AIDS United Honors Historic March on Washington

An open letter to elected officials spells out why racial justice must be a part of our work to end the HIV epidemic.

August 28, 2020 By AIDS United

Friday, August 28, 2020, marks 57 years since the historic 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. It was at that march that the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his famous “I Have a Dream” speech.

This year, a Commitment March on Washington will be held Friday “to recommit to the dream Dr. Martin Luther King defined in the 1963 march, to call for police accountability and reform, and to mobilize voters ahead of the November elections,” as a news release from the NAACP states.

Tens of thousands are expected to participate in person in Washington, D.C., and thousands more will participate virtually from around the world.

Racial justice is a key framework AIDS United employs as it works to end the HIV epidemic in the United States. That is why AIDS United endorses the 2020 Commitment March on Washington and is closing for the day to commemorate the original historic march and allow staff to participate in-person or virtually in this year’s march. AIDS United urges others to join in committing too.

Earlier this year, AIDS United’s Public Policy Council released an open letter calling on elected officials to enact criminal justice reforms as part of a larger racial justice strategy.

That letter, which was endorsed by nearly 80 HIV organizations, laid out precisely why racial justice must be a part of our work to end the HIV epidemic.

Let us be clear: There is nothing deficient about Black and Brown bodies.

And yet, those of us who are Black and Brown are more likely to die from medical conditions as different as childbirth and heart disease. There is nothing specific about Black bodies that make us more susceptible to HIV, and yet nearly half the new HIV diagnoses in the United States are among Black people.

The problem is neither medical nor biological. It is sociological. The problem is white supremacy.

AIDS United's Public Policy Council is the leading coalition of HIV organizations. It has previously adopted a racial justice framework and recently formed a racial justice committee tasked with helping HIV organizations from across the country ingrain racial justice throughout their work.

AIDS United remains committed to the dream King articulated 57 years ago: "to make real the promises of democracy," "to lift our nation from the quicksand of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood" and "to make justice a reality for all of God's children."

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