These Powerful Photos and Stories Portray HIV and LGBT Stigma

Photographer Robin Hammond's work gets highlighted by rock icon Elton John in The New York Times.

June 26, 2018 By Trent Straube

For many, June is a time of LGBT awareness, culminating, at least in the United States, with Manhattan's Pride March the last Sunday of the month. So it's timely that rock star–turned–AIDS activist Sir Elton John recently penned an opinion piece in The New York Times highlighting the intersection between homophobia and HIV/AIDS.

> From Elton John: "As an artist, I know that a single photograph can tell a greater truth than a pile of statistics, and there is profound humanity in giving individuals at the margins the opportunity to step into the light." https://t.co/2HIPrrKvEb pic.twitter.com/cpcA0nuaJS
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> — NYT Opinion (@nytopinion) June 22, 2018

Titled "'God Knows Us. God Loves Us.': Life on the margins in LGBT Africa," the article features astonishing photographs by Robin Hammond. With funding from the Elton John AIDS Foundation, Hammond traveled to countries where homosexuality is illegal and profiled advocates who not only bared their faces for the camera but also told their stories of persecution and perseverance. It is part of Hammond's project titled Where Love Is Illegal, which you can learn more about here.

In his essay, John writes that "for too many people around the world, those benefits [of AIDS advocacy] are still out of reach. Even in places where treatment is available, the stigma that

persists around HIV—along with the shame imposed by homophobia—contributes to new infections and keeps people from seeking treatment even when they know they need it. Our work as advocates is to help end that hopeless feeling of invisibility."

These images and narratives show that those affected by the AIDS epidemic are not evil. https://t.co/2HlPrrKvEb pic.twitter.com/ti1PCClCi6

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The project includes people from Kenya, Mozambique, Ghana and more.

"These images do more than tell stories of progress; they remind us of our shared humanity, of our responsibilities to one another," John writes. "When you look at these photographs, don't do so for merely a split second, as though you're scrolling through your Instagram feed. Take the time to see the great hope contained within them."

Powerful article by @eltonofficial in @nytopinion today. We're proud to be part of this collaboration with @EJAF that makes sure #LGBTQ voices from around the world are heard. https://t.co/vWjpfOfAqn pic.twitter.com/ppDNFYnNXt

— WhereLoveIsIllegal (@love_is_illegal) June 22, 2018

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