



R.I.P. Sharon DeCuir, HIV Activist and Longtime PWN-USA Leader

DeCuir was a fierce reproductive justice champion and Positive Women's Network leader and board member in Louisiana.

February 13, 2025 By Laura Schmidt

HIV-positive advocate and [Positive Women's Network-USA](#) (PWN-USA) board member Sharon DeCuir died earlier this month, according to a [news release](#) the network issued. In 2017, she was featured in [The POZ 100: Celebrating Women](#) for her HIV activism and her work with several leading HIV organizations in the [South](#).

DeCuir worked tirelessly to support people living with [HIV](#) and [AIDS](#)—particularly women and girls—throughout Louisiana. She was a longtime leader at PWN-USA, a national organization that mobilizes women living with HIV to [advocate](#) for changes that improve their lives and uphold their rights.



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“As we carry forward the important work Sharon helped shape, we will honor her legacy by weaving her spirit into everything we do,” said PWN’s board vice chair, Tana Pradia, in the release.

DeCuir was diagnosed with HIV in 2002 at 35 years old. Her husband at the time was HIV positive but did not tell her he had the virus due to the shame and [stigma](#). When he shared that his HIV had advanced to AIDS, DeCuir got tested and learned that she had most likely been living with the virus for three to five years.

“In that moment, my life was forever changed,” she told BET in 2011. “I got sick, became unable to work and had to get on disability. All of this completely tore me down....”

But DeCuir “found the will to learn to live again”, as she put it, and went on to become a founding member of the PWN Louisiana Chapter, overcoming her fear and dedicating her life to helping community members access HIV prevention, treatment and support.

“The more I started getting out in the community and talking to people, I soon found out that I was not the only woman who was infected with HIV/AIDS. But I also realized that I was the one who was willing to put a face to HIV/AIDS publicly in my town, Baton Rouge, Louisiana,” DeCuir told BET.

DeCuir worked with the HIV/AIDS Alliance for Region Two Inc. (HAART) for 12 years. She started at HAART as a volunteer and later became the organization’s national leadership and advocacy coordinator.

She also worked with the Louisiana AIDS Advocacy Network, the Black Treatment Advocates Network and the Southern HIV/AIDS Strategy Initiative.

“She was more than just a board member and leader; she was a friend, a wise woman and a true force of nature. We will miss her fierce spirit, her wise counsel and her unwavering commitment to our shared vision,” shared Marnina Miller, co-executive director of PWN.