



Listening to Older Women Across the Globe: An Overview of AIDS 2024

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By Louise Wallace

AIDS 2024, the [25th International AIDS Conference](#), convened July 22-26, 2024, in Munich Germany, showcasing exciting community-led innovations alongside scientific breakthroughs and game changers. Two members of The Well Project's community advisory board made their way to Munich to experience the conference's unparalleled energy – and often-complicated dynamics – firsthand. Read on for one perspective on AIDS 2024 – and scroll down the page for more.

Attending my first International AIDS Conference in Munich, Germany, was overwhelming yet exciting! I was immediately struck by the diversity and vibrancy of the global community, all coming together to learn and share.

Navigating the conference was initially daunting. The Global Village, filled with stalls offering keychains, pens, bags, and other branded materials, buzzed with activity. Videos and live presentations from HIV organizations worldwide added to the dynamic atmosphere.

Given my age, 54, I gravitated towards the Silver Zone, a networking area for older people living with HIV. One of the most impactful presentations I attended there was by Nicoletta Policek, who discussed people's feelings about death. Her study identified two main themes: fear of progression, and anxiety about its consequences; and fear of death, related to loneliness, pain, trust in the healthcare system, financial concerns, and stigma.

Hearing death openly discussed was refreshing. Cultural attitudes towards death vary widely;

some celebrate it, while others do not.

This reminded me of my 81-year-old mother, who, being very organized, began planning her funeral in her 60s!

Recently, I accompanied her to the funeral parlor to ensure everything was in order. Although it felt strange, it was also empowering. I believe a good quality of life should be matched by a good quality of death.

The importance of physical exercise for older people living with HIV was another key topic. An expert presenter emphasized strength training's role in managing the high prevalence of cardiovascular issues and other comorbidities among people living with HIV. He discussed lifestyle choices and the World Health Organization's model for healthy aging, highlighting a 20-year study on the increased cardiovascular risk for people living with HIV and the need to address inflammation without relying solely on medication.

This resonated with me, prompting reflection on my own journey with alcohol and addiction, and my progress in overcoming them.

As I approach my 55th birthday, my takeaways from the Silver Zone include being kind to oneself, embracing the wisdom that menopause brings, and recognizing that I am enough just as I am. Inspired by these insights, I am planning a three-day yoga retreat in Romania next year. For more details, you can [visit my website](#).

Coming from a Caribbean heritage with parents from St. Lucia and being born in London, I was particularly interested in the Caribbean community's presentations. In the Women's Networking

Zone, I listened to women from Trinidad discussing stigma and financial hardships, especially among older women. This led to a meaningful connection with Diana Weeks, a Caribbean speaker, whom I invited onto my podcast, "[Aunty Lou's Hour](#)," to share her journey and experience.

Meeting Katie, another The Well Project blogger, was one of my highlights. I felt such a strong sense of community, empowerment, Sisterhood, and love when we met.

The conference concluded with a heartfelt goodbye party. As I danced on stage, reflecting on my journey from hiding my HIV status from my children and mother to proudly standing as a wise woman in menopause, tears of gratitude and pride flowed. This conference not only provided valuable knowledge and connections but also affirmed my personal growth and resilience.

More from The Well Project on the 25th International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2024)

- [Can We Talk About Sex?!? A Recap from AIDS 2024](#) by Kimberly Canady
 - [A Chance of a Lifetime: A Recap from AIDS 2024](#) by Kimberly Canady
 - [Lead the noise](#) by HIVstigmafighter on A Girl Like Me
 - [Sharing the Journey from Stigma to Mindfulness: A Recap from AIDS 2024](#) by Louise Wallace
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The Well Project is a non-profit organization whose mission is to change the course of the HIV/AIDS pandemic through a unique and comprehensive focus on women and girls across the gender spectrum. Visit their website, <https://www.thewellproject.org/>, to access fact sheets (English and Spanish), blogs, and advocacy tools, and to join a global community of women living with HIV.
