Lil Nas X Visits Black HIV Groups, Raises $100K for Southern AIDS Efforts

A choir of LGBTQ members and faith leaders sang from Lil Nas X's "Montero"—the album raises funds for 15 groups fighting HIV in the South.

October 21, 2021 By Trent Straube

Once again, pop star Lil Nas X shines a light on the HIV community. While returning to his hometown of Atlanta to celebrate the smashing success of his debut album, Montero, the 22-year-old Grammy winner stopped by an event Wednesday night that included the HIV organizations he has been raising money for through the album's online "baby registry."

So far, the album has raised over $100,000 for 15 groups fighting HIV/AIDS in the South. (In the lead-up to the album's September 15 release, Lil Nas X announced he was "pregnant" and launched the registry, through which fans could donate to nonprofits.)

> What an honor to partner with @DALLASAUSTIN and host @LilNasX for a choir performance organized by @SouthernAIDSCo made up of members of the LGBTQ community. We are grateful to Lil Nas X For using his platform to continue to raise awareness and dismantle #HIVStigma. pic.twitter.com/lYCbswDIZf
>
> — Gilead COMPASS Initiative (@BeOurCOMPASS) October 21, 2021

The 15 nonprofits are grantees of Gilead Sciences' COMPASS Initiative (the name stands for

“COMmitment to Partnership in Addressing HIV/AIDS in Southern States”). Several community leaders from the HIV nonprofits and music industry execs attended the celebration, which was hosted by the COMPASS Initiative and music producer Dallas Austin.

The party included a choir made up of LGBTQ people, allies and faith leaders who sang songs from Montero while dressed in purple robes, a nod to the annual Spirit Day, marked each October 21. Spearheaded by LGBTQ advocacy group GLAAD, Spirit Day encourages people to wear purple in support of queer youth.

While in Atlanta, Lil Nas X visited COMPASS grantee Thrive SS, which supports Black gay men living with HIV. The “Old Town Road” singer also stopped by the Ponce De Leon Center, an HIV clinic and facility that’s part of Grady Health.

> #tbt while in Atlanta @LilNasX made time to visit COMPASS partners @thrive_ss, and Grady’s Ponce de Leon Center. Check out @heisvaluable in attendance. LilNasX is the personification of showing up and being committed! We’re proud to partner with these amazing organizations! pic.twitter.com/gZWhLwex6n
>
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“Lil Nas X is a fierce advocate, and we are grateful that he continues to use his platform to raise awareness and change the public perception of HIV,” said Shanell L. McGoy, PhD, MPH, the director of public affairs for Gilead Sciences, in an emailed press release. “Empowering new leaders to reach members of their communities was one of the main reasons we started the Gilead COMPASS Initiative three years ago. Thrive SS and other partners throughout the U.S. South are making real progress dismantling HIV stigma in their communities.”

McGoy, who is based in Atlanta, added: “Through the Gilead COMPASS Initiative, we provide funding to support local community organizations working to end the HIV epidemic in the Southern United States. Collaboration with partners to raise awareness about HIV and dismantle stigma is an essential part of the initiative.”

Gilead Sciences manufactures many blockbuster HIV treatments, including Biktarvy, Truvada, Stribild and Descovy. The pharma giant will match Montero's fundraising efforts up to an additional $25,000 per grantee once the baby registry is closed.

The registry—on WelcomeToMontero.com—links each track on his album to a different nonprofit. With the exception of The Bail Project, a national group fighting to end cash bail, and the Cade Foundation, which supports families experiencing infertility, the nonprofits are part of the COMPASS Initiative.

As POZ reported earlier in an article about Lil Nas X's HIV advocacy, the Montero baby registry includes these nonprofits:

> Transinclusive Group
>
> Advocating and working collaboratively with community partners in efforts to "Build Trust and Relationships" within the transgender community; by ending discrimination, mistreatment and racial disparities in health care, employment, education and housing.
>
> Ch-Pier
>
> Creating a platform for rural communities to decrease the vicious cycle of health disparities through education, intervention and research.
>
> Bros in Convo
>
> Providing comprehensive, multicultural sexual health and wellness education and peer support that empowers, promotes and protects the healthy well-being of young men of color.
>
> Compassionate Atlanta
>
> A grassroots community-building nonprofit that seeks to raise awareness about the benefits of compassionate action throughout the Greater Atlanta area by teaching and encouraging people of every persuasion and walk of life to channel their concern for the well-being of others into tangible action.
>
> Relationship Unleashed
>
> Fighting inequality through comprehensive programming, including HIV/AIDS, domestic violence, mental health and holistic therapy. We strive to build productive relationships and partnerships and to make a positive impact with all of our pursuits.
>
> Central Alabama Alliance Resource & Advocacy Center

Leading positive health change in Alabama and empowering communities through education, advocacy and service.

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Somos una organización de base comunitaria, conformada por mujeres Trans para personas Trans (Transexuales, Transgénero e Intersex) y nuestrxs aliadxs, mantenemos nuestro enfoque de trabajo para la visibilidad y elegibilidad los derechos humanos y el bienestar de nuestra comunidad, mediante el empoderamiento, la organización comunitaria que permita fomentar una incidencia política en equidad e igualdad.

We are a community-based organization, made up of Trans women for Trans people (Transsexuals, Transgender and Intersex) and our allies, our work approach is focused on the visibility and protection of human rights and the well-being of our community, through empowerment, community organization to promote advocacy in equity and equality.

Samuel Dewitt Proctor Conference

Represents a cross-section of progressive African-American faith leaders and their congregations to build the capacity of faith leaders' understanding of and engagement with the social determinants of health uniquely impacting African-American trans and queer communities and African-American cisgender women in the Southern region of the United States (in partnership with historically Black institutions of higher education).

Arianna Center

Engages, empowers and lifts up the trans community of South Florida with a special emphasis on the most marginalized, including the Trans Latinx community, undocumented immigrants, people living with HIV and AIDS and those who have experienced incarceration.

Thrive SS

Working to improve health equity for Black gay men living with HIV through direct support, advocacy and building collective power.

What's in the Mirror?

What's in the Mirror? is a nonprofit organization and social movement that uses art and advocacy to end the stigma of mental health.

The Counter Narrative

An organization that works to build power among Black gay men and work in coalition and solidarity with all movements committed to social and racial justice.

The Normal Anomaly

This initiative centers Black, queer plus persons to overcome barriers and end stigma and problematic narratives in order to actualize a new normal and to see the forward mobility of Black queer plus communities.

Happy Hippie

The Happy Hippie Foundation is a nonprofit organization founded by Miley Cyrus. Our mission is to rally young people to fight injustice facing homeless youth, LGBTQ youth and other vulnerable populations.

To learn more about HIV in the Southern United States, click the POZ hashtag #South, where you'll find recent articles such as "Southern HIV/AIDS Awareness Day 2021," "PrEP Programs Face Devastating Loss of Funding for HIV Prevention" and "Which U.S. Region Sees the Highest Rates of HIV Diagnoses and Death?"

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