10 Activist Quotes That Ignited the USCA Crowd

Inspiration from the U.S. Conference on AIDS, for the hearts and minds of advocates everywhere

September 7, 2018 By Trent Straube

Activism took center stage at the 22nd annual U.S. Conference on AIDS (#2018USCA), being held September 6 through 9 in Orlando.

“For this year’s conference, we wanted to focus on the importance of activism in the fight against HIV,” said Paul Kawata, executive director of National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC), which organizes the yearly events.

“Activism played such a crucial role in the early years of the epidemic, bringing pressure on governments, industry and society to respond to the epidemic with urgency and compassion,” Kawata explained in a press release. “Today, as we face an uncertain political environment, HIV activism is needed more than ever. We hope this conference will reignite the kind of passion and action in the HIV community that we saw at the very beginning. If we are truly going to end the epidemic, that kind of commitment is what we will need from everyone.”

To that end, prominent activists from various social movements helped kick off USCA, including Alicia Garza, a cofounder of #BlackLivesMatter; David Hogg, a survivor of the mass shooting at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida; Abigail Echo-Hawk, director of the Urban Indian Health institute in Seattle; and Richard L. Zaldivar, executive director of The Wall Las Memorias Project in Los Angeles. (A large screen onstage summed up the theme of the opening plenary session nicely, greeting the crowd with the message: “Activism and the Intersection of Movements Fighting for Social Justice.”)

The annual AIDS conference features much more than speakers—other events include workshops, breakout sessions, poster presentations, networking events and a mammoth exhibition hall with booths (visit POZ at booth 311).

We will have more coverage of USCA in the near future. For now, here’s a roundup of tweets from the opening sessions. The conference’s theme this year is “Fight Back! Fight HIV!” Let these activists inspire you to do exactly that.

“We can’t say #AllLivesMatter, when 44% of new HIV diagnoses are of Black people.” - @aliciagarza, co-founder of #BlackLivesMatter. #2018USCA pic.twitter.com/bHjckGM6RL

— NASTAD (@NASTAD) September 6, 2018

“We are all here to fight with one weapon and that is love.” @davidhogg111 on healing community divides for a common fight. #2018USCA pic.twitter.com/ixWAgRhjNZ

— Capacity for Health (@c4htips) September 6, 2018

“We get nothing if we don’t fight back” — expressed legendary HIV activist, Larry Kramer during the #2018USCA plenary session. #FightBackFightHIV pic.twitter.com/4Z5nYWZYqV

— CBA Provider Network (@CBA_Providers) September 6, 2018

Abigail Echo-Hawk, Director of the Urban Indian Health

Institute, with an amazing speech I’m going to remember for a long time: “Don’t come to us because you think we have the most problems. Come to us because we have the answers.” #2018USCA pic.twitter.com/vtq1tJ9l3l

— Daisy Becerra (@dsbece) September 6, 2018

“Stigma is like air. You can’t see it, but you can feel it.” POWERFUL! #2018USCA #EndHIVStigma pic.twitter.com/6lboUWf4EC

— NASTAD (@NASTAD) September 6, 2018

Naina Khanna speaking truth to power #2018usca @uspwn reunion_project No IAC In USA in 2020 #resist “stand up for justice - justice won’t wait” @TheBodyDotCom @PhillyFIGHT @TheSeroProject @Taz4love @JDatTheBody pic.twitter.com/fsYJsKfqDl

— Waheedah Shabazz-El (@wshabazzsmiles) September 6, 2018

These are not normal times, so this should not be a normal conference. We need to ride up, act now Richard Zalvidar @TheWallMemorias #2018USCA #thewellproject pic.twitter.com/sgIlsZ8KTO

— The Well Project (@thewellproject) September 6, 2018

“Intersectionality is not diversity...Black Lives Matter began as a love note to Black people...Black Lives Matter has always uplifted the lives of all Black people.” -Alicia Garza, #BlackLivesMatter #2018USCA pic.twitter.com/TTFaNpCBHJ

— Black AIDS Institute (@blackaids) September 6, 2018

“Don’t let politicians divide us. Don’t let our labels divide us. No matter the size of your platform, speak up and then be willing to hand the mic to others.” David Hogg @davidhogg111, Activist & Survivor of Marjory Stoneman Douglass High School #2018usca pic.twitter.com/mDiPCbgSB5

— Avita (@AvitaPharmacy) September 6, 2018

Rise Up and Act Now! #2018USCA#HIVPowerShift

“Advocacy is what LOVE looks like in public”

pic.twitter.com/gwnCz1qxSj

— Tracey Jackson (@piedmontcare) September 6, 2018

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