Guess Which Famous Activists Will Kick Off the U.S. Conference on AIDS

They'll discuss racism, gun violence, health equity and HIV September 6 at #2018USCA.

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Social justice and activism have always had a place in the HIV community, but they will take center stage at the opening plenary of this year's United States Conference on AIDS (USCA). Specifically, the following speakers will address racism, gun violence and health equity at the September 6 kickoff session:

- Alicia Garza, cofounder of #BlackLivesMatter
- David Hogg, activist and survivor of the Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, Florida
- Abigail Echo-Hawk, director of Urban Indian Health Institute in Seattle
- Richard L. Zaldivar, executive director of The Wall Las Memorias Project in Los Angeles

Celeste Philip, MD, MPH, the surgeon general for Florida, will welcome guests to the 2018 USCA, held Thursday, September 6, to Sunday, September 9, at the Hyatt Regency in Orlando.

Thousands of advocates, health leaders, allies and people living with HIV from across the nation converge at USCA each year for workshops, skills-building opportunities, networking events, poster presentations, exhibition booths and, yes, entertainment.

The event is organized annually by the National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC). Below is a video from last year's USCA, held in Washington, DC.

This year's opening plenary is titled "Activism and the Intersection of Movements Fighting for

Social Justice."

"Join us as we hear from social justice movement leaders and advocates for racial health equity," states the USCA announcement. "The speakers will share their thoughts on the need for activism in our communities to ultimately effect positive change. The themes of racism, gun violence, health access and equity are intersecting our lives more prominently day-by-day. Together, let's determine a way forward."

In related news, you can read NMAC executive director Paul Kawata's POZ Blog here. In his latest post, "The Loneliness Epidemic," he encourages everyone to attend USCA 2018 in Orlando. And in a different blog post, Kawata notes that "the federal government will discuss its plan to end the HIV epidemic in America during a USCA plenary, then hold a town hall to collect feedback from attendees. Everyone needs to come prepared to share their thoughts on what it will take to make this happen."

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