

R.I.P. Humberto Cruz, HIV Advocate for Immigrants and People of Color

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Humberto Cruz, who served as the director of New York State’s AIDS Institute and was appointed to the national Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS in 2010, has died.

Tributes to his HIV advocacy for people of color and immigrants were posted by Apicha Community Health Center (CHC), which provides care to underserved and vulnerable populations in New York City, and by the Latino Commission on AIDS.

For more than 30 years, Cruz served in management positions with New York state government, where he enhanced Medicaid rates for HIV care and expanded the AIDS Institute’s reach to include hepatitis and other sexually transmitted infections. [According to the Latino Commission on AIDS](#), Cruz also helped develop the first U.S. National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS).

The commission honored Cruz in 2011 with the Dennis de Leon Voz de Compromiso Award, which was presented by actress Rosie Perez (see the photo above).

In 2013, [Apicha CHC also honored Cruz](#) for his service. In a post about Cruz’s passing, the organization wrote in part:

Humberto was among a rarified group of public health professionals who truly understood the plight of people on the margins of society, of people who have the least access to health care. He effortlessly understood when we say that communities of color bear a heavy burden of HIV/AIDS because of stigma, cultural taboos and discrimination. He understood what it means to be gay and HIV-positive in our communities. He was sensitive to the language barriers experienced by immigrants. He comprehended the struggles of a community-based organization as it builds infrastructure while delivering needed services. As HIV funding decreased over the years, his leadership minimized the impact on services to the neediest communities in New York state. In short, Humberto was a pillar of hope and empowerment to all of us.

Without Humberto, Apicha CHC would not be here today. We are eternally grateful for his tireless commitment to fighting the AIDS epidemic and will continue to carry on his legacy.

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<http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/rip-humberto-cruz-hiv-advocate-immigrants-people-color>