



RISE ABOVE WORD SEARCH

ADVOCACY AIDS WATCH CONFERENCE CHEROKEE JUDGE TOLERANCE STIGMA MINNIE JONES TOBACCO QUIT HOUSING SMOKING DOFL HARM REDUCTION HISTORY EQUALITY

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ASK MISS WINNIE...

Dear Miss Winnie:

Some of my so-called friends stopped talking to me because of my beliefs. I thought tolerance is a two-way street. How can I help us to all just get along?

Frustrated in Fletcher

Dear Frustrated:

Well, aren't you the insightful one.....many people today just want to crawl into their respective corners rather than attempt to understand someone with a different lifestyle or opinion from their own.

Tolerance is the appreciation of diversity and the ability to exercise a fair and objective attitude towards those whose opinions, practices, religion, politics, nationality and so on differ from one's own.

Intolerance is the failure to appreciate and respect the practices, opinions and beliefs of another person or group. Intolerance will drive people and groups apart, creating a sense of permanent separation between them.

So what can you do? Try to focus on being tolerant of others in their daily lives. You can consciously challenge the stereotypes and assumptions that you typically have about others. We all do it! I have to tell you this is not going to be easy. Miss Winnie has had her own share of dealing with this, both at work and at home. But you know what? Dealing with intolerance in a respectful and challenging manner will boost your own sense of tolerance and self esteem.

Let me know if this helps.....and good luck!

Miss Winnie

Have a question for Miss Winnie?
Email MissWinnie@wncap.org and put your mind at ease!

Questions, Comments, Criticisms?
Contact RISE ABOVE:
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MAKING A DIFFERENCE HIV ADVOCACY IN ACTION

BY: JEFFREY LONG, HIV & HARM REDUCTION ACTIVIST
FORMER WNCAP CLIENT



Advocate Jeffrey Long (left) poses with Jesse Milan, President & CEO of AIDS United, a national HIV advocacy organization based in Washington, D.C.

It took me a while to call myself an **HIV advocate**. I'm not sure why. Maybe it's because at the beginning, I was doing advocacy for me, to help my own mental health. After my diagnosis of HIV, I was in a funk. I needed to do something. **In a way, HIV advocacy saved my life.**

Don't get me wrong - I have fun with my advocacy. It takes me to all kinds of interesting places. For example, last summer I was awarded a Social Media Fellowship from **NMAC** (formerly the National Minority AIDS Council) so I could attend the **2019 US Conference on AIDS** in Washington, D.C.

How did I become this Super Advocate you see before you? Well, I started by volunteering for the state health department and attending meetings in Raleigh for something called the **NC HIV/AIDS Prevention & Care Advisory Council**. That led to me becoming certified to test folks for HIV and hepatitis C.

I also volunteered with several organizations that dealt with **harm reduction** and **substance use disorder**. For those of you who don't know, "harm reduction" refers to a set of practices that help people who use drugs be safer. ... *continue on next page*

LIVE AND LET LIVE: THE IMPORTANCE OF TOLERANCE



Tolerance means accepting everyone, no matter what their HIV status is.

Let's face it – sometimes it seems like the world has gone crazy! **"Live and let live"** (tolerance) has become more like "Live and think/look/love like me - or else!"

Unfortunately, people living with HIV too often know what it feels like to be judged for our poz status. Even in 2020, nearly 40 years after the start of the epidemic, some people still think you can catch HIV by hugging, kissing, or sharing the same water fountain. For the record, you can't.

But prejudice against people living with HIV (PLWH) isn't the only kind of intolerance. Any time one person **judges another without knowing them** - whether it's because of how they look, who they love, or what their beliefs are - is intolerance.

WNCAP serves 18 counties in Western NC, and the cultural divide between different areas can be striking. People from **Asheville** would be surprised to hear some of the conversations happening in a McDonald's in **Clay County!** It's natural for people to have different political beliefs, but sometimes ... *continue on next page*



Apologies to Ms. Del Rio...

"HIV Advocacy"... Syringe access and distributing overdose-reversing naloxone (Narcan) are both considered harm reduction.

Harm reduction swims in the same fishbowl as HIV advocacy. For one thing, you can get HIV and hepatitis C from sharing injection equipment. Also, people who use drugs are stigmatized in a similar way that people living with HIV are. So we have to be in this fight together.

I am always grateful to WNCAP, first for helping me out as a case management client, then for helping me with my advocacy work. WNCAP supports a lot of my events out West here in Cherokee, and I travel with WNCAP to events like **AIDS Watch** in D.C. and **HIV Speaks on Jones Street** in Raleigh. Sometimes I apply for scholarships to go on these trips, and sometimes they are paid for by WNCAP. HIV Advocacy does not have to cost you any money, even if you are staying in fancy hotels!

We fight for **affordable housing** for people living with HIV (PLWH), along with **Medicaid expansion**, funding for **hepatitis C** treatment and prevention, **harm reduction** policies, and many other issues affecting PLWH.

I'm proud of being known in the community as an HIV and harm reduction advocate. **NC State Representative Joe Sam Queen** knows me because I see him all the time at Western Carolina ball games, so I know he remembers what we are cramming into his head in Raleigh!



WNCAP advocates meeting with NC Rep. Joe Sam Queen to discuss Medicaid expansion and other issues affecting people living with HIV

I'm a member of the **Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians** and I talk to my leaders about what is needed to keep people healthy and safe. I was asked recently to sit on a tribal health board called THIP, the Tribal

Health Initiative Program, which puts me in a position to advocate for my community.

HIV advocacy made me feel better about my poz status. Through advocacy, I have had some **amazing adventures**. I've met **wonderful friends**. It makes me feel good to **stand up for other people**.

If you have the time, the dedication, and the heart for advocacy, contact WNCAP at info@wncap.org, call **(828) 252-7489**, or talk to your case manager. We want current and former clients, like myself, to participate in advocacy. I'd love to meet you on this advocacy road I'm on.

"Tolerance"... it escalates into outright hatred and prejudice! Let's be clear: no one is saying that everyone should agree with everyone. **Of course we have our differences - that's what makes us human!** But tolerance means establishing a base line of compassion and human empathy.



So how can we bridge the gap and "all just get along?" As **Miss Winnie** so wisely says, "Try to focus on being tolerant of others in their daily lives." Though tolerance may seem to be impossible to achieve in certain circumstances, being tolerant remains key to reducing hostile tensions between individuals and groups and to helping people move past seemingly intractable conflict.

We can disagree without being disagreeable. We can have legitimate differences of opinion while still respecting other people as human beings. And people living with HIV are uniquely suited to be "ambassadors" for tolerance, because **we know what it's like to be judged.**

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HIV & TOBACCO USE

Information in this article is taken from HIV.gov and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Smoking is a **serious health threat** for everyone. In fact, smoking causes **one in every five deaths** in the United States each year. But it's **especially dangerous** for people living with HIV.

In addition to common risks like cancer, heart disease, and emphysema, if you smoke and have HIV, you're **more likely to get HIV-related infections**, including **Thrush** (a mouth infection, also called oral candidiasis) and **Hairy Leukoplakia** (white mouth sores). You are also at greater risk of contracting **bacterial pneumonia** and **pneumocystis pneumonia**, a dangerous lung infection.



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Given the benefit of smoking cessation, strategies to assist individuals who smoke to quit should be a **primary focus** in modern HIV care. Quitting smoking has **major and immediate health benefits** for all tobacco users, especially those living with HIV. Quitting reduces your chances of developing disease, helps you feel better, and improves your quality of life.

Tobacco harm reduction focuses on reducing health risk without necessarily requiring abstinence. Quitting tobacco use entirely remains the healthiest option; however, using tobacco less often or switching to an alternative like vaporizing nicotine or using nicotine patches or gum can reduce your risk of known health consequences of smoking. **You should always talk to your medical provider before using a tobacco alternative.**

If you want to start the process of quitting or learn the benefits, you can always talk to your **case manager** here at WNCAP or check out the CDC's national tobacco education campaign—**Tips From Former Smokers (Tips)**. The Tips campaign profiles real people who are living with serious long-term health effects from smoking. You can also view a story and tips from a person living with HIV who quit smoking. Visit BeTobaccoFree.hhs.gov or call the **Smoking Quitline: 877-44U-QUIT (877-448-7848)**

FEBRUARY IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH



February is Black History Month, and **National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day**, observed every year on **February 7**, is an opportunity to raise awareness of the racial disparities in HIV that persist in the United States. Year after year, African Americans continue to shoulder the **heaviest burden** of HIV.

This year's NBHAAD theme, "**We're in This Together**," highlights the importance of social support—from friends, family, colleagues, and partners—when addressing HIV in the black community.



African Americans account for nearly **half of all new cases of HIV** each year, despite representing only 13% of the U.S. population.

Structural inequality in the healthcare sector contributes to this disparity. NBHAAD leverages a national platform to help combat the stigma of HIV so that new cases of HIV will decline and those living with HIV/AIDS can survive and thrive.