How I’m Using My HIV/AIDS Organizing Experience

Including at this year’s Dream Rally

April 4, 2018 By Martha Warriner Jarrett

In the 3+ years since I learned I was HIV positive, I’ve tried to engage in both the HIV/AIDS community and the local Bakersfield community. That’s something I’ve never had the time to do. But now that I’m retired, all that’s changed. When my book (A Rough Season) was published, I was interviewed on a local TV station. I held a book launch party at a local gallery. I’ve also been involved in the HIV/AIDS group at the local health department, and in organizing events for AIDS Testing Day and World AIDS day. In connection with World AIDS Day, one of the local TV stations did a lengthy interview of my husband and me. They even talked to my infectious disease doctor. That piece appeared on the morning news on December 1 and I spoke to quite a crowd at the event that we held.

My activism in the HIV/AIDS community has led to my activism in the larger community through the Justice Committee at my church, and a group that’s working on fostering better relations between law enforcement and the community here in Bakersfield. Last but not least, I’m helping the Justice Committee and Faith in the Valley organize The Dream Rally to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s assassination on April 4, 1968. We’re holding it at a local park and we’ll have speakers and music and food vendors. Our speakers will address the question, “What’s happened to Dr. King’s dream in the last 50 years?” During the last half century, his dreams for racial equality, peace and economic equality have reached both high points and low points. I sometimes wonder if we’ve made any progress at all. Going forward, our group hopes to focus on poverty and discrimination, both racial and religious, as well as the immigration issue.

Wish you could all join us at Yokuts Park on April 7, 2018. Maybe you can be there in spirit.

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