The Power of Equality

Year after year, trans folks lift their voices, especially trans people of color, but the outcomes remain the same.

January 8, 2018 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

I am a gay man, but I am not transgender. I am cisgender. In other words, my gender identity corresponds with the sex that I was identified as having at birth. My preferred pronouns are “he,” “him” and “his.”

It took me a long time after accepting my sexual orientation to also accept my gender identity. Not because I had any doubts, but because it was difficult for me to accept that I had a gender identity. In that respect, I saw myself as “normal,” so getting beyond that idea took effort.

My experience is like that of other people who in a given situation view themselves as “normal,” which just means in the majority or average. A similar dynamic is at work for many white people with regard to race. For them, they are “normal” and other races are not.

Such thinking has major consequences for people on both sides not only at an individual level but also at a community level, which affects social policies. No layer of society is immune from the effects. Public health is certainly affected by such thinking. We’ve seen the effects time and time again.

Even allies, the folks we believe should “get it,” often really don’t, despite their best intentions. Case in point: The erasure of trans people from public health data and larger conversations affecting trans health. This is a widespread and longstanding problem that stubbornly persists.

During a plenary session at the 2017 United States Conference on AIDS (USCA), our cover subject, Achim Howard, did something about it. As a Black trans man living with HIV, he took the stage to express his frustration that trans people weren’t in the presentation. Others joined him onstage to provide further testimony.

They painted a dark picture of a broken cycle. Year after year, trans folks lift their voices, especially trans people of color, but the outcomes remain the same. Much of what’s required to make progress is surely long-term in nature, but that doesn’t adequately explain why even small steps aren’t being taken. Click here for more.

Ever since the 2016 election (and, frankly, for at least a year before that), it feels like the news

cycle has been supercharged. So much so that even major events are forgotten by most of us in quick order. The only people who don't have that luxury are, of course, the folks who live through such events.

Kelly Young, CEO of AIDS Foundation Houston, is one of those people. Hurricane Harvey devastated her city and created huge challenges for its residents, including people living with HIV. Click here to read our Q&A with Kelly about how her agency is coping in the aftermath of the storm.

Although unwanted changes can be stressful, thoughtful reflections on our lives are often good things. In that spirit, to usher in 2018 we've introduced two sections to the magazine: "Everyday" and "Pulse." Click here and here, respectively, to see what's new!

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