



# The ChangeMaker

*The latest news, views and announcements*

## WT4AC TO CO-SPONSOR CITY CLUB OF CLEVELAND VIRTUAL WORLD AIDS DAY EVENT

We Think 4 A Change is honored to co-sponsor the City Club of Cleveland virtual World AIDS Day event on November 30, 2021 at 12 noon:

*The Ripple that Became a Tidal Wave: HIV/AIDS Activism and the Transformative Power of Safety Nets* will feature Dr. Celeste Watkins-Hayes, professor of sociology and founding director of the Center for Racial Justice at the University of Michigan, and author of the book *Remaking a Life: How Women Living with HIV/AIDS Confront Inequality*.



THE CITY CLUB OF CLEVELAND

### FREE EVENT

Learn more or sign up to attend at: [cityclub.org](http://cityclub.org)

Also live on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/cityclubofcleveland)

She will outline the importance of activism and community leadership, pointing to the significance of looking for leadership in unexpected places; the value of constructive conflict among diverse groups; and the willingness to see this public health threat through the lens of inequality as useful lessons that can apply to many of our challenges, including the Covid-19 pandemic.

From the desk of:

*Michelle Jackson-Rollins*  
Executive Director



## 'EXPOSING' SOMEONE TO HIV IS AGAINST THE LAW IN 37 STATES - WITH PENALTIES RANGING UP TO LIFE IN PRISON

by: Robin Lennon-Dearing, Associate Professor of Social Work, University of Memphis  
 Republished from: [The Conversation](https://www.theconversation.com) September 22, 2021

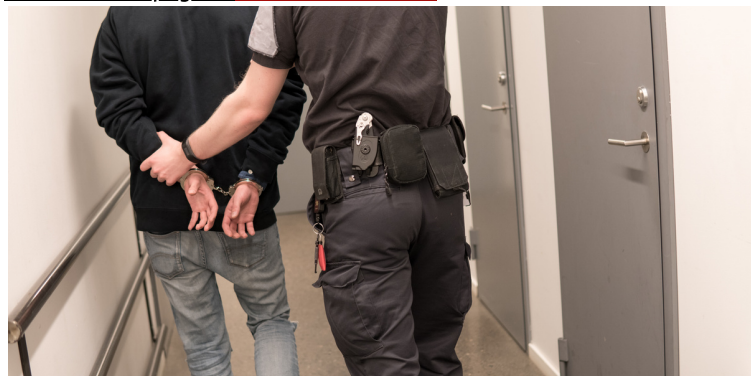
Despite the fact that HIV is now a treatable medical condition, the majority of U.S. states still have laws on the books that criminalize exposing other people to HIV. Whether or not the virus is transmitted does not matter. Neither does a person's intention to cause harm. A person simply must be aware of being HIV-positive to be found guilty.

These laws are enforced mainly on marginalized people living in poverty who cannot afford lawyers. The penalties – felony convictions and being placed on sex offender registries – are severe and life altering.

It is difficult to know exactly how many people are affected by HIV criminal laws, since a central database of such arrests does not exist. The HIV Justice Network has collected a partial list of 2,923 HIV criminal cases since 2008 based on media reports.

I am a professor of social work who studies the impact of HIV criminal laws from the perspective of people who have been arrested. My research shows such statutes are outdated, harm people living with HIV and exacerbate the spread of the virus by driving people into hiding and away from treatment services.

[Continued on page 4: HIV Criminalization](#)



In 1990, 14 states had HIV criminal laws. By 2005, 23 states had them, Today, these laws are on the books in 37 states.



End the year with Change!



# The ChangeMaker

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OCTOBER 15

**NATIONAL  
LATINX AIDS  
AWARENESS DAY**



**THE 12TH ANNUAL  
INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE ON STIGMA**  
Trauma... Recovery... Healing

HOWARD UNIVERSITY

Register at [www.whocanyoutell.org](http://www.whocanyoutell.org)  
Contact us at [hupeds@howard.edu](mailto:hupeds@howard.edu) or 202.865.4578  
November 15th to 19th 2021

Ending the HIV Epidemic

**World AIDS Day  
December 1, 2021**

**ENDING THE HIV EPIDEMIC  
RESILIENCE  
& IMPACT**

HIV.gov

#WorldAIDSDay  
Tuesday, December 1



From: Michelle Jackson-Rollins

And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

John 8:32 NKJV

## Be the Change



Do you have a story that you would like to contribute to the ChangeMaker, the newsletter of We Think 4 A Change. Send your story, question or suggestion of what you would like to see to [contactus@wethink4achange.org](mailto:contactus@wethink4achange.org). All submissions are subject to editorial review and may be edited for space.



# *In Loving Memory of* **Demario Hairston**

The community of We Think 4 A Change is saddened by the death of Demario Hairston. We were fortunate to experience his caring nature, compassion and commitment in serving the at-risk community and those most in need of our services. Demario had a zeal for learning and was a true advocate on behalf of those impacted by HIV/AIDS. He continuously fulfilled his purpose by conducting HIV/AIDS outreach and prevention activities throughout greater Cleveland with his peers. Demario recently applied to join the Black AIDS Institute - African American HIV University and dreamed to become a black leader in his community educating on the perils of this disease. He was determined to fulfill his purpose and lead the fight to End the HIV Epidemic. Demario always greeted you with a smile and was an example of ambition and determination. The WT4AC family lost a champion and we will truly miss Demario

Funeral services for Demario were held Tuesday,  
September 14.



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## *Celebrating the Life of* **Quinton Whitfield Durham**

On behalf of We Think 4-A-Change, we extend our deepest condolences to those who knew and loved Quinton. He was passionate about the need to be of service to the community, which inspired him to create the Durham Community Trade Institute and his work with the foodbank at Garden Valley Neighborhood House. Through his community work we came to know and love our dear brother Quinton as we partnered to ensure persons living with HIV were protected from hunger. We will miss him.

Funeral services for Qinton were held  
Tuesday, September 21.



**LAST MONTH WOMEN WE THINK 4 A CHANGE HOSTED ONLINE FORUM ON HOW THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM'S UNFAIR TARGETS PERSONS WITH HIV**

**HIV CRIMINALIZATION** cont. from page 1

In 1981, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported the first cases of what later would be called acquired immune deficiency syndrome, or AIDS. By 1982, researchers had strong evidence the disease could be transmitted through blood and sexual activity. At the time, the death rate for AIDS patients was estimated to be 65%.

In 1983, scientists discovered the retrovirus that causes AIDS and named it the human immunodeficiency virus, or HIV. Initially, HIV infection was reported mainly in gay men, but as time went on, it was diagnosed in other populations, including women and children.

In 1994, AIDS was the leading cause of death for all Americans ages 25 to 44. Medical treatment for the disease was in its infancy. Both factors fueled the public's fear of being exposed to AIDS. A diagnosis seemed like a death sentence.

**WOMEN WE THINK 4 A CHANGE**

**Presents - HIV Criminalization: The Law is Real**

**Panelists**

- Naimah O'Neal**  
Medical Social Worker  
Circle Health Service
- Diedra Johnson**  
Advocate and Co-Founder  
Ending Criminalization of HIV and Overincarceration in Virginia
- Dr. Barbara Gripshover**  
Medical Director  
University Hospitals of Cleveland
- Delaney Barr, Esq**  
Staff Attorney  
Equality Ohio Education Fund Legal Clinic

The 1988, Ronald Reagan's Presidential Commission on the HIV Epidemic recommended that states establish criminal penalties as a way of deterring people with HIV from engaging in behavior likely to transmit the virus. The 1990 Ryan White CARE Act, which provided major funding for HIV services, required states to certify they had adequate laws in place to prosecute individuals who knowingly exposed another person to HIV.

In 1990, 14 states had HIV criminal laws. By 2005, 23 states had them – even though the reauthorization of the Ryan White CARE Act in 2000 removed the criminalization requirement. Today, these laws are on the books in 37 states.

From the outset, experts across many disciplines voiced concern about the effectiveness of using punitive criminal laws as a way of deterring the spread of HIV. Indeed, HIV criminal laws have backfired from a public health perspective. A 2017 study found people living in states with HIV criminal laws are less likely to get tested and know their HIV status than those in states without HIV laws. Stigma and fear of prosecution discourage people from seeking information or help.

**U=U**

**Undetectable = Untransmittable**

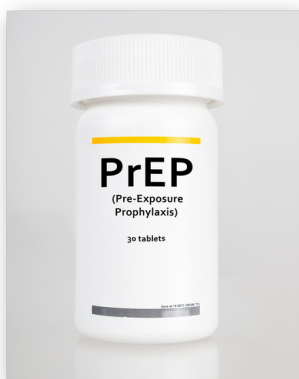
A person living with HIV who has an undetectable viral load does not transmit the virus to their partners.

U=U consensus statement of the Prevention Access Campaign. #UequalsU

The HIV epidemic in the U.S. has changed tremendously in the past 40 years.

HIV exposure laws have not kept up with the changes in HIV science and treatment. People with knowledge of their HIV status can receive treatment that makes them unable to transmit the virus. Proven prevention methods such as HIV testing, treatment and preexposure prophylaxis, or PrEP, are tools that remove the justification for HIV criminal laws.

Scientists can identify solutions to public health challenges, but it takes action by politicians to turn solutions into policy. HIV criminal laws are largely ignored because the people they directly affect are not connected to political power.



**MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITY  
ATTEND POSITIVE LIVING 23  
RETREAT IN  
FORT WALTON BEACH, FLORIDA**



I had the outstanding opportunity to attend my third Positive Living Conference on August 27-29th of August 2021. Since COVID this was the first in-person in over a year.

People from all over converged at 1550 Miracle Strip Parkway, Fort Walton Beach, Florida to share ideas about growing in the area of advocacy until a cure. People from all walks of life, some young and old; for some it was their first time there and still other were seasoned participant at this summit.

There were various workshops to address a variety of topics to address understanding how to disclose one's status, the importance of sharing your stories, to the importance of how to effectively advocate to anyone.

We also learned how to relax and let our hair down because stress can be counterproductive to the cause. I heard the message that we must use all the tools in our toolbox both on the prevention and care side to end HIV/AIDS in my lifetime.



I love to network with others to learn what works in other communities and share our successes and challenges to find fresh ideas to bring back to my community.

For my roommate it was her first time which allowed me see the summit through her eyes to re-engage and think about how many others might want to learn how to become great advocates even if to only become the best possible advocate for their own healthcare.

Learning from people in other states is important because you step outside of your world to see another. This summit is about fostering the next generation of advocates and re-energizing old heads like me until there's a cure.

