



HIV/AIDS at Creating Change

February 10, 2015 By [Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.](#)

Coordinated by the National LGBTQ Task Force, the 27th National Conference on LGBT Equality,  a.k.a. [Creating Change](#), was held in Denver, Colorado, from February 4 to 8.

I had the privilege of attending and presenting. It was my first Creating Change and it didn't disappoint.

AIDS United and Gilead sponsored the nine HIV/AIDS sessions held during the conference. The sessions covered pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for HIV prevention, HIV awareness campaigns, HIV criminalization, black gay men's HIV advocacy in the South and much more.

I presented during the pre-conference day-long institute coordinated by AIDS United titled "Relight the Fire: Bringing the LGBTQ and HIV/AIDS Communities Back Together, Building Leaders for a Reunited Movement." This was a new institute for Creating Change.

As the title implies, the institute aimed to get people interested in bridging these movements by sharing stories and strategies, as well as strengthening leadership skills. The interactivity certainly seemed to motivate participants to engage.

My presentation, which turned mostly into a Q&A session, was giving advice on using the media to help bridge both movements. After lots of history and reflection, it seemed that folks were ready for some practical takeaways by the time I had the floor. Thanks to AIDS United for letting me participate.

I hope folks found my presentation of value, but frankly I was struck by how much I got out of the experience, not only from my presentation but from the whole day. I was reinvigorated with hope that these two movements just might get back together after all.

The air was full of hope. Apart from the HIV/AIDS programming, I had the pleasure of seeing familiar faces from HIV/AIDS advocacy. I also was heartened by the inclusion of HIV/AIDS in the "state of the movement" speech by Rea Carey, executive director of the Task Force.

Without rehashing old gripes about why the LGBT and HIV/AIDS movements drifted apart, I do sincerely hope that what I felt at Creating Change becomes more than just a feeling. We need each other now perhaps more than ever.

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