Why Not Reclaim December 1 as "World HIV Day"?

December 1, 2016

Thursday, December 1, is World AIDS Day (WAD) 2016, an annual observance that began in 1988 and is marked by the World Health Organization (WHO). Events locally and globally aim to raise awareness of the virus and remember those lost to the epidemic.

You can read POZ's coverage of WAD here, including a calendar of events, President Obama's proclamation and a history of WAD.

Meanwhile, a group of organizations including Project Inform and the Global Forum on MSM and HIV launched a campaign and website — worldhivday.org — to reclaim December 1 as World HIV Day.

Here is how they make their case for World HIV Day:

> The word has changed. The global response to HIV must change too. December 1st has traditionally been World AIDS Day — but this year, we urge the global community to reclaim December the 1st as World HIV Day.
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> We do this, because as we enter the next phase of the global HIV response, we cannot let fear and discrimination drive us backwards.
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> We must reaffirm and redouble our efforts to end one of the greatest health challenges of our generation.
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> And, we have reason for great optimism: Dramatic advances in biomedical and behavioral sciences have given us the tools to prevent HIV-related deaths and dramatically reduce new HIV infections. We defeat HIV when we provide access to treatment for all people living with HIV, HIV testing and comprehensive prevention strategies that include PrEP and condom availability, and harm reduction strategies for people who inject drugs that include needle exchange and opiate substitution therapy. We defeat HIV when these solutions are delivered by genuinely respecting the rights and dignity of all people living with and affected by HIV.

This epidemic has never been just about a virus. We defeat HIV when we embrace social justice and the fundamental human dignity and leadership of affected populations around the globe. With changes in governments and policies around the world — most recently in the USA — there is a real risk that HIV will be deprioritized and fatally defended.

If we choose, we can revert to persecution, blame and despair, jettisoning proven science, dismantling the progress of the last thirty-five years, and driving up new infections and deaths. But, if we choose, we can end HIV by prioritizing resources for key populations and meet the challenge of dismantling systems that create poverty, mass incarceration, and harness access to full access to health care and education, and create new structures that support inclusion and diversity.

AIDS was our past, HIV is our present and our future can be a world where we ended a virus, by making an unprecedented sustained global investment in combining science with respect for the human rights of all. This December the 1st — let us commit to creating a World Without HIV. Let’s End HIV.

WorldHIVDay.org

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