

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2023 USCHATM US Conference on HIV/AIDS

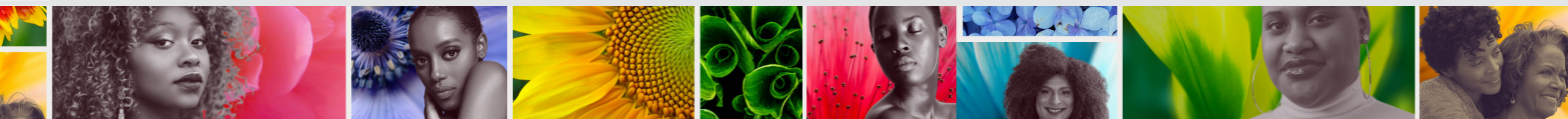


The United States Conference on HIV/AIDS (USCHA) — the largest gathering of HIV/AIDS activists, advocates, health workers, policy makers and community organizers in the country — was held this year in Washington, DC, from September 6 to 9.

This year's uplifting theme was ***A Love Letter to Black Women.***

Several Amida Care staff had the opportunity to attend and shared their thoughts and memories.





Open Plenary Lunch: A Love Letter to Black Women

featured an inspiring speech by Congresswoman Maxine Waters, young people born with HIV, and a performance by Sweet Honey in the Rock.

Here are a few takeaways from Amida Care staff in attendance:

“We were asked to wear our Sunday best (crowns requested) while we ate a delicious lunch together. The team listened to soulful music from Black female artists, beautiful spoken word, and loving shout-outs to women who live with HIV/AIDS or have transitioned because of it. Congresswoman Maxine Waters delivered a powerful speech on the early pioneers who worked to tirelessly to advocate for people living with HIV/AIDS. We were captivated.”

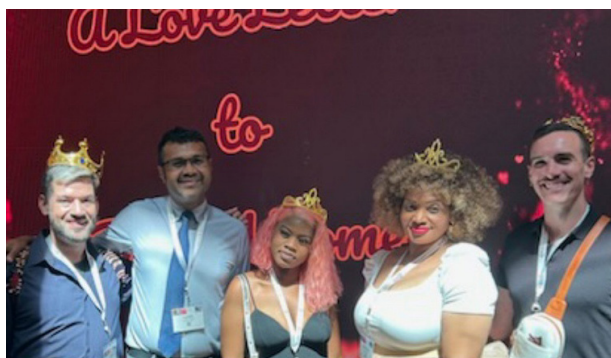
— Renee Byer Pryce, Director of Administration

“This session made me feel appreciated as a Black woman. Also, seeing hundreds of Black women surrounding me made me feel inspired. They gave us props for our hard work and props for our strength. We also heard different tactics that Congresswoman Waters is taking. We heard a crying out for help from our youth that are now HIV advocates and things that we should know that will make a change within our organization and community.”

— Miah Jordan, Events Associate

“We were welcomed with amazing music--live music, beautifully sung music, with lyrics that I found myself singing along to, although I had never even heard those songs before. Then there was a reading of the beautiful poem Dandelion. I was enlightened and very pleased to learn that the poem was symbolic of children born with HIV. And the “Dandelions” have not only survived, but are thriving today as well-rounded adults; many of them were in attendance. Then, we had the pleasure of listening to a very inspirational speech by Representative Maxine Waters. She asked all of the attendees if we were “ready for a fight” against inequality. I do believe we all left the banquet hall ready to fight indeed.”

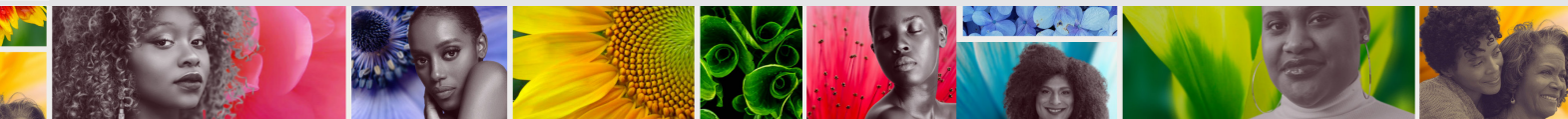
-- Jaime Pena, Member Services Representative



Amida Care staff at Opening Plenary Lunch, wearing their crowns and Sunday Best, as requested (Top photo, left to right: Member Services Representative Jaime Pena, Director of Public Policy and Government Relations Lyndel Urbano, Events Associate Miah Jordan, Partnership Support Representative Dominique Janvier, Program Manager, Trans Health & HIV Prevention Carey Hanlin; Bottom photo, left to right: Carey Hanlin, Transgender & Non-Binary Health Navigator Jessica Harvey, Director of Administration Renee Byer Pryce, VP of Marketing & Communications Carlos N. Molina



Photo courtesy: POZ Magazine



Staff takeaways from various conference workshops:

Jessica Harvey

Transgender & Non-Binary Health Navigator

Surviving being AFAB (Assigned Female at Birth)

Trans masculine folx have struggled with finding representation, including finding themselves. The panelists had a really beautiful testimony of exploration with gender expression and sexuality to find self and ultimately self-love.

Intersectional Identities

Recent data from the CDC demonstrate that Black people comprise approximately 14% of the population and more than 42% of new HIV diagnosis. We need to energize the Black public health workforce, by investing in Black leaders to lead and educate Black masses on the science and effectiveness of PrEP, and support a federally funded national PrEP program.

For all Black HIV prevention activists and community members to receive national updates on policy issues impacting PrEP access, new opportunities, participate in virtual convening, and engage with other activists use this link.

Many Men

Black cisgender heterosexual men continue to struggle with stigma and discussed feeling uncomfortable in spaces that are HIV-centered, as there is a lack of representation. Balancing privilege and inclusion can be a difficult space if we focus on separation of identity, as opposed to unity on a common goal.

People born with HIV are reclaiming their names as Dandelions and/or long-term survivors. Black cisgender heterosexual men discussed navigating stereotypes of being gay/living with HIV while involved in this work, and how there was an unlearning process to accept their status, or closeness to the work. The stigma lives through all communities, however cisgender hetero men's perspective is one that is often overlooked in this space, and some discussed how they do not feel welcomed. Discussions of privilege and access were really interesting this session, in which the conclusion was, if you do not see a space for yourself, make one.



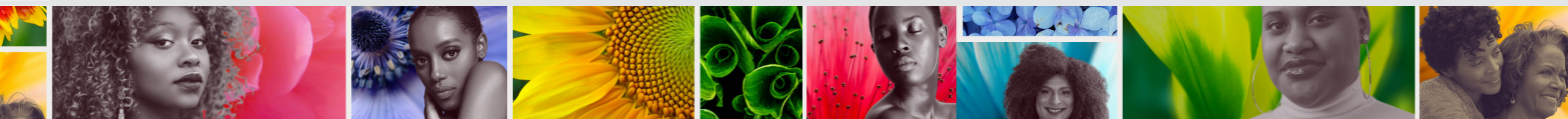
Did you know that the FDA only recently approved a condom for anal sex?!

Sensationalizing Black Women

The history of Black AFAB individuals around forced birth and involuntary solitude is often overlooked and rarely discussed, but is important in understanding the complexities of Black AFABs and body autonomy. Black women are often creators and innovators, but are rarely credited. Individuality is something that is often embraced by society in a performative way, but feelings of not being seen, heard, or valued is the norm. This session concluded with the importance of giving grace to self, and self-care that doesn't need to be a luxurious experience with a hefty price tag.

Do For Love

Cisgender heterosexual men discussed their passion for the work in queer-dominated spaces and PLWH (people living with HIV) spaces. They told stories of how the first time they were validated by another man of color was in a queer space. The level of "black boy joy" and pure love received from the community allowed for a beautiful space of growth and acceptance. To expand the community of cisgender hetero men doing this work, there were discussions of mentorships to help normalize discussions and combat the patriarchy and toxic masculinity.



Medical Mistrust

Under discussion: Creating panels with providers of experience and members who have experienced mistreatment; having a person-centered approach and not shying away from the history and current instances that further this medical mistrust narrative; including materials/information to remove the haze of medical interventions and directly address historical issues, while providing information showing it's from a trusted source.

Indigenous HIV/AIDS Syndemic Strategy

This presentation began with an acknowledgement of the history of the space we were sitting in. This was such a powerful reminder that these tribes are not forgotten. Indigenous folx have been underrepresented in this conversation, and often overlooked. Urban Indian Populations may be a great resource to contact about more involvement from this community to ensure representation.



Lyndel Urbano, Carlos N. Molina and Renée Byer-Pryce at arrival day

Green Book

The Green Book was a resource guide for Black people to navigate through the south to find safe places to be. This was a community book built by and for Black individuals. This concept was used to create a prevention Green Book for Black women to find competent, affirming, and safe providers in Louisville, Kentucky. It is a live document that has a vetting process by a group of Black women to ensure providers are and remain a safe place for services. The historical context and focus on Black women is very powerful.

9/7 Exhibit Hall

Introducing
The World's Fastest HIV Test

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I was fascinated by this HIV rapid response test that gives results in a minute.

Going from unknown to known in 60 sec- simply mind blowing.

Renée Byer-Pryce

USCHA
US Conference on HIV/AIDS

Miah Jordan Events Associate

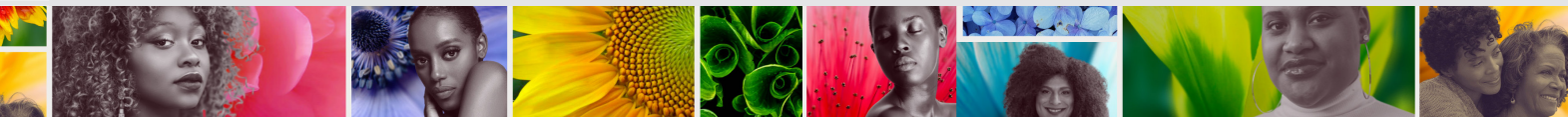
Black Women's Lounge

One of my favorite things was joining the Black Women's Lounge. They had refreshments, massage chairs, and art supplies. There were HIV advocates telling their story while we were participating in activities. After coming from a session, going to the Lounges can be very relaxing. They were giving out prizes and gifts. Everything just felt very welcoming.

Carey Hanlin Program Manager, Trans Health & HIV Prevention

Risk Factors for TGNB Youth

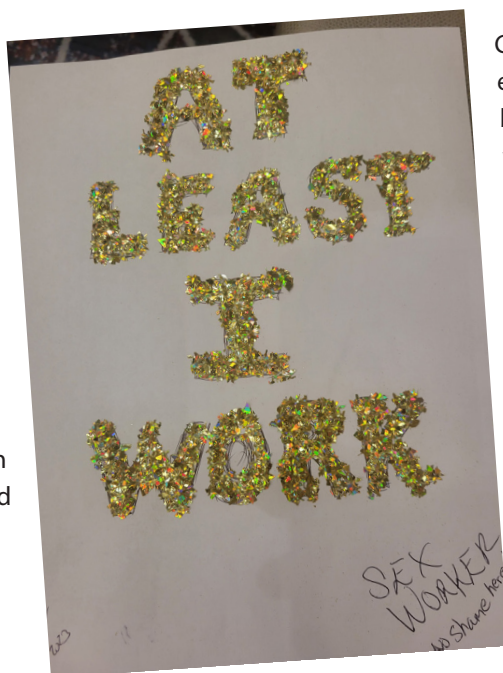
Michelle Collins-Ogle, who runs the Montefiore Adolescent and Youth Sexual Health Clinic, presented on risk factors for the TGNB youth she sees at her clinic. Her research has shown that youth with substance use disorder were more likely than youth with other predominating risk factors to initiate PrEP. She also shared the comprehensive trans-inclusive intake forms her clinic uses.



Dominique Janvier
Partnership Support Representative

HIV/Aging Policy Boot Camp: Building Skills for Equity and Inclusion Workshop

A law was passed in 2020 in District of Columbia (D.C. Law 23-154. Care for LGBTQ Seniors and Seniors with HIV Amendment Act of 2020), making it illegal for nursing homes and long-term care facilities to deny LGBTQ seniors and seniors living with HIV admission and care. Many other states have adapted a form of this law to protect their aging LGBTQ seniors and seniors living with HIV. Currently a similar law is waiting to be signed by the Governor of New York Kathy Hochul.



Artwork from *The Mother of Sex Work* workshop

My Fabulous Disease: A Community Celebration and Conversation

Author Mark S. King wrote his chronicles about living with HIV and overcoming his drug addiction. The author's friends and colleagues read excerpts from the book. King's stories are humorous and serious at the same time. He writes about losing his father to cancer, when he thought he would die before his parents because of his HIV diagnosis. A copy of the author's book was given to all participants; I am looking forward to reading it.

Black Women in HIV: The Challenge of Being Effective Leaders

The seminar featured Black women who are executives, directors, and CEOs of CBOs (community-based organizations). The women discussed the challenges they all faced while starting their CBOs. They had to fight for funding (Ryan White) and recognition. These women overcame their challenges and now they are mentoring other women of color in the HIV field on how to become directors, executives, and CEOs.

The Mother of Sex Work: Histories and Intersections with HIV/AIDS

The discussion was about "Sex Work," a term coined by

Carol Leigh in 1979 at a conference for erotic laborers. Leigh wanted sex work to be recognized as legitimate work. She was one of the original members of ACT UP and BAYSWAN. At the end of the discussion, participants made flyers supporting sex work.

Jaime Pena
Member Services Representative

!Si, se puede!: Engaging Latines in Clinical Research

The speaker was such a fascinating person. In his words, he's an introverted, yet energetic, scientist from Argentina. His organization, Loud Inc, is based in Houston Texas. It made me feel hopeful, and proud, that there is some help for the underserved LGBTQ+ community in Houston. I am greatly looking forward to attending the next workshops.



Jaime Pena with representatives from Mistr, a telemedicine (telePrEP) platform offering easy online access to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)