living with HIV should actively respond to the HIV epidemic, including sitting on the boards of AIDS organizations and participating in governmental efforts to make policy. The discussion was the basis of the feature article “Positive Networks: People living with HIV discuss self-empowerment.”

Other POZ articles over the years reported that Dockrey had lobbied religious leaders about HIV prevention and was elected to the steering committee of the U.S. People Living with HIV (PLHIV) Caucus.

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