People Living With HIV Become Art

The “I Am a Work of ART” campaign promotes viral suppression.

September 26, 2022 By Trent Straube

What is it like to be a living, breathing work of art? Nine people who have HIV share that experience in the federal campaign “I Am a Work of ART.”

(“I Am a Work OF Art”) HIV.gov; (Frame) iStock

Featuring videos, posters, social media posts and more, the campaign's goal is to "encourage people with HIV who are not in care to seek care, remain in care and achieve viral suppression," explains HIV.gov.

Viral suppression—meaning that HIV is undetectable—is achieved by taking HIV meds known as antiretroviral therapy, or ART. Folks diagnosed with HIV who take meds and maintain an undetectable viral load not only experience slower disease progression and live healthier and longer lives, but they also don't transmit HIV to their partners via sex, a fact referred to as Undetectable Equals Untransmittable, or U=U.

In a video on HIV.gov, Harold Phillips, MRP, director of the White House Office of National AIDS Policy, discusses "I Am a Work of ART."

“It’s a campaign that features nine people living with HIV,” Phillips says, “who tell their stories of their journey through life before HIV, then with HIV as well as getting into HIV medical care and taking their HIV medications and what it all means to them and what they’ve been able to accomplish by being in consistent medical care and taking their medications. It’s really exciting hearing from people with lived experience influencing the campaign.”

Samples of campaign materials are above, but visit the website for more, including posters, flyers and business cards you can download and print.

The “I Am a Work of ART” page at HIV.gov describes the campaign’s history and need:

(“I Am a Work OF Art”) HIV.gov; (Frame) iStock

“The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [HHS] launched the campaign in June 2022, as part of the federal Ending the HIV Epidemic in the U.S. (EHE) initiative. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates the overall viral suppression rate in the United States is 53%. Therefore, a key strategy to prevent new HIV transmissions is increasing the proportion of people with HIV who are virally suppressed.

“Both the National HIV/AIDS Strategy and the EHE initiative aim to reduce new HIV infections in the United States by 90% by 2030.

“Using a co-creation approach, HHS engaged traditional and nontraditional HIV stakeholders and people with HIV in eight EHE priority jurisdictions across the U.S. to develop ‘I Am a Work of ART.’”

The campaign features a diverse group of people with HIV who share personal stories about getting into care and using ART to achieve viral suppression.

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