



A Night of “Joy and Pride” as Playwrights With HIV Debut New Works

Plus: Matty Mahoski received the 2023 Write It Out! Prize for playwrights living with HIV.

December 12, 2023 By [Trent Straube](#)

After a 10-week virtual workshop, participants in the the fourth annual Write It Out! playwriting program for people living with [HIV](#) debuted new works at a December 2 event at the LGBT Community Center in New York in honor of [World AIDS Day](#), marked annually each December 1.

[Write It Out! \(WIO!\)](#), in partnership with the [National Queer Theater](#), announced Matty Mahoski as the 2023 recipient of the WIO! Prize for playwrights living with HIV. WIO! founder Donja R. Love selected Mahoski’s work UN(IN)SURE from four finalists.

This World AIDS Day, NQT and donja r. love are proud to announce the winner of the Write It Out! Prize: Matty Mahoski! ...

Posted by [National Queer Theater](#) on [Friday, December 1, 2023](#)

For the event at the LGBT Comunity Center, actors directed by [Dane Figueroa Edidi](#) performed seven short plays created by the WIO! virtual workshop participants, giving the writers a chance to hear their words onstage and in front of an audience.

“The first in-person sharing for Write It Out! exceeded my wildest imagination,” Love told POZ. “The level of love and joy that manifested was so palpable. It bounced off each body in the space creating something so magical.”

For far too long, people in the HIV community have faced shame and [stigma](#), he said, “but this was

a night in which there were no traces. Instead, what we cultivated was joy and pride. The wonderful writers of the 2023 WIO! cohort used their words to offer love and healing. It was one of the most transformative nights of my life.”



[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by National Queer Theater (@nationalqueertheater)

The lineup for Write It Out!’s 2023 final sharing included:

- First Nigga to Cry written by Aaliy Abdullah Muhammad
- 8,900 written by Kodee Stephens
- Speak Yo Truth (SYT) written by a playwright who prefers to be anonymous
- Tiger, Max, & the Angel of Death written by David Anzuelo
- Present Tense written by Mark S. King

- Awake written by Ted Sod
- You Lived It written by ZM

For more on Write It Out!, see "[Got HIV and Something to Say? Apply for This Free Playwriting Workshop.](#)"

As the recipient of this year's Write It Out! Prize, Mahoski will receive \$5,000 and a year of dramaturgical support to develop a new work.

"Receiving the Write It Out! Prize is a powerful affirmation of my personal progress as well as a recognition of the heart and effort I have poured into this play," [Mahoski said in a statement](#). "As an early-career playwright, receiving these generous resources will create a firm foundation to stand on as I continue to learn and grow in this medium. Becoming HIV positive forced me to reimagine my life in every way I had previously considered it. Living with HIV has empowered me to walk fully into who I am and to hold myself with strength, with love and with the knowledge that I am not alone; I am in community. The WIO! cohort and prize have helped me to recognize that I want my work and my art to be of service to our community."

"Matty's play is clever and muscular," added Love. "I found myself falling deeper and deeper into the story. How they used absurdism to speak to the incompetence and brokenness of the health care system was painful and hilarious. The play triggered my anxiety as I recalled many frustrating experiences navigating the health care system. Above all, Matty's play made me feel like I am not alone."

Write It Out! was founded in 2019, according to its website, to "use the power of imagination and healing to strengthen the voice of those living with HIV and AIDS and transform the theatrical landscape into a more equitable and stigma-free space."

"Writing helped me navigate my status after diagnosis," Love has explained on the Write It Out! website. "I started Write It Out! (WIO!) as a way for people living with HIV to be in a creative space void of shame and [stigma](#), to be in a community.... I realize WIO! Is more than a writing workshop. It's a family that helps people grow as artists and people living with HIV."

Love is the scribe behind the hit play one in two; the title references the statistic that one in two gay [African-American](#) men are expected to test positive for HIV in their lifetime. The play was performed in New York City in 2019 and 2020 and was awarded the 2020 POZ Award for Best Play. See the [POZ write-up here](#).

Love, who is also a filmmaker and poet, graced the cover of [POZ in December 2021](#), for that year's POZ 100, which celebrated Black HIV advocates. He also spoke with POZ founder Sean Strub in a Q&A titled "[Visibility Is Survival](#)."

© 2024 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

<https://www.poz.com/article/night-joy-pride-wio-playwrights-hiv-debut-new-works>