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## **Spotlight on Masonia Traylor: Women Making a Difference**

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Image



*The Well Project interviews Community Advisory Board member Masonia Traylor for our "Spotlight: Women Making a Difference" series.*

## **What is the goal of your advocacy work?**

My goal is to ensure that the voices of women and youth living with HIV/AIDS are maximized for awareness and education and support. I also want to encourage my community to take a stronger stand on managing the current HIV/AIDS epidemic.

## **Do you have a specific focus?**

Women and youth

## **Why is it important to you to reach out to women specifically?**

Although I understand that the height of the epidemic has always primarily affected men who have sex with other men, after getting diagnosed I really saw the lack of women representation. My reality was that I didn't see women who looked like me battling this disease, especially at my age. I felt alone.

## **What is the thing you are most proud of, professionally or personally?**

Currently I'm most proud of my resilience and my fight to have the happiness and joy that I deserve.

## **If you could visit one place in the world, where would it be?**

Hawaii near some beautiful waterfalls and clear water.

## **What advice or information would you offer a woman newly diagnosed with HIV?**

Don't lose yourself because of this diagnosis and keep joy on the forefront of your life. Remain positive with your outlook on life.

## **Can you share a story that illustrates how you've been successful in working with women living with HIV?**

Social media can be used for so many negative things but I'm a firm believer that EVERY negative can be turned into a POSITIVE. I was skeptical about using social media to disclose my status but by doing so, I learned that:

I am not alone as a woman living with this virus

I offer hope to others just by continuously pushing forward and finding reasons to live.

One beautiful opportunity came my way and I nearly turned away from it. I met someone via my inbox from out of state where a young lady was newly diagnosed. She was frightened and lost about how to manage moving forward. I was afraid to talk to her because I wasn't in a motivating space at that time. However I was able to guide her as a peer from hundreds of miles away to a place where she was able to accept her diagnosis, date a wonderful partner, and trust her peace again. It felt amazing to be a part of that process and I would do it again if it continues to save lives throughout this epidemic!

## **How do you use The Well Project personally?**

I use The Well Project personally to add fuel to my fire so that I don't forget my WHY. I use it to remind myself that I am not alone in my personal life or in my advocacy work. There are many people battling cancer, lupus, depression, mental health and so much more and resilience to survive HIV/AIDS offers HOPE to everyone!

## In your work?

I recommend that others access The Well Project's resources and I leverage it in my own advocacy work.

## What difference has The Well Project made in your life and work?

The Well Project has played a beautiful role in my survival in that I no longer had to dig to find diverse voices of this epidemic.



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