



DONNA SEAY “POSITIVE DIRECTION” SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Donna Seay (first carrying the maiden name Donna Elaine Sanders) was a driven community activist, motivational speaker, advocate, vocalist, painter, dancer and above all else...an incredible, loving, committed, intelligent, charismatic, magnetic, witty visionary. That was my Mom.

There is not a “traditional” path towards explaining the relevance my mother has on the lives of everyone she touched. A powerhouse since a child, she has always exhibited a vast array of artistic motivations throughout her life.

Donna was born in Gastonia, North Carolina on December 27th, 1952. Her parents Charles and Jessie Sanders would soon migrate to the City of Newark, NJ to raise their family and build a home. As a young child, Donna shared her angelic, clear yet strong vocal skills during various “sing-a-longs” of favorite tunes at home, in school and church. Influential American gospel singer Mahalia Jackson’s “A City called Heaven” was the first song she learned and practiced daily.

Her love for music and artistic expression was further explored and honed during her teen years. A student and graduate of the prestigious Newark Arts High School, Donna was unique, holding Dual majors in Music and Visual Arts. A member of the Arts High School Girl’s Glee Club, Fencing Club, Three-Dimensional Art Club, African Culture Club and Black Youth Organization- Donna’s passion for creativity, equality and fights against injustices were foundational components to her life efforts, movements and achievements.

As a Senior in High School, Donna’s tenacity in breaking down racial barriers and racial segregation lead her to join forces with community empowerment- focused groups enraged by the systemic inequality being held at Rutgers University- Newark campus. In the year 1969, an effort to initiate change regarding race relations took place at the university. A historic moment where members of the Rutgers- Newark Black Organization of Students (BOS), in addition to numerous organizations, High School and College students took over Conklin Hall, in protest. My mother, a highly vocal and ambitious woman, fought to make a difference at the age of 17.



Through Public Service, Political Activism, Community Engagement, Neighborhood Beautification projects, Youth and Family Empowerment- my mother’s life is emphasized by the words “change, life and love.”

Her work throughout the City of Newark, motivated a desire to do something, at the time-unprecedented. She would form the arts and performance-based project: Positive Direction, with musician/composer- Kevin Marshall and entrepreneur William Brooks.

Positive Direction became an outlet for Newark youth and young adults to learn different artistic disciplines, as a preventative approach towards unfavorable behavior. Vocal, instrumental, drama, dance and music production allowed participants to develop by-way of professional coaching, training and coordinated stage performances; in addition to, personally through mentorships.

Donna was a lead vocalist in the gospel ensemble “The Disciples of Truth.” As a vocal coach, she trained students from various New Jersey based high schools (most especially Newark Arts High School).

Donna built businesses, opportunities, bridges and pathways for everyone, regardless of race, religion, creed, color, orientation, socio-economic status, political affiliation...and many other areas that could possibly separate people. My mother brought everyone together. She loved to sing. Loved happiness. Loved hard. She loved life.

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