

Zero HIV Stigma Day 2023 [VIDEO]

Watch the short film “Human First” to mark the debut of #ZeroHIVStigmaDay, Friday, July 21.

July 21, 2023 By [Trent Straube](#)

Mark your calendars—there’s a new [HIV](#) awareness day. Friday, July 21, marks the inaugural Zero HIV Stigma Day ([#ZeroHIVStigmaDay](#)), a global effort to fight [HIV stigma](#) in all its forms.

The awareness day is spearheaded by the [International Association of Providers of AIDS Care \(IAPAC\)](#), with collaboration from the NAZ Project and the Global HIV Collaborative in the United Kingdom and the [Fast-Track Cities Institute](#), a global initiative in which cities sign a declaration committing to achieve HIV-related goals.

The theme of this year’s Zero HIV Stigma Day is “Human First,” in reference to the fact that whether a person has HIV or not, that person is first and foremost a human being. To coincide with the campaign, IAPAC and the Fast-Track Cities Initiative premiered Human First, a short documentary that follows six individuals in South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States as they share their personal fight against stigma. You can watch the film on [IAPAC’s YouTube page](#) as well as in the video at the top of this article.

Organizers of Zero HIV Stigma Day chose July 21 because that is the birthday of Prudence Mabele. In 1992, she became the first Black South African woman to publicly disclose she was living with HIV. She died in 2017.

"Stigma in South Africa and around the world was so high at that point," explained Calvin Pugh, IAPAC's senior adviser on community engagement (and an HIV-positive advocate in Kansas City, Missouri), in the POZ article "[The Importance of Zero HIV Stigma Day](#)." "What she did was an incredible act of courage, so we wanted to honor her with the date of Zero HIV Stigma Day."

Pugh also noted that, although "the United States has over a dozen different HIV awareness days...the rest of the world has only World AIDS Day.

"We wanted to anchor a day around the idea of fighting stigma because it can feel abstract," he continued. "We often talk about how it's a problem...but there's no recognition on a global scale of the impact it has on the HIV epidemic as a whole—how it can impede and complicate testing, relationships, institutions and their policies. The impact it has on people's health and how they feel about themselves is super important. If we're going to end the epidemic, we have to address it in a firmer and clearer way."

Because fighting HIV stigma is not a one-day-a-year effort, the folks behind the awareness day also launched a [POZ blog titled Zero HIV Stigma](#), which will include posts throughout the year. "Through this blog," writes José M. Zuniga, president and CEO of IAPAC and the Fast-Track Cities Institute, "we hope to serve as a forum to share lived experiences, preview data and research, and promote best practices as we strive to realize the theme of this year's inaugural Zero HIV Stigma Day—"Human First." It may sound cliché, but the H in HIV stands for 'human.' Together, we can, and we must, muster the courage of our convictions."

Courtesy of the Zero HIV Stigma Day campaign

Learn more about and get involved with Zero HIV Stigma Day on the awareness day's [website](#) or on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

In related U.S. news, the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS (PACHA) recently passed a resolution calling on stakeholders to work to end HIV-related stigma. Read more about that on [HIV.gov's POZ blog](#).