



Sandra Maria Anderson, MS, Ed. D

Sandra is a mother and grandmother who in 2009, earned her associate degree in Health Care Administration; In 2011, her bachelor's degree in Human Service Management and later, in 2013, her master's degree at Palm Beach Atlantic University in Organizational Leadership. Today, Sandra attends Liberty University, completing her doctoral studies in Community Care and Counseling Marriage and Family Therapy. In 2016, Sandra chronicled the many life events that have led her from victim to victory in her autobiography 'Lessons from the Thorns: His Grace Is Sufficient.' After a childhood marred in sexual abuse, trafficking, and suicide attempts, Sandra spiraled into despair. Trafficked at 11 years old, pregnant at 13 years old, Sandra moved from foster homes to shelter homes in DCF custody. Abused by her children's

father, she turned to drugs to numb her from every pain and traumatic experience past and present. From the age of 16, Sandra battled cocaine addiction which led to arrests, incarcerations, and an AIDS diagnosis. Today, she has overcome through faith in Christ and resilience through trials and tribulations. She has lived with HIV for over 28 years and works to serve and empower others to not only see the end to the HIV epidemic, but also to support individuals and families to live healthy, productive, and well-balanced lives.

Today, Sandra is an author and speaker. She works for the Florida Department of Health in Palm Beach County, serving as the Minority AIDS Coordinator. As she completes her dissertation in the Spring of 2021 in the area of African American studies and transgenerational trauma, Sandra plans to develop programs to halt the transmission of trauma in families, restoring a sense of purpose, wellness, and self-actualization.

When we understand our connectedness, we will become empowered to not only advocate for the right of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for ourselves, but also for others. We must resist apathy, and embrace the understanding that life is not over when we experience trauma, grief, and even an AIDS diagnoses; it is just the beginning. We must choose to fulfil our purpose for being, no matter what! This starts with gratitude.

— **Sandra Marie Anderson**