

RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY IN ACTION

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON STIGMA

2017 Conference Summary Report





"There was a real
connection and
intersectionality"

- Conference Attendee

CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

The 8th annual International Conference on Stigma was successfully held at Howard University's Blackburn Center on November 17th, 2017 from 8:30am to 5:00pm.

- Up to 5.5 CEU social work hours were offered.
- 3 raffles were held throughout the day
- Vendors included: AIDS Healthcare Foundation, Promising Futures, NOBCO, Khafre Abif, Nova Salud, MMG, HU African Studies/GlobeMed, JSI / HIV.gov, DC PrEP for Women initiative, Vuru, HU School of Social Work
- A live webcast was streamed on the Stigma Conference website: whocanyoutell.org

Conference learning objectives were:

- Describe the impact of stigma on human rights of affected individuals and its role in impeding treatment and prevention of HIV and other health-related illnesses
- List effective strategies to mitigate stigma and improve outcomes
- Describe specific examples from attendee's lives (personal and professional) of stigma and its impact on individuals
- Design strategies to recognize and address stigmatizing behaviors and policies in their environment

EVENT OUTLINE

Plenary Sessions

From Grassroots to National: Fighting HIV Stigma

Moderator: Jesse Milan Jr., JD, President and CEO, AIDS United

Panelists:

Patricia Nalls, Founder and Executive Director of The Women's Collective

Shayla Schlossenberg, Outreach and Mobile Coordinator, HIPS

Brandon Primus, JD, MPA, Director of Corporate Compliance and Lead Manager, Harlem United



Coming Home: Making Way for Members of the HIV Community to 'Return' to the Church -- The Creation of Pathways by the International Stigma Index Project and the Framework for Dialogue on Faith-based Initiatives

Moderators:

Vanessa Johnson, JD

Steering Committee Member, U.S. People Living with HIV Caucus, Ribbon Consulting Group, A DBA of Just Cause Consulting LLC

Reverend Michael Schuenemeyer, MDiv

Executive for Health and Wholeness Advocacy, Wider Church Ministries, United Church of Christ



Workshops

1. Researchers Needed! Nuts and Bolts of Studying Stigma
2. Addressing Stigma and Risk Among Incarcerated Women Living with HIV/AIDS
3. Leadership and change through storytelling
4. Unpacking Stigma in The Trump Era—Youth Focused Workshop
5. Cultural Competency and Stigma: is there a Connection?



Personal Perspectives

Tracey Dannemiller, Advocate, Mother, and Founder, Straight from the Heart of Florida, Inc

Jada Mercedes Cardona, HIV/STD Health Equity Specialist, Louisiana Department of Health, New Orleans, LA.

Christopher Johnson, Associate Director of Communications, AIDS Healthcare Foundation

ATTENDANCE AND PROCEEDS

336 in-person attendees

154 webcast attendees

Live stream:

Attendees viewed the conference from the United States, Canada, the UK, and Italy

\$116,042

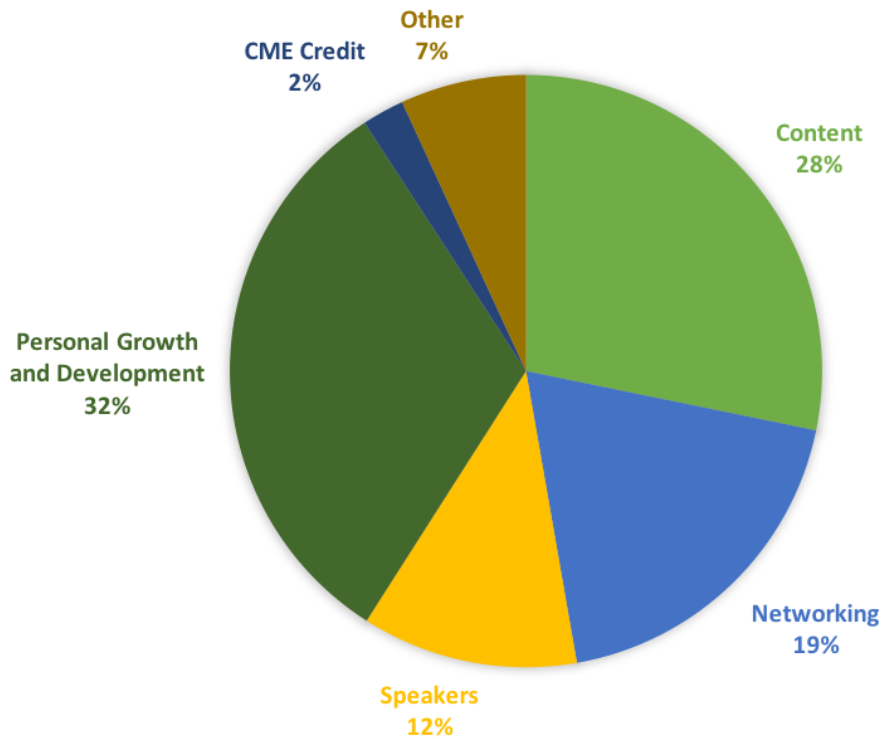
in grants and donations

25 scholarships
given



**"I liked the combination
of scientific research
and personal stories."**

TOP REASONS FOR ATTENDING THE CONFERENCE



- 68% of attendees were female
- All age groups from 13 to >55 were well represented, with ages 25-34 having the greatest attendance (25%) and 45-54 having the lowest (18.2%)
- 31% of participants were healthcare providers

83% of the
attendees were
minorities

SURVEY STATISTICS

FEEDBACK

**"I enjoyed the information
on PrEP Stigma"**

**"Wonderful panel with concrete
evidence of research findings"**

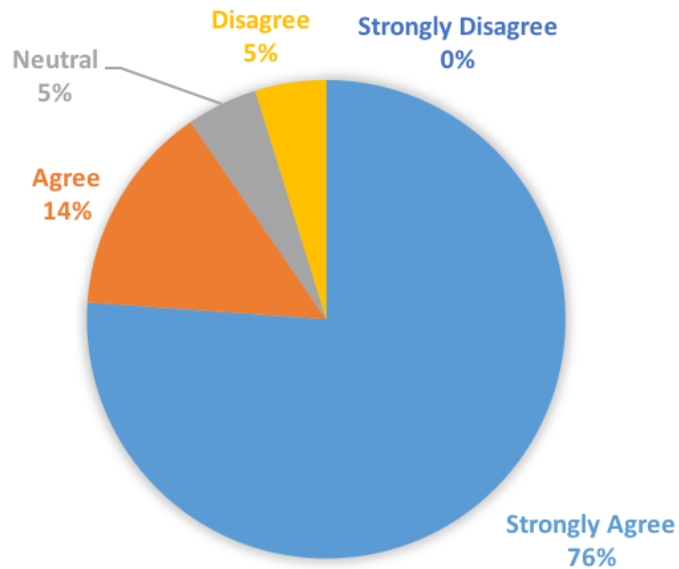
**"Phill Wilson woke everyone up with his
energy and storytelling ability"**

"Open, frank, informative"



Common areas of improvement included: more time for questions, sound issues, time management, greater diversity of speaker ages, and discussions of topics including PrEP in the African American community and HIV negative children with HIV positive parents.

**THIS EVENT WAS BENEFICIAL TO MY PROFESSIONAL
LIFE AND I WOULD ATTEND AGAIN**



- 95% of participants said they learned things they can apply to their practice/work/personal life
- 91% of attendees said they would make changes to their practice, organization, or personal life after attending the conference
- "Addressing Stigma and Risk Among Incarcerated Women Living with HIV/AIDS" was the most highly rated workshop, with over 73% of participants giving it the highest rating of "outstanding"
- 90% of attendees would like to have supplemental events throughout the year

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Emcee - Lisa Fager Bediako

Opening Session

- Barrie Singers, 6th graders from the Barrie School, sang two songs to start the conference
- Anthony K. Wutoh, Ph.D, R.Ph. and Michael Kharfen welcomed attendees and shared exciting updates in HIV news, including the U=U campaign
- Dr. Sohail Rana spoke of "Chelsea," a patient of his who died, not of HIV, but of stigma



Morning Session

From Grassroots to National: Fighting HIV Stigma

- Moderator: Jesse Milan, Jr., JD
- Panelists: Patricia Nalls, Shayla Schlossenberg, Brandon Primus, JD, MPA
- The session focused on three populations impacted by HIV stigma:

women living with HIV, drug user and sex worker groups, and Black people living with HIV

- The panelists discussed how HIV stigma fills people with shame and disgrace.
- Many deny their HIV status or refuse to see their test results for fear of stigma associated with a positive diagnosis
- HIV stigma is intersectional – it affects those with mental illness, those addicted to drugs and alcohol, and those facing domestic and sexual abuse
- Brandon Primus stated his goal to flip stigma as a mark of disgrace to a mark of strength

Keynote Speaker - Phill Wilson

How to make Gumbo out of Stigma

“Stigma is about identifying outliers and making judgments about those outliers”

- We have better prevention tools and treatment
- If we can stop transmission and acquisition, we can end the epidemic
- We won't stop HIV if we don't see it as a moral imperative
- Oppression is a cloth. You can't cut up just racism, or just transphobia, you must target each facet of oppression
- How do we stand together?
 - Fight against stigma wherever we see it. It's not just about HIV phobia or transphobia or homophobia
 - Remember that each person brings something to the “gumbo”
 - We need to look at ourselves and ask how we stigmatize each other

Afternoon Session

Coming Home: Making Way for Members of the HIV Community to 'Return' to the Church - The creation of pathways by the International Stigma Index Project and the Framework for Dialogue on Faith-based initiatives

- Panelists: Vanessa Johnson, JD, Reverend Michael Schuenemeyer, MDiv
- Religion is one of the sources of stigma
- We must do open and affirming work – help churches understand how they can include members of different gender expressions and sexual orientations
- Creating space for authentic conversations allows us to create relationships that allow people to feel accepted as they are authentically, which then makes it difficult for stigma to take hold
- Vanessa Johnson discussed the International Stigma Index Project, created through a collaboration with GNP+
- The panelists also answered questions from the audience

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Workshops

Researchers Needed! Nuts and Bolts of Studying

- There was a large turn out for this workshop which was targeted towards social and behavioral researchers who were looking to do stigma research
- An overview of the current research in intersectional HIV stigma and common research design methodologies was provided, with discussion of possible sources of funding for HIV stigma related research
- Anne Stangl, Chris Beyrer, and Ezer Kang shared their insights, and several perinatally infected youth also gave their perspectives on the need for stigma research
- At the conclusion of the conference, two workgroups were created for continued networking , mentoring, and collaborative grant writing

Addressing Stigma and Risk Among Incarcerated Women Living with HIV/AIDS

- The Women's Prison Association (WPA) provides comprehensive services to women at all stages of criminal justice involvement
- WPA presented their continuum of care model including HIV-testing, transitional planning for HIV-positive women, and peer education programming
- Challenges and opportunities when working in correctional settings were discussed, specifically related to the challenges facing clients
- Participants learned strategies to best help their clients and reduce stigma

Leadership and change through storytelling

- This workshop examined storytelling and stigma
- Participants discussed how to unleash the power of messaging and shared stories of stigma and overcoming adversity
- The focus was on empowering participants to be effective leaders and advocates through storytelling

Unpacking Stigma in the Trump Era - Youth Focused Workshop

- This workshop explored the various measures of stigma related topics that youth and young adults are facing today
- It addressed the social, medical, political, and legal impacts of HIV stigmas, LGBT-related stigmas, and sexual health-related stigmas
- Also discussed was the current political climate and its impact on stigma related to these areas
- Participants learned how to define stigma and take steps towards alleviating harmful stigmas

Cultural Competency and Stigma: is there a Connection?

- This session, presented by the Mid-Atlantic AIDS Education and Training Center, featured Guy-Oreido Weston, the Executive Director of DC Care
- Participants learned how to define culture as it relates to social determinants of health, provision of health, and social service
- Strategies were discussed that providers can use as individuals and institutions to achieve cultural competence in their service delivery

Personal Perspectives

- Moderator: Khafre Kujichagulia Abif, MLS, Community Organizer, Southern AIDS Coalition
- Panelists: Tracey Dannemiller, Jada Mercedes Cardona, Christopher Johnson
- Christopher discussed how one is constantly coming out - coming out as gay, coming out as HIV-positive, et cetera
- The panelists discussed how they have faced stigma and the courage it takes to speak their truth and share their story
- Jada remarked how coming out can actually be the trauma, no matter your gender, serostatus, or identity



WINNING ARTWORK



Liberation for Blessed Choice
by Andrea Noel



Sticks and Stones may break your
bones but words can KILL
by Yemonja Smalls



Barrier
by Antron Reshaud

WINNING ABSTRACT

**Reimagining Stigma: HIV/AIDS, Mental Health Disorders,
and Stigma Syndemics in Kenya**, Elizabeth J. Pfeiffer, *Rhode
Island College*

Disease interactions between HIV/AIDS and mental health disorders are well documented in high-income countries, with research demonstrating that the additive effects of suffering from both conditions work synergistically to produce adverse health outcomes. While the relationship between these epidemics have been less well examined in sub-Saharan Africa, recent studies in Kenya report not only high rates of HIV/AIDS and mental disorders across the general population, but also suggest a strong association between the two. While data point to the idea that the stigmas associated with mental illness may be greater than those associated with HIV/AIDS, the latter epidemic has received more scholarly attention. Furthermore, the literatures centering on the deleterious health effects of stigma are often developed in distinct domains, with one body of work, for example, focusing on AIDS-related stigma, and another on mental illness stigma. Little research has questioned the ways that these domains may intersect with one another. Drawing on syndemics theory, which focuses attention on disease/disease interaction in social context, the literatures on stigma, and empirical data gathered during ethnographic research in western Kenya, this study critically explores the interactions between HIV/AIDS and mental health disorders, with a particular focus on how the intertwining social stigmas associated with both conditions, drive the synergy. Data suggest that life stressors associated with HIV stigma appear to drive mental disorders, and the stigmas associated with both conditions interact in a mutually enhancing spiral to produce negative health consequences. This research contends that focusing on the perspectives and beliefs of those experiencing, interpreting, and/or resisting processes of stigma in situ adds value to our understanding of the complex processes of HIV/AIDS-related stigma, offers a more holistic and detailed understanding of these linked epidemics, and can inform current and future global health policies and programs in this part of the world.

Special Thanks To . . .

Conference Director: Sohail Rana, M.D., Professor of Pediatrics and Child Health, Howard University

Associate Director: Patricia Houston, MS

Assistant Directors: Edwin Powell, DA, Ed. and Cynthia Gipson, MA

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November 16, 2018

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