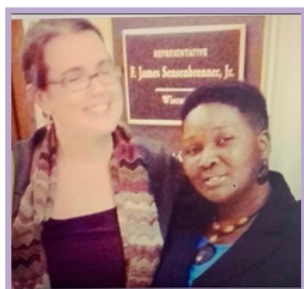


Remembering Deborah Pembrook



Fainess Lipenga, Member of the Board of Directors for Survivor Alliance and Training Advisor to the Human Trafficking Legal Center

I've known Deborah since 2013, we then built a strong trust not only as colleagues but as a friend, a sister. We used to call each other, she was also one of my mentors. Deborah was someone who did not see any color on anyone, she was one of the calmest human beings, a problem-solver, a visionary when it comes to leadership. She was someone I could talk to any time of the day. She was one of my cheerleaders who cheered me on in every little success, my weakness, or anything between. Deborah would reach out to me often whether regarding work or just venting. She was so thoughtful but also very aware of cultural dynamics, very thoughtful and sensitive when she interacted with me or when we worked together. Deborah saw me and treated me just as every other survivor expert regardless of our differences. Deborah was good at collaboration. She really cared for the anti-trafficking movement and survivors. What a big loss.

We lost a strong leader, a mentor, colleague and a friend. Thank you for your service Deborah Pembrook, thank you for being a great passionate mentor to those who were lucky enough to connect with you. Your absence continues to be felt in the trafficking movement. Your work will live among us and your surviving sisters, brothers will continue, it will never go in vain, your legacy will continue. Gone too soon but never to be forgotten. Until then, Rest in Power Deborah, Freedom fighter and trafficking movement unsung hero.

Evelyn Chumbow, Member of the Board of Directors of Free the Slaves and Operations Manager & Survivor Advocate for the Human Trafficking Legal Center

Sorrow fills my heart with this sad moment, a sorrow that is deep and personal. Deborah has silently closed the door of life and departed from us. Our lives will be empty in areas that she had brightened. How does one express the amazing essence and spirit of Deborah Pembroke, her selfless generosity, uncompromising belief in all that is good and her unwavering commitment to family, friends and colleagues. Words, even the very best of words, cannot pay tribute or truly capture the sense of loss that I am feeling today.

I remember when I first met Deborah in-person after just hearing her voice when I was working with NSN, she came to me and was like, “Omg! Evelyn, it’s you. I love and admire you.” She was so welcoming and very much caring. The last panel discussion I had with her was last year when we presented on the issue of racism in the movement and she was the only white woman on that panel who graced us with so much respect. My last email with her was on April 26th, 2022 when she emailed to say she couldn’t make it to our zoom discussion.

The loss is there, tangible and real within everyone, but Deborah exemplified life, love, laughter and an irrepressible belief in seeing the best in everything...even loss. She was kind hearted, inspirational and a true freedom fighter. And so, today I honor her, by profoundly feeling and expressing our loss, but also by remembering Deborah for the amazing person who has played a unique and special role in all of our lives and this movement.

Martina Vandenberg, President of the Human Trafficking Legal Center

Deborah Pembroke, a visionary leader in this movement, taught us all so much. Her loss is unspeakably painful, as we had so much more to learn from her. Deborah brought joy, wisdom, generosity, kindness, and depth to this movement. She shared all of these gifts with us, asking for nothing in return. She mentored survivors, she supported allies.

We are all better for knowing Deborah.

Deborah contributed brilliantly to so many projects, collaborating with other survivor leaders to conduct research on racism and human trafficking and leading discussions on survivor leadership. She gave us concrete examples of where the movement had gone wrong. And she always had creative ideas to make things right.

We have lost a giant in this movement. It is our responsibility to honor her legacy. And we will.