



Why HINAC is the HIV Event We Desperately Need and How to Get a Scholarship

The 'HIV Is Not A Crime Training Academy' is unlike any other community event. Here's info and how to apply for a scholarship.

January 31, 2023 By [Mark S. King](#)

The issue of HIV criminalization used to intimidate me, because I didn't understand State laws, much less how to change them. Thank God I got a scholarship to the first [HIV Is Not A Crime Training Academy \(HINAC\)](#) in 2014, because it opened my eyes and introduced me to dedicated, kick ass activists, the large majority of them living with HIV, who showed me how they were already rolling back dangerous statutes that are prosecuting and jailing people for no other reason than their HIV status. And yes, this grotesque injustice is going on right here in the United States.

But let me stop right there and tell you this: the next HINAC is being held this June 4-7 and there are scholarships available. I urge anyone with any level of knowledge of this issue, or who wants to get an education about it, to find out about the scholarships process and get [your application in](#) by midnight on February 15, 2023 (there is [a recording available](#) and [PowerPoint slides](#) explaining the process but keep in mind they don't reflect the fact the deadline has been extended to February 15). That deadline is days away, folks.

Trust me when I tell you that HINAC is a life-changing experience, focused on real education and interaction, where you will meet people who you will know and admire for the rest of your life. Yes. Really.

Scholarships range from a discounted registration fee of \$75 to the inclusion of lodging, meals, and even reasonable transportation costs. HINAC prioritizes people living with HIV, people who haven't been before, folks from the transgender community, and from southern States. You need someone to nominate you who will explain on the form why they think you would benefit from attending and how you might be able to use what you learn.

My favorite part of HINAC is how it is very deliberately unlike any other conference you might have attended. There is no swanky host hotel. There are no Big Pharma gift bags or ballroom-sized catered lunches. Instead, HINAC is held on the campus of a university (this year, at Emory & Henry College in Emory, VA), where we all stay in dorm rooms and eat in the cafeteria and if that sounds like roughing it to you, maybe it is. Give in. You'll love it.

Look, I'm as bougie as the next privileged gay guy, but I have been to every in-person HINAC and always have a blast. You won't be clicking through Netflix selections in your hotel room. You'll be laughing with, and learning from, all of your new friends in the middle of a college campus. (Still need convincing? [Watch this terrific video](#) about the 2016 HINAC event.)

Most people know HIV criminalization from biased news stories of people who didn't disclose their

HIV status to partners (stories that usually don't mention that the person living with HIV was undetectable or used other protection or otherwise did not expose their partner to HIV or the very complicated issue of HIV disclosure) but it's so much more than that. If you're living with HIV and get arrested for something unrelated to your status, criminal charges could be heightened simply because of the virus in your body.

And get this. Right now, Tennessee is going through [an HIV funding nightmare](#) because the State is cutting off their own "Ending the Epidemic" federal funding just so they can limit money to Planned Parenthood and other such conservative bullshit. The State is willing to walk away from millions and millions of dollars in HIV funding just to make an insane political statement.

What does this have to do with HIV? The county in Tennessee that will suffer from the greatest loss of funding is Shelby County. And Shelby County is also the place where the largest number of people living with HIV have been prosecuted. It's all connected. Go figure.

There's so much more to say, but you can find out more on the [SERO Project web site](#) about criminalization, [HINAC](#), and [the scholarship process](#). You can also visit the [SERO Facebook page](#) or email Tami Haught, HINAC Co-Director at tami.haught@seroproject.com. Get busy and submit your application!

HINAC will be held June 4-7, 2023, at Emory & Henry College in Emory, VA. The partner organizations involved are SERO Project, [THRIVE SS](#), [US PLHIV Caucus](#), [Positively Trans](#), and the [Positive Women's Network \(USA\)](#).

Mark