I am courageous, I am brave, and I am beautiful!

February 3, 2016 By Visual AIDS

Deloris Dockrey, director of community organizing and New Jersey Women Advocacy Network (NJWAN), shares her poem “Courage with Grace” with Visual AIDS to celebrate Love Positive Women (LPW). LPW is an international series of grassroots events running from February 1 through 14 that uses Valentine’s Day as a backdrop, creating a platform for individuals and communities to engage in public and private acts of love and caring for women living with HIV. Working from a place of strength, LPW focuses on the idea of interconnectedness, relationship building, loving oneself and loving ones community. How will you celebrate the women living with HIV in your life this year for Love Positive Women?

For Love Positive Women 2016, Visual AIDS, the Fire Island Artist Residency, Dieu Donné and the International Community of Women Living With HIV (ICW) hosted three paper-making valentine workshops at Dieu Donné in New York City to support women living with HIV. An accompanying valentine exhibition in the Dieu Donné gallery space showcases many of the valentines created as a gesture of love and solidarity for women living with HIV around the world. The valentines will be mailed to women living with HIV at the conclusion of the exhibition, in hopes of lessening the stigma they experience and providing a hopeful and heartening moment of love on Valentine’s Day.

A public closing reception for the Love Positive Women valentine exhibition will be held Wednesday, February 3, from 6 to 8 p.m. at Dieu Donné (315 West 36th Street, New York). The closing reception will include brief reflections on the importance of love and community building from members of the Positive Women’s Network (PWN-USA) and ICW, including Kia Labeija, Michelle Lopez, Deloris Dockrey, Rusti Miller-Hill and more.

Courage with Grace!

by Deloris Dockrey

I am courageous, I am brave, and I am beautiful!

It took me a long time to say those words,

And even longer to belief them.

Now, I find the courage to acknowledge my truth.

I found Grace through Faith.

Grace gave me courage and

Courage gave me strength.

Strength to make life’s hard decisions.

Grace helps to spin guilt and shame on its head.

Grace made my life a success.

My life is a testimony;

A testimony of courage and strength.

I found courage and courage is my strength.

It took courage to overcome many of life obstacles,

To weather the storms, and survive,

It took Grace and Grace gave me strength.

Why fear the unknown, why be paralyzed

I found true Grace to face my fears and you can too

Through Faith I found Grace

Grace gave me strength.

Deloris Dockrey is the director of community organizing and New Jersey Women Advocacy Network (NJWAN) for Hyacinth AIDS Foundation, New Jersey’s oldest and largest AIDS service organization, where she directs public education, AIDS prevention and community action campaigns to raise awareness and encourage action to address the social crisis caused by HIV/AIDS. As a person living with HIV, Dockrey has a personal as well as professional interest in public health policies related to the HIV epidemic. She has trained and mobilized people living with HIV to advocate for policies that impact their access to care, treatment, support, and prevention services.

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