Honoring an Often-Overlooked Population on World AIDS Day

Millennials and Gen Z continue the fight for social justice and health equity.

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The following post is from Jesse Milan Jr., president & CEO of AIDS United.

World AIDS Day on December 1 is a day of commemoration and remembrance, but it is also a call to action in the present. Sadly, World AIDS Day often has meaning mostly for long-time survivors both HIV positive and negative, but it seems irrelevant to our youth and anyone too young to have personally known someone who died of AIDS.

Not this year.

This year I want us to not only honor and remember the ones we've lost and loved to AIDS, but I want us to honor and support our youth and everyone too young to remember the hardest days and deaths from AIDS who are working today for our cause. I want us to acknowledge all our young adults and youth working valiantly today along side Baby Boomers and Gen Xers for the social justice and health equity legacy of AIDS. I hope we want to recognize along with all our hardworking long-term survivors all our active young thrivers who come to this work with a deep passion to promote hope and wellness and for the rights and programs needed for today and for our future.

Learn more about World AIDS Day and download graphics like these on UNAIDS.org.Courtesy of UNAIDS

I’ve learned from colleagues so much younger than me that the core values and goals of social justice, dignity and human rights, and of access to prevention, treatment and care transcend age and generations. I first fought for those rights and goals when I was 29 when my late partner died. How sad that we are still fighting for rights and services, but how inspiring it is to see so many in their teens, 20s and 30s working and leading the fight today.

So, if you self-identify as Gen Y, or Gen Z, as iGen, Centennial or Millennial, or if you don’t want anyone to guess your age at all, thank you for all you give of yourself and for all you do for our communities. We remember those who we wish could be here to see all the advances we’ve made, and we honor all those who have worked for the progress we’ve made to date. But I hope you know that this World AIDS Day we honor you too for advancing our communities and our country to where we need to be to end this epidemic for people of every age. I am certain that those who did not live to know you would be as proud as I am to know and work with you today.

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