



R.I.P. Hydeia Broadbent, 39, an Outspoken HIV Advocate Since Childhood

Born with HIV, Hydeia Broadbent spoke at the 1996 Republican National Convention at age 12. She graced the cover of POZ twice.

February 21, 2024 By [Trent Straube](#)

Hydeia Broadbent, who was born with [HIV](#) and who triumphed as a groundbreaking [activist](#) since childhood, has died. She was 39.

“With great sadness, I must inform you all that our beloved friend, mentor and daughter Hydeia, passed away today after living with AIDS since birth,” wrote her father, Loren Broadbent, in an early morning February 21 Facebook post. “Despite facing numerous challenges throughout her life, Hydeia remained determined to spread hope and positivity through education around HIV/AIDS.”

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Posted by [Loren Broadbent](#) on [Tuesday, February 20, 2024](#)

She died in her sleep of natural causes on February 20, [according to Essence](#).

Broadbent became a groundbreaking voice for people living with HIV, notably for Black children and women and especially for people born with the virus, a group now referred to as lifetime survivors. She “has Shirley Temple’s star quality, Whoopi Goldberg’s wit and Madonna’s media

savvy,” wrote POZ magazine in an October 1997 cover story “[She’s Come a Long Way From Baby.](#)”

The article followed the then 13-year-old as she spoke to packed high school audiences about HIV and AIDS. The previous year, she commanded a much larger audience when she spoke at the 1996 Republican National Convention. She also appeared on The Oprah Winfrey Show (many times over the years), Good Morning America and other television programs, including a Nickelodeon special about AIDS that costarred Magic Johnson. For many Americans, she represented one of the first and only faces of the epidemic they knew.

They call me an activist. And yet I cannot fathom the level of courage this woman conjured throughout her life. She has died, and the loss is profound.

<https://t.co/PXMIHgVXSy>

— Mark S. King (@MyFabDisease) [February 21, 2024](#)

She was adopted by Pat and Loren Broadbent in 1984 as a 6-week-old infant and experienced health issues from the start. Doctors discovered the cause when her biological mother, a drug user, gave birth again; this time the baby was tested for HIV. The child was positive, so Hydeia was also tested. Doctors predicted Hydeia wouldn’t make it to age 5, POZ recounted in our cover story.

The October 1997 cover of POZ featured a 13-year-old Hydeia Broadbent.

She remained active as an AIDS activist and public speaker her entire life, covering topics such as mental health and safer sex. In an April/May 2017 cover story "[The Kids Are Alright](#)," POZ caught up with Broadbent and other advocates who'd been born with HIV. She had worked with the Magic Johnson Foundation and was an ambassador for the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation (Glaser's son, Jake, was also profiled in that issue of POZ).

She spoke candidly about the challenges of living with HIV, including the financial burden: “We have to make sure that people are aware the medicines do cost money—that you do have to get help with insurance,” she said, adding: “We still need to let people know that there’s no cure. Some people don’t understand the medical regimen of someone living with HIV or AIDS. It is not just about popping one pill a day.” Broadbent also noted that as she got older, it became easier to stick with the routine of taking meds.

In response to the news of her passing, several fellow HIV activists posted tributes.

“I’m sad to announce that renowned AIDS Activist Hydeia Broadbent passed away today, wrote Rae Lewis-Thornton, a longtime survivor who was also [recently profiled in POZ](#). “Over the years our paths crossed so much we became friends. Rest my sister Rest. Your legacy will live forever. Good and faithful servant well done ... love you Deia”

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pic.twitter.com/1IWoccZ81J

— Rae Lewis-Thornton (@raelt) [February 21, 2024](#)

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In related news, see the POZ’s January cover story, “[We Are Lifetime Survivors](#),” to learn more about the cohort of those born with the virus, who today are reclaiming their experiences. They’re nicknamed “Dandelions,” after a poem by the late lifetime survivor Mary Bowman. Find out more about the movement [at TheDandelions.org](https://TheDandelions.org).