Creating Opportunities for Trans Women of Color to Thrive

An interview with Jasmine Tasaki of We Care Tennessee

March 13, 2020 By AIDS United

Jasmine Tasaki describes herself as a parental figure in her community. She is the executive director of We Care Tennessee, an organization that works to empower transgender women of color in Tennessee. Starting in 2017 and becoming fully Established in 2018, her organization is driven by "progressive ideas, bold actions and a strong foundation of support."

"Dealing with the challenges of today requires problem solvers who bring different perspectives and are willing to take risks," Tasaki said. "WeCareTn emerged out of a pursuit to inspire and support the trans women of color community—and a desire for actions to speak louder than words. Here at WeCareTn, we are driven by a single goal: to do our part in making the lives of trans women better."

We Care Tennessee's logoCourtesy of Facebook/Jasmine Tasaki

Tasaki is a part of AIDS United's first-ever cohort of the Fund for Resilience, Equity and Engagement and the Transgender Leadership Initiative Leadership Development Program. These leaders were chosen through AIDS United's grantee partner organizations as representatives of transgender and gender-nonconforming people and Black gay, bisexual, queer and same-gender-loving men—populations in our communities most disproportionately impacted by HIV.

We caught up with Tasaki to learn more about her story and how she works to mobilize her community to stop HIV together.

How did you get into this field?

Being a parent figure in this community is where my journey began, and I got into this work organically.

As a survivor of sexual trauma, stigma related to the trans community and abuse, it was only a higher calling that could compel me to sit in my suffering until I was ready to lead others into healing.

I have been in the official work of organizing community for five years.

How do we start to reduce the barriers preventing transgender women of color from accessing care?

Stigma, housing instability and lack of resources are barriers to trans women of color accessing care in the mid-South. I feel that continued leadership and advocacy development within the TWOC community is key to our movement.

Secondly, I feel that more organizations, corporations and private donors should fund grassroots, trans-led organizations. These are the people who create the containers which we are hoping to replicate on a broader level.

What are some of the challenges preventing trans women of color from being in executive leadership roles? What are some of the solutions to addressing those challenges?

Systemic oppression, lack of confidence and lack of representation are three of the reasons trans women of color are not often in leadership or executive roles. Many trans women of color are in organizer roles where cisgender people are pulling the strings of their trauma, hurt and happiness. This ultimately creates a puppet show that has no impact on community but, in fact, only impacts the organizations' funding.

It is time for trans women of color to reclaim our voices, narratives and people. We need full autonomy over organizations built for our people, period.

We must start from within because the conversation is a big one that must be had. It must start in the spaces where we live and are so that we can thrive collectively. If ten organizations are supported, heard and seen, but twenty organizations are not, we have accomplished nothing.

This week we honored National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, held each year on March 10. Do you have a call to action for communities?

I dare you to research, engage and support true trans-led organizations.

The FREE and TLI Leadership Development Program was created as part of a joint initiative of the Fund for Resilience, Equity and Engagement, generously supported by the Elton John AIDS Foundation and the Transgender Leadership Initiative, generously supported by Janssen Pharmaceuticals.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.