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Aids Crisis

Time to Deliver!

- News from around the world -

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The 16th International AIDS Conference Time to Deliver held in Toronto Canada from August 13-18 has ended only to raise more questions, more political demands, and a whole new sense of urgency for those living and dying from AIDS on a global level.

AIDS activists who are entering the second decade of activism in North America are tired and those who are still alive continue to hold the banners and demands of those who have died. Unlike most social movements the AIDS movement has grown and expanded in many ways that has created a genuine global response.
[<https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/TTD.jpg>]

Another crucial factor is the numbers of those becoming infected world wide at the rate of close to 40 million while thousands die everyday. If this conference did anything it gave a space for activists to make the global demands necessary to strategize, and fight back.

It has been gay men and lesbians for the most part who have been in the forefront of the movement in North America who created clear, and non compromising demands from the State for prevention materials, access to treatment and care, and human rights through comprehensive AIDS strategies from both governments and other institutions on an international basis and have won on many fronts.

Many of these leaders in the movement have for the most part died. However, new voices from developing countries and voices of women and youth that did not have a voice in the past are emerging, and as a result, we are learning and making links as never before.

Although the media hype was focused on "the two Bill's (Bill Clinton and Bill and Melinda Gates) and celebrities, those of us working, living with and activists in the AIDS movement became even more convinced that the demand for comprehensive AIDS strategies that links this movement to a broader anti - globalization framework is crucial if we are to stop the spread of HIV in the decades to come.

One AIDS activist said it a long time ago "AIDS is like a lens of the world around us. AIDS reflects and manifests itself as it exists in the world." It crosses societies through interconnecting and by multiple forms of oppressions based on racism, sexism/misogyny, class, the suppression of gender identities, the oppression of sexual practices/desires and various forms of drug use and draconian drug policies.

The contradictions spu out while capitalist hegemony by the pharmaceuticals and through government inaction that breeds neglect, stigma, red tape, and miss guided policies and practices increases on a daily basis.

The international AIDS Conference focused on the theme of Time to Deliver. While researchers debated and shared papers on new vaccines and new promising treatments and other scientific data, demonstrations were held on ARV's (HIV treatment) access to developing nations immediately without pharmaceuticals or funders interference and at a cost for countries to develop their own generic medicine and dispensing rather than stay dependent on the corporations that hold the patens.

The largest demonstration was the Women's and girls March and rally on the Monday morning of the opening day not only did speakers focus on the numbers of women testing positive around the world at disproportionate rates than men but on the fundamental need for women to have control over our own reproduction, access to general and reproductive health care at no cost, the right to education, job training (beyond bead making NGO initiatives) and

viable economic independence from men and the end to both male violence against women and both State sanctioned and individual rape of women and girls.

"Women's rights are human rights" as one of the major demands were chanted. Another significant demonstration organized during AIDS 2006 was by Sex Workers and their supporters from over 21 countries demanding their own place not only at the conference, but also within their own countries. They demanded that sex work be recognized as a form of work that should include health insurance, paid vacation, and job security. As with all women, Sex trade workers demanded human rights and workers rights, and to be treated with respect as they are key people in the fight for AIDS prevention strategies within all communities around the world.

Here, within the Canadian State The Harm Reduction Movement has grown from the early epidemic when we first began passing out clean sterile injecting equipment including syringes to injection drug users to a more current comprehensive strategy that includes safer crack use equipment and Narcan distribution to heroin users to prevent overdose and through advocating for drug policy reform. We have seen since the 1980s the drug policy reform and Harm Reduction movements growing not only through out the Canadian State but internationally except for in the U.S.

The most recent demonstration during the International AIDS Conference reflected this struggle on a Federal Level. From Quebec to Vancouver activists gathered to demand that the first North American safe injection site "Insite" remain open. It is under imminent threat of closure pending a decision by the Conservative government Health Minister to exempt the site from Federal legislation under The Controlled Drugs and Substances Act section 56 in order to remain open.

Over 600 injection drug users frequent the site on a daily basis. Hundreds of people have prevented overdose, HIV infection, Hepatitis C, and have obtain drug treatment, and health care services by accessing Insite. This was only one of many demands and political pressure the AIDS movement has placed on the conservative government led by Stephen Harper who didn't even show up to the conference.

As the disparity between developing countries and the West are more apparent day-by-day and where the most vulnerable members of most communities on both sides of the world are hardest hit by the AIDS Pandemic. The rising contradictions of globalization unmask itself within the AIDS pandemic.

It is no wonder that governments find millions of dollars and build their armies and spend it on war or occupation abroad rather than keeping essential services or resources such as health care and treatment or water public. It is also no surprise that we have to continue the struggle against the spread of HIV and the care of those living with, affected, and stigmatized by this disease with little or scarce resources, it is no surprise that trying to access funding and or having to contend with bureaucracy at disproportionate levels that the very lives of people living with HIV/AIDS are at stake.

As one woman AIDS activist put it "how can we care for the orphans of HIV/AIDS if we can't give support, treatment, and a voice for the women/the mothers of these children?" "How can we tell people to use a condom when there isn't any and when there isn't even clean or free water in the whole village?" For that matter it is no surprise that the future of humanity is at stake and as such the struggle contues.