



# We the LGBT

An open letter by LGBT executive directors urging the community to join the fight against HIV/AIDS.

June 3, 2013

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Over the last 30 years, the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community has seen great strides in the movement for full equality. Much of this success is the result of a concerted movement, which was galvanized in response to the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s.

In the decades since, our movement has seen incredible victories. Today, twenty-one states and Washington, DC, have implemented nondiscrimination laws in employment to protect LGBT employees. Eighteen states allow gay couples to adopt children. Sixteen states have passed legislation protecting LGBT students from discrimination, with another fifteen states specifically protecting LGBT students from bullying. Gays and lesbians can now serve openly in the military and more than half of all Americans support marriage equality, including the first-ever sitting president.

Unfortunately, our community hasn't maintained the same momentum in our fight against HIV. Gay and bisexual men recently accounted for 63 percent of all new HIV infections and perhaps most concerning is the 22 percent increase among those between 13 and 24 years old. Each day, more than eighty gay and bisexual men become infected with HIV in the United States. These trends are even more pronounced among gay and bisexual men of color, with young black gay and bisexual men having a higher rate of HIV infection than any other population in this country. While we don't have enough data on transgender populations, studies show that 28 percent of transgender women are HIV positive in the United States, with rates over 50 percent for African American transgender women.

One in five gay and bisexual men are living with HIV in the United States. Despite these alarming statistics, which have galvanized our community in the past, the HIV epidemic has seemed to fall by the wayside. Many in our community have simply stopped talking about the issue. This must change.

We, the undersigned, are committed to being part of this change and urge the entire community to join us in this fight.

- If you are a policy maker, fight to protect and expand HIV treatment and prevention programming and fight to stop HIV criminalization at the federal, state and local level.

- If you are an LGBT organization, be sure to speak to your constituents about the continued toll this epidemic has on our community.
- If you're an LGBT donor, support causes that support the health of the community. And, get tested, know your status, and join the fight to end this epidemic.

Science and policy have aligned like never before to make it possible to envision an AIDS-free generation. That vision will not be realized without addressing the persistent and disparate impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on gay, bisexual and transgender Americans. Today, we commit to ending this epidemic and protecting the health of our community. [We urge you to join us in this effort.](#)

Signed,

Michael Adams, SAGE

Brett Andrews, Positive Resource Center

Selisse Berry, Out & Equal Workplace Advocates

Rea Carey, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

Rudolph H. Carn, NAESM, Inc.

Kevin M. Cathcart, Lambda Legal

Bernard Cherkasov, Equality Illinois

Masen Davis, Transgender Law Center

Victor E. Diaz-Herman, Pridelines Youth Services

Earl Fowlkes, Center For Black Equity

Antonio David Garcia, Affirmations

Marjorie Hill, Gay Men's Health Crisis

Jody Huckaby, PFLAG National

Rebecca Isaacs, Equality Federation

Lorri L. Jean, LA Gay and Lesbian Community Center

Paul Kawata, National Minority AIDS Council

Kate Kendell, National Center for Lesbian Rights

Lorraine Langlois, Metro Wellness & Community Centers

Sharon J. Lettman-Hicks, National Black Justice Coalition

Curtis Lipscomb, Kick - The Agency for LGBT African Americans

Carlos Martinez, The Center/GLBT Community Center of Colorado

Monica Meyer, OutFront Minnesota

Candice Nichols, The Gay & Lesbian Community Center of Southern Nevada

Lisa Perry-Wood, Family Equality Council

Terry Stone, CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers

Kara Suffredini, MassEquality

Fred Swanson, Gay City Health Project

Lee Swislow, Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders

Glenda Testone, The NYC LGBT Community Center

Rachel B. Tiven, Immigration Equality

Lance Toma, Asian & Pacific Islander Wellness Center

Modesto Tico Valle, Center on Halsted

Hector Vargas, GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBT Equality  
Phill Wilson, Black AIDS Institute  
Chuck Wolfe, Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund and Institute  
Toni Young, Community Education Group

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Go to [wethelgbt.org](http://wethelgbt.org) to sign the petition.

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