

News Alerts

An Open Letter from the AIDS2020 Conference Coordinating Committee

October 24, 2018

An open letter from your AIDS 2020 Conference Coordinating Committee

We are proud of the communities we are ? people living with HIV; men who have sex with men, transgender people, and other LGBTQI people; racial and ethnic minorities, indigenous people, immigrants and refugees; sex workers and people who inject drugs. We are scientists, clinicians and community advocates. We represent an international community, a United States and other countries around the globe that are resisting divisive politics and united in this historic and collective fight to end the HIV epidemic. Within the United States, we represent Oakland, San Francisco, southern states and major cities across the nation. In this capacity, we are honoured to assume the responsibility as the leadership body of the 23rd International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2020) and take on the role of the Conference Coordinating Committee (CCC).

In just under two years, our HIV community will gather in Oakland and San Francisco for AIDS 2020 which comes at a critical moment in the global fight against HIV. Moreover, this conference is occurring at a critical point in the history of the host country, the United States. Never has it been more important to make our collective voices heard.

With great challenge comes great opportunity. We know from experience that the conference has the power to unite diverse voices to confront harmful policies and draw international attention and resources to ending the epidemic. We came together in Vancouver in 1996 to usher in the HAART era. We came together in 2000 to face AIDS denialism in South Africa. Now, the selection of the US is giving us the opportunity to stand up and seize this moment ? and leverage this powerful platform ? as a united community and to drive meaningful change.

We had broad community support from organizations and persons living with HIV in San Francisco and Oakland to hold the meeting in the Bay Area. Moreover, key political leaders in California all committed their support to AIDS 2020. We believe in this opportunity so much that we are committing our time over the next two years to fulfill important roles within the AIDS 2020 CCC and to make this committee one that is responsive to the needs of all people living with and at-risk for HIV.

In assuming our roles on the CCC, we commit to planning an impactful AIDS 2020 agenda that allows us to celebrate and learn from our successes while constantly pushing for advances in science, programmes and policy. Over the coming months, we will be seeking your input, and working closely with the International AIDS Society and partners to ensure that the conference is as accessible as possible to all who wish to attend. We are committed to a global gathering that gives a voice to all communities, shares solutions, and advances the conversation to end this epidemic.

We are excited to head to the Bay Area of California, a part of the world deeply entwined with the history of the global AIDS response – an international hub of both activism and science. The Bay Area has been at the forefront of advances from basic science to treatment and prevention breakthroughs and has been at the frontlines of advocacy, fighting back against unacceptable policies. Through the unique partnership of Oakland and San Francisco we can show two sides of the same coin – the successes that San Francisco has had and the struggles that Oakland is still facing.

Every host city or country comes with its own immigration challenges and we recognize the specific challenges we will face in the US. However, strong political commitment is the backbone of a meaningful and impactful conference. It was the unparalleled political leadership demonstrated by the State of California that helped secure the bid. California, and Oakland and San Francisco in particular, have a long history of resisting unjust policies, including immigration reform and refugee quotas.

With the selection of the Bay Area for AIDS 2020, we have the chance to elevate US and global HIV concerns on to the national and international stage. That includes shining a spotlight on and working to reform unjust policies that restrict entry into the US and other countries and perpetuate a climate of stigma and fear. This is a rare moment to put HIV and those most affected, including people of colour, minorities and the economically disadvantaged, at the centre of political discussion. It won't be easy, but we will rise to the challenge and work together – as we always have – on fighting prejudice, racism, sexism and isolationism wherever it happens

While we recognize that we take different approaches to achieve the same goal, what has fundamentally made our community strong was the mutual underlying respect for one another. We are all fighting the same fight against HIV and we look forward to joining forces as the AIDS 2020 CCC to do this together.

Sincerely,

The AIDS 2020 Co-chairs,

Anton Pozniak, International Chair, Chelsea and Westminster NHS Trust; United Kingdom

Cynthia Carey-Grant, Local Co-chair, Oakland, formerly Women Organized to Respond to Life-Threatening Diseases; United States

Monica Gandhi, Local Co-chair, San Francisco, University of California, San Francisco; United States

Signed by your AIDS 2020 CCC members:

Adeeba Kamarulzaman, University of Malaya; Malaysia

Andrew Ball, World Health Organization

Beatriz Grinsztejn, Evandro Chagas National Institute of Infectious Disease ? Oswaldo Cruz Foundation; Brazil

Carole Treston, Association of Nurses in AIDS Care; United States

Chris Beyrer, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health; United States

Erika Castellanos, Global Action for Trans Equality; The Netherlands

Hyman Scott, San Francisco Department of Public Health; United States

Javier Bellocq, The Global Network of People Living with HIV; Argentina

Jintanat Ananworanich, Military HIV Research Program; United States

Joe Hollendoner, San Francisco AIDS Foundation; United States

Judith Auerbach, University of California, San Francisco; United States

Steffanie Strathdee, University of California, San Diego; United States

Kathie Hiers, AIDS Alabama; United States

Kevin Osborne, International AIDS Society; Switzerland

Mandeep Dhaliwal, United Nation Development Programme

Manuel Venegas, University of Washington; United States

Marama Mullen, International Community of Women Living with HIV; New Zealand

Marina Klein, McGill University Health Care; Canada

Mary Ann Torres, International Council of AIDS Service Organizations; Canada

Midnight Poonkasetwattana, Asia Pacific Coalition on Male Sexual Health; Thailand

Morten Ussing, The United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS

Shannon Kowalski, International Women?s Health Coalition; United States

Trevor Stratton, International Indigenous HIV and AIDS Community; Canada

Vuyiseka Dubula, Africa Centre for HIV/AIDS Management, Stellenbosch University; South Africa

Dr. Monica Gandhi Named as San Francisco Based Co-Chair for AIDS2020

October 2, 2018



The 23rd International AIDS conference, AIDS2020, is returning to the Bay Area for the first time in 30 years, with leadership from renowned UC San Francisco physician-scientists and the International AIDS Society. The meeting attracts 15,000 or more people from around the world and will be held in July of 2020, both in San Francisco and Oakland.

The San Francisco co-chair will be Monica Gandhi, MD, MPH, UCSF professor of medicine in the Division of HIV, Infectious Disease, and Global Medicine and Medical Director of Ward 86, which played a historic role in the treatment and prevention of HIV/AIDS, at UCSF partner hospital Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center. The Oakland co-chair will be Cynthia Carey-Grant, former executive director of WORLD, an Oakland-based agency serving women with HIV/AIDS. Anton Pozniak, MD, president of the International

AIDS Society, is the third co-chair.

"Dr. Gandhi is uniquely qualified to serve in this role," said Diane Havlir, MD, UCSF professor of medicine and Chief of the Division of HIV, Infectious Disease, and Global Medicine at ZSFG. "As a renowned clinician, brilliant researcher, and passionate educator, she is making huge strides to end the epidemic. She is a pillar of the HIV community in the Bay Area and beyond."

The three co-chairs will lead the meeting's conference coordinating committee, which includes 27 global leaders from scientific institutions, civil society organizations, and community-based advocacy groups.

"I am honored to help lead the planning efforts for AIDS2020, a landmark conference allowing us to showcase the advancements in global HIV and highlight the work of our local communities in Oakland and San Francisco," Gandhi said.

San Francisco has made great strides eliminating new infections in recent years, with a record low number of 221 new diagnoses in 2017.

"UCSF physician-scientists have been at the forefront in responding to the HIV/AIDS epidemic since it appeared in humans in the early 1980s, and remain deeply committed to helping people around the world, by improving clinical care, advancing our understanding of the basic science, and contributing to national and international AIDS policy," said UCSF Chancellor Sam Hawgood, MBBS. "We are proud of the leadership our faculty have shown in these historic conferences."

The International AIDS Conference was last hosted by San Francisco in 1990, when Paul Volberding, MD, professor of medicine at UCSF, and the co-founder of Ward 86, served as president of the International AIDS Society, and UCSF's current Chair of the Department of Medicine, Robert Wachter, MD, served as conference program director. Havlir later served as co-chair of the 19th conference, which was held in Washington, D.C.

"To bring the conference back to the Bay Area after 30 years is an incredible opportunity to showcase the achievements that have been made in getting more people tested for HIV, more people on treatment, and more people virally suppressed — areas in which UCSF, the San Francisco Department of Public Health, and our community partners have led the way," Volberding said.

The conference returns at a time of global significance. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS has set an ambitious 2020 goal, known as "90-90-90," to ensure that 90 percent of those living with HIV are aware of their status, 90 percent of those who know they are HIV-positive receive sustained antiretroviral therapy, and 90 percent of those on therapy are virally suppressed.

The HIV/AIDS work done at UCSF has influenced national and international policy, said Eric Goosby, MD, professor of medicine at UCSF, who helped lead HIV/AIDS policy under U.S. presidents, first as the founding director of the Ryan White Care Act (RWCA) under Bill Clinton and then as U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator, implementing the President's Emergency Care for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) under Barack Obama.

"UCSF played an integral role in creating the model for the Ryan White Care Act, which went on to serve as the basis of PEPFAR," Goosby said. "Both programs have achieved

extraordinary success, with RWCA providing care to half a million people each year in 52 epicenter cities, and PEPFAR having treated 15 million people since 2013.?

Learn more about the AIDS 2020 co-chairs ^[1].

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[1] <http://www.aids2020.org/The-latest/News/ArticleID/196>