



National AIDS Memorial Announces Recipients of the Mary Bowman Arts in Activism Award [VIDEO]

Applications available March 1, 2023 for the next awards for the HIV/AIDS arts and social justice program funded through the support of ViiV Healthcare

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The National AIDS Memorial announces that Bobbi-Angelica Morris, currently at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., and Joseph Taylor, at Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, are the most recent recipients of the Mary Bowman Arts in Activism Award. Now in its fourth year, the Award honors the life of Mary Bowman, the poet, advocate, author and singer who passed away from AIDS in early 2019 at the age of 30.

Funded through a generous multi-year grant from ViiV Healthcare, the only pharmaceutical company solely focused on HIV, the Award offers support to artist-activists who through their creative practice inspire individuals and communities, and make a positive impact in the fight against HIV/AIDS while advancing social justice. The awardees receive \$5,000 each.

The Mary Bowman Arts in Activism Award recognizes the power of the arts to dismantle stigma and isolation, and bring people together in our shared humanity. Mary Bowman, an icon of hope and resilience, was born with HIV and lived out her experiences of growing up with HIV—and losing a mother to AIDS—through her art. As a young out woman of color, she was a dynamic, vital voice for the next generation of individuals living with HIV, willing and proud to speak of her own challenges beyond HIV. She was also a fierce advocate for other young people with HIV. The arts gave Bowman the platform and voice to channel her creative energy, her passion, her truth. She performed at the 2018 ViiV Healthcare Youth and Community Summit, inspiring leaders across the movement. This was one of many examples of how Mary used her voice and her art to build bridges and make a difference.

Activism through visual and/or performing arts harnesses the imagination to design campaigns, programs, events, narratives and strategies that provoke new questions and infuse meaning in the pursuit of more respectful ways of being, and to foster a more equitable, just society. The arts become a tool for combating stigma, providing insight into different lives and experiences that builds empathy and challenges our own implicit biases. Stigma, and all it entails—shame, isolation, embarrassment, prejudice, exclusion—remains among the most formidable barriers to fighting the

AIDS epidemic. Through this Award, we hope to inspire art that develops appreciation, understanding and activism.

“During Black History Month, we are especially pleased to support poet and spoken word performer Bobbi-Angelica Morris and painter Joseph Taylor with our most recent Mary Bowman Arts in Activism Awards,” said John Cunningham, Chief Executive Officer of the National AIDS Memorial. “Bobbi-Angelica’s poetry and commitment is creating space for marginalized voices and intersectional identities to express themselves freely and creatively. “Joseph Taylor uses his artistic talent to uplift the voices within the Black community by visually amplifying their challenges and struggles while simultaneously illustrating their grace, heroism and power.” Both outstanding art activists honor the life, and the creative and changemaking spirit of Mary Bowman.

Bobbi-Angelica Morris stated, “The life and legacy of Mary Bowman have inspired me to stay true to the identities...that make me who I am today. As a form of expression and activism, my spoken word poetry often references different forms of oppression or traumas....I see this same mindset in Mary’s story, as she shared her artwork about personal experiences, inspiring others to live their truth.”

ViiV Healthcare has supported the multi-year program with more than \$100,000 in funding to the National AIDS Memorial. In 2023, \$5,000 awards will be granted to an additional two eligible artist-activists, and the Mary Bowman paid fellowship program that launched last year will also continue with our second fellow beginning this summer.

“This Award supports young artists and activists like Joseph and Bobbi-Angelica who use their creativity and unique perspectives to highlight our shared humanity, and to make change through their art,” said Marc Meachem, Head, U.S. External Affairs, ViiV Healthcare. “Like Mary Bowman, their work shows how culture can break down stigma and deepen connections with people to activate positive change.”

ViiV Healthcare recognizes the power of the arts to break down HIV/AIDS stigma and isolation, and the company proudly supports cultural programs that inspire individuals and communities in the fight to end the HIV/AIDS epidemic. A beautifully-produced [video tribute](#) to Bowman, created by the National AIDS Memorial with support from ViiV Healthcare, captures that spirit and Bowman’s life and work.

Details about the application process and requirements for the Award may be found at www.aidsmemorial.org/marybowman. The online application for the next round of awards will open March 1, 2023, with applications accepted until the deadline of July 15, 2023, 5pm PT.