National AIDS Memorial Announces 2022-2023 Pedro Zamora Young Leaders Scholarship Recipients

Funded through the support of Gilead Sciences, the program has provided nearly $500K in scholarships to college students in support of academic studies and community engagement to advance health and social justice

November 18, 2022 By National AIDS Memorial

The National AIDS Memorial has announced its 2022/2023 Pedro Zamora Young Leaders scholars, its largest and most diverse class ever, providing $5,000 scholarships to 17 students attending 16 universities and academic institutions from across the country.

This month marks 28 years since Pedro Zamora died of AIDS-related complications. The Pedro Zamora Young Leaders Scholarship honors his legacy as an AIDS educator and advocate against stigma and prejudice. The program brings recognition and visibility to outstanding young people by supporting their higher education endeavors and who, like Pedro, are making a profound impact advancing health and social justice issues.

“This scholarship supports young people who demonstrate a passion for health and social justice and who are using their voices for advocacy and change,” said National AIDS Memorial CEO John Cunningham. “These students are carrying Pedro’s torch forward, pursuing careers and work that will have a positive impact. Their optimism, action and commitment provide so much hope for the future.”

The 2022-2023 scholars hail from colleges and universities in ten states and the District of Columbia. More than 40% are the first in their families to attend college; 41% are Black/African American; 35% are Hispanic/Latinx; and 12% are Asian American/Pacific Islanders. They include:

California: Thuan-Huong Doan, UCLA; Karen Gallegos Estrada, UC-Santa Cruz; Esmeralda Yzguerra, University of Southern California. District of Columbia: Salihah Aakil Bey, Howard University; Isabella Igbanugo, American University; Edwin Santos, American University. Florida: Kaysyn Jones, Florida State University. Maryland: Ijeoma Okoro, University of Maryland. New York: Kathleen Hoang, Columbia University. North Carolina: Leo Sanabria, Duke University. Pennsylvania: Dayana Henderson, Pennsylvania State University. Rhode Island: Elizabeth Soyemi, Brown University. South Carolina: Jillian Gray, College of Charleston; Darby Porter, University of South Carolina.

Texas: Lesly Chávez-Valencia, University of Texas, Austin; Areli Rosales, University of Texas, San Antonio. Virginia: Maryann Nwude, Virginia Tech University

Dayana Henderson, one of the scholars from Penn State University spoke of Pedro's work in her application, saying, "For Pedro to be diagnosed at the age of 17, and rather than be angry at the world or embarrassed about his diagnosis, he used it to educate and advocate. He was not afraid to discuss his sexuality, his status or be an activist. This should be a lesson to us all. I want to eradicate the stigma, fear, exclusion, discrimination and hate surrounding HIV/AIDS, and free those that have lived in the shadows of shame."

Awarded annually, the Pedro Zamora Young Leaders Scholarship is funded through major support provided by Gilead Sciences and individual donors. Since its inception in 2009, the program has provided nearly $500,000 in support to 129 students.

"This is a truly amazing class of Pedro scholars, each making an impact on their campuses and in the community for a better, more equitable future," said Alex Kalomparis, Senior Vice President, Gilead Sciences. "Gilead is proud to support this important program that is developing the next generation of leaders in Pedro's honor in the fight to end HIV through action and advocacy."

Says Pedro scholar Salihah Aakil Bey, "I aspire for my art to be the kind of safe space that [HIV/AIDS] activists made. A place that teaches words to discuss our lives, love to remind us we matter, and beauty to remind us to smile. I want to tell the stories of my people, Black, Muslim, American people, and in doing so make us known and show all that we've overcome, the music we've made, the love we've brought, and show that our story is America."

This year's recipients are making a powerful difference as young leaders working on issues ranging from HIV/AIDS, arts and community development, mental health, undocumented and migrant community rights, race- and gender-based health care equity, LGBTQ+ activism, Islamophobia, algorithmic biases, criminal justice, domestic violence, and human rights.

The application process for the fall 2023/spring 2024 school year opens March 1, 2023. Details about the program, including a newly created video about the program, can be found at aidsmemorial.org/scholarships.

Candidates must demonstrate how they are providing service and/or leadership in efforts to end HIV or help those living with it; fight against stigma, denial, racism, and hate; and how their studies, career plans or public service will contribute to advancing social justice.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.poz.com/blog/national-aids-memorial-announces-20222023-pedro-zamora-young-leaders-scholarship-recipients