

Summit Biographies and Photos

Morning Plenary Speakers



Anisha Gandhi, PhD, MPH, is the Acting Assistant Commissioner for the New York City Health Department's Bureau of HIV, where she oversees New York City's response to the HIV epidemic. She also serves as the Bureau's Director of Racial Equity and Social Justice Initiatives, leading efforts to embed a racial equity lens across research, programmatic, capacity building, and evaluation activities, and to advance workforce equity within the Bureau. As an infectious disease epidemiologist and public health practitioner, she has developed and implemented innovative programs and research initiatives to identify and address inequities in HIV and STI testing, prevention, and care among Black, Latino, immigrant, and LGBTQ+ communities and among individuals engaged in sex work. Dr. Gandhi received her undergraduate and Master of Public Health degrees from the University of California, Berkeley, her doctoral degree in Epidemiology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the HIV Center for Clinical and Behavioral Studies at Columbia University and the New York State Psychiatric Institute.



Camara Phyllis Jones, MD, MPH, PhD is a family physician and epidemiologist whose work focuses on the impacts of racism on the health and well-being of the nation. She seeks to broaden the national health debate to include not only universal access to high quality health care, but also attention to the social determinants of health (including poverty) and the social determinants of equity (including racism). As a social epidemiologist, her work on "race"-associated differences in health outcomes goes beyond documenting those differences to vigorously investigating the structural causes of the differences. She hopes through her work to initiate a national conversation on racism that will eventually lead to a National Campaign Against Racism.

Dr. Jones is currently a Senior Fellow at the Satcher Health Leadership Institute, an Adjunct Professor at the Rollins School of Public Health, and an Adjunct Associate Professor at the Morehouse School of Medicine. She was an Assistant Professor at the Harvard School of Public Health from 1994 to 2000 before being recruited to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as a Medical Officer in 2000. Her many honors include the Wellesley Alumnae Achievement Award (Wellesley College's highest alumnae honor, 2018), the John Snow Award

(“for distinguished service to the health of the public through outstanding contributions to epidemiology,” Epidemiology Section, American Public Health Association, 2011) and the Chanchlani Global Health Research Award (McMaster University, 2019). Dr. Jones received her BA in Molecular Biology from Wellesley College, her MD from the Stanford University School of Medicine, and both her Master of Public Health and her PhD in Epidemiology from the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health.

Afternoon Plenary Speakers

“Across the Lifespan from Prevention to Aging” – Panel Discussion



Gina Brown, MD, is an obstetrician and gynecologist, joined the NIH Office of AIDS Research (OAR) as a medical officer to manage microbicides and women's and girl's research issues. Prior, she served as the chair of the NIH Office of AIDS Research Advisory Council (OARAC) for 2004 and has chaired the OAR Women and Girls working group. Dr. Brown also was the maternal-fetal specialist at the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and was an assistant professor of Clinical Obstetrics and Gynecology, at the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University. There she was a member of the Department of Maternal-Fetal Medicine at Columbia and served as the women's health director of the Women and Children Care Center at Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center, a clinic that provides comprehensive care for HIV positive women and their families. At the Center, she also was a co-investigator for the Women and Infant's Transmission Study (WITS) and the Pediatric AIDS Clinical Trials Group (PACTG).

Dr. Brown is a graduate of Harvard University and Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine. She received her ob/gyn training at Harlem Hospital Center and completed fellowships in Maternal-Fetal Medicine and Surgical-Anesthesia Critical Care at the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University.



Connie L. Johnson is an author, inspirational speaker, community educator and long-term AIDS survivor. She is dedicated to eradicating negative HIV/AIDS related stigma and helping women and girls realize their optimum potential. Connie uses her voice as a blogger for *A Girl Like Me*, a blog sponsored by The Well Project. Connie began public speaking in 2009. Since then, she has graced stages around the world as the keynote speaker at numerous conferences and other HIV/AIDS

related events. In 2014, Connie developed a creative writing workshop, *HerStory* a workshop designed especially for women living with HIV/AIDS. She has since facilitated this workshop to hundreds of women across the nation. She is the author of *Beyond Measure*, a collection of autobiographical sketches that chronicle the lives of eight Kenyan women who are living with HIV/AIDS. Connie holds a Bachelor of Art in Child and Family Studies from Columbia College in Columbia, SC and Master of Art in Social Justice and Community Development from Loyola Chicago University.



Raven Lopez was born HIV-positive after her mother, HIV/AIDS advocate and care coordinator **Michelle Lopez**, was infected. Raven grew up knowing her status. The experience enabled her to gain her voice, sharing her experience on the *Oprah Winfrey Show*, at an AIDS Walk in 1999 at age 9, and through other outlets. The stigma she faced early in life, especially at school, was daunting. However, Lopez countered the ignorance with knowledge, as she explained to NBLCA's CEO, C. Virginia Fields, "Even though I got made fun of, bullied, food thrown on me, spit on, my hair cut, that still didn't stop me from educating my peers and letting people know that just because I have HIV doesn't make me less of a person or better than a person," Today, I'm a mother of a negative baby boy that is 4 year old. His father is negative and I live my life as any normal

person. HIV does not control me I control HIV!



Nala Toussaint Brooklyn born with an Afro-Caribbean background, works to advance the social and economic well-being of African Descendants, with an urgent focus on queer, same-gender-loving people, transgender, and non-binary people, and ultimately the entire community. She has done extensive work as an outreach liaison, conducting safe sex intervention activities for youths & young adults, and coordinating educational and job development services at renowned LGBT public service organizations.

With a background in grassroots activism and community building, Nala works with organizations to spark impactful change through policy, activism, and education. Through shared humanity, she challenges notions of inclusivity and diversity to expand gender, racial, and economic equity at the corporate and executive levels



Waheedah Shabazz-El is an African American Muslim woman and retired postal worker who was diagnosed with AIDS in 2003. She serves as a board member for Law Project of PA, Steering Committee Member for U=U and advisory board member for Sero-Project. She is employed by Phila FIGHT as its Goodwill Ambassador. Waheedah is a founding member of Positive Women's Network – USA. Currently Waheedah is the Interim Program Director for The Reunion Project where she is leading an HIV Long-Term Survivor Alliance. Waheedah's areas of expertise include HIV criminalization, Trans Justice, Faith and HIV, Women and girls living with HIV, Aging with HIV and Electoral Organizing.

SUMMIT HONOREES



Dawn Averitt began working in the HIV/AIDS arena in 1993, after being diagnosed with HIV in 1988. In addition to being the mother of 3 daughters, she has founded two non-profit organizations, WISE (Women’s Information Service and Exchange) in 1995 and The Well Project in 2002.

As a social justice advocate for people living with HIV and AIDS, Dawn also launched a think tank in 2003 now called the Women’s Research Initiative on HIV/AIDS (WRI) which drives “more, better, faster” research in women. In the past 25+ years, she has developed programs to increase awareness, accelerate testing, provide access to treatment, disseminate information and expand clinical trials. Dawn has served on many national committees including two terms on the President’s Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS (PACHA) from 2010-2015 during the Obama administration.



Lilibeth Gonzalez is a 65-year-old Latinx mother raised in the Lower East Side. She is the youngest of 4 and had to endure the loss of her 2 siblings due to AIDS related complications. With all the loss, she never imagined it would prepare her for what she would come to know that she too was diagnosed with AIDS approximately 3 decades ago. Lilibeth was determined to take a leadership role and pass the information on to Women and Girls living with HIV and the vulnerable HIV population.

Lilibeth works at GMHC as a Community Health Educator for the past 14 years. She is the Creator of the group “Thriving at 50 and Beyond” for people living with HIV and Aging. She received an award from Mayor Bill de Blasio for her work in the Spanish Positive Living Workshop. HIV has given her a purpose to LIVE and inspire others to self-care and longevity.



Octavia Y. Lewis, MPA is an Activist, Advocate, Humanitarian, Mother and Scholar. Octavia is the Transgender Health Coordinator for the TransWellness Centers at Montefiore. She understands the many nuances and intersections of the World in which she exists and therefore aligns herself with those who are in agreeance for the betterment of the TGNB Community.

She is a Board Member of PWN-USA, Positively Trans Advisory Board Member, Board Member for the Center of Transgender Excellence at UCSF and a Member of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women-Manhattan Chapter. Her mentor, Avery Wyatt, MPH taught her “That People Do Not Care How Much You Know, Until

They Know How Much You Care”.