HIV Groups and Celebs Want You to “Distance Yourself From Hate” [VIDEO]

Proceeds from the sales of face masks will help GMHC provide masks and meals for those in need.

June 12, 2020 By Trent Straube

Wearing a face mask is the right thing to do. Period. Masks are also important to provide for those in need and to fight against prejudice. Thanks to a campaign called “Distance Yourself From Hate,” you can do all three at once—and look fashionable doing it!

GMHC, the nation’s oldest HIV/AIDS service organization, teamed up with the creative agency theCollectiveShift to launch the campaign, which raises money by selling branded face masks so GMHC can provide protective masks and food to underserved New Yorkers.

The masks feature the message “Distance Yourself From Hate” and are available in red or black for $30 each on the campaign website.

GMHC face masks for “Distance Yourself From Hate”Courtesy of DistanceYourselfFromHate.org

The campaign also features public service announcements from artists and entertainers describing what the phrase “Distance Yourself From Hate” means to them. Participants include Samantha Bee, Sarah Michelle Gellar, Mathew Knowles (Beyoncé’s dad), Diane Kruger, Javier Muñoz, Bebe

Neuwirth, Rosie Perez, Norman Reedus, Mj Rodriguez, Latrice Royale, Cecily Strong, Tommy Ton and fashion designer Jason Wu. You can watch an edited collage of the participants at the top of this article. Sample individual messages are embedded throughout, and others can be viewed at DistanceYourselfFromHate.org.

The campaign was originally intended as a way to counter the discrimination directed at Asian people during the COVID-19 pandemic. But, according to a GMHC press release, the concept took on a different meaning in light of the recent Black Lives Matter protests denouncing the killings of George Floyd, Breona Taylor and other Black people by the police.

“We are living in unprecedented times, when some of our political leaders are fanning the flames of hate,” said GMHC CEO Kelsey Louie in the press release. “These same leaders have sought to divide us from one another when we need to be coming together.”

“We all have a responsibility to speak out against social injustice,” added Wu, who is also a GMHC board member. “This campaign is an opportunity for everyone to take a stand against hate and spread a message of unity, love and solidarity.”

In an interview with Women’s Wear Daily, Wu opened up about the homophobia he experienced growing up as a creative Chinese kid and spoke about the diversity of the GMHC campaign. “It’s quite inclusive because we come from the LGBTQ community, where we have always been about inclusion,” he said.

Wu also pointed out that this is the first time GMHC is offering its services to people beyond its HIV-positive clientele. “We felt,” he said, ”this was a great time to spread that message and also offer our support to a greater group of marginalized communities.”

To distribute the masks and help provide food, GMHC is working with Harlem United, another New York City–based HIV service provider, and Lantern Community Services, which battles the epidemic of homelessness.

In related news, for a snapshot of HIV organizations meeting the challenges of the new pandemic, read “Can You Get HIV Services During COVID-19?”

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