

A Tribute to the Life of the Late

Mark A. Colomb, Ph.D.

Visionary • Passionate • Educator • Servant • Compassionate • Generous

Visionary, passionate, educator, servant, compassionate, generous - these are descriptions of the late Dr. Mark A. Colomb and the life that he lived so fully on a daily basis in his singular and visionary quest to rid our society of HIV infection, particularly among African Americans and especially among African American men.

He worked passionately to reduce the stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS, to educate the youngest to the oldest about its prevention, to serve those most impacted in any way that he could, to show compassion to those infected and affected by one of the world's most misunderstood and maligned diseases in recent history and to use his personal and professional resources, generously without expecting any return other than to end the epidemic in the African American population.

Dr. Colomb's distinguished career in the HIV/AIDS arena began at Jackson State University when he became a master's degree level graduate assistant with the JSU National Alumni AIDS Prevention Project in 1988. In 1992, he began working at the Mississippi State Department of Health, Division of STD/HIV, where he became a division branch director and served until 1999.

Dr. Colomb joined the staff of Jackson State University as director of the Mississippi Urban Research Center where he served as project director/principal investigator for 13 federally- and state-funded projects from 1999-2003. A gifted and talented grant writer, he is credited with garnering more than \$9 million, the largest of 12 five-year national grants awarded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2000. This funding established Jackson State University as a premier HIV/AIDS prevention training agency for African American community-based organizations throughout the U.S. and its territories.

In 2003, Dr. Colomb became president and chief executive officer of My Brother's Keeper, Inc., a non-profit organization with offices in Ridgeland and Jackson, MS and Atlanta, GA. With a mission to reduce health disparities and promote well-being in minority populations, Dr. Colomb spearheaded funding from national organizations to conduct HIV/AIDS, and other chronic disease prevention education and services locally and nationally.

Dr. Colomb played an integral role in shaping state and national HIV/AIDS policy legislation, particularly on behalf of African Americans, by working with a variety of constituents from grassroots advocacy groups to national legislative bodies. He and others worked closely with the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS to craft the Minority AIDS Initiative which was enacted into law by the 105th United States Congress in 1988. His vision and leadership helped to develop and institute National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day which became a reality in 2000.

Whether he was connecting with the most disenfranchised and marginalized citizens or the top wielders of power in the upper echelons of local, state and national government, his reputation as a warrior in the fight against this disease continued with tenacity until he quietly left those of us behind on March 24, 2011 to perpetuate his spirit and honor his legacy by taking up the torch and bearing it forward until the scourge of HIV/AIDS is ended for all people.