San Francisco, March 8, 2024 — The National AIDS Memorial’s Mary Bowman Arts in Activism Award application for Fall 2024 funding is open through July 15, 2024. The Award supports young and emerging art activists who focus on HIV/AIDS and/or health and social justice art. These artists, like Mary Bowman who is honored through this Award, pursue a bold vision for a future where no community will be harmed because of fear, silence, discrimination, or stigma. The online application for the next round of awards opened March 1, and applications will be accepted until the deadline of July 15, 2024, 5pm PT. Awardees will be notified by September 1. More information about the program can be found at https://www.aidsmemorial.org/mary-bowman-arts-in-activism-award.

Now in its fifth year, the Award honors the life of the late Mary Bowman, a poet, advocate, author, and singer who passed away from AIDS in early 2019 at the age of 30. 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. The arts gave Bowman the platform and voice to channel her creative energy, her passion, and her truth to build bridges and make a difference.

Funded through a generous multi-year grant from ViiV Healthcare, the only pharmaceutical company solely focused on HIV, the Award offers support to both student and non-student art-activists who, like Bowman, are making a positive impact in the fight against HIV/AIDS and/or are advancing health and social justice by inspiring individuals and communities through their creative practices. The awardees receive $5,000 each and at least two artist-activists will be bestowed the Award in 2024.

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, the National AIDS Memorial hopes to inspire art that develops appreciation, understanding, and activism.

In September 2023, the National AIDS Memorial awarded its most recent recipients to Jade Duffus, currently at George Washington University, and Indira Ardolic, attending CUNY Hunter based in New York.

Jade Duffus is majoring in political science with a minor in the arts. As a young Black woman in America, Duffus is deeply committed to advocating for a more equitable and diverse space for Black and
Brown communities, recognizing the disparities that persist in society, as she navigates them everyday. Duffus’ passion for promoting equality and addressing socioeconomic disparities within the Black community fuels her academic journey in political science, with the ultimate goal of becoming a lawyer dedicated to fighting injustices faced by marginalized communities. Duffus harnesses her creative talents to complement her political awareness, amplifying the voices of those who lack the means to uplift themselves.

As Duffus explains, “I firmly believe in the power of advocacy and the transformative role that the arts can play in raising awareness, challenging social norms, and amplifying marginalized voices. The Mary Bowman Arts in Activism Award aligns perfectly with my passion for using the arts as a tool for social justice.”

The second 2023 awardee, Indira Ardolic, is a new media artist and creative technologist who channels her creative energies towards elevating the voices of marginalized individuals facing systemic oppression. Blending mysticism with technology, her interactive artworks reimagine experiences and dreams, providing viewers with a deeper understanding through virtual reality and interactive installations.

Ardolic, who is passionate about creating narrative art with a powerful social impact, shares, “I intend to create new media and interactive arts to emphasize and uplift marginalized communities. I have created new media art work and installations in my experience with freelance to share stories of those with HIV/AIDS, individuals who were formerly incarcerated, and the LGBTQ community.”

“We are deeply inspired by these talented and passionate art activists,” said John Cunningham, Chief Executive Officer of the National AIDS Memorial. “The intention of their respective art forms to achieve health and social equity exemplifies the pioneering spirit of Mary Bowman who used her art and activism to raise awareness about bigotry, stigma, and social justice, particularly around the issue of HIV/AIDS.”

“This award - inspired by the long term survivor, artist and activist Mary Bowman - is here to support young advocates as they use the arts and culture to raise awareness about HIV and AIDS and to amplify the voices of people that are too often left behind,” said Marc Meachem, Head, U.S. External Affairs, ViiV Healthcare. “Through their art, awardees demonstrate how culture reduces stigma, inspiring empathy and action towards the end of the epidemic. Mary’s art offered hope and visibility for people born with HIV and we look forward to seeing more from the activists keeping this hope alive.”

The mission of the National AIDS Memorial is to share the story of the struggle against HIV/AIDS and to remember, in perpetuity, the lives lost, offer healing and hope to survivors, and inspire new generations of activists in the fight against stigma, denial, and hate for a just future. Through the National AIDS Memorial Grove, AIDS Memorial Quilt, and other programs that benefit the community, the National AIDS Memorial ensures that the story of AIDS and the AIDS movement is never forgotten, and connects four decades of healing, hope, remembrance and survival to issues faced by society today. Learn more at www.aidsmemorial.org.

ViiV Healthcare is a global specialist HIV company established in November 2009 by GlaxoSmithKline (LSE: GSK) and Pfizer (NYSE: PFE) dedicated to delivering advances in treatment and care for people living with HIV, and for people who are at risk of becoming infected with HIV. Shionogi became a ViiV Healthcare shareholder in October 2012. ViiV Healthcare's aim is to take a deeper and broader interest in HIV/AIDS than any company has done before and take a new approach to deliver effective and innovative medicines for HIV treatment and prevention, as well as support communities affected by HIV. For more information on the company, its management, portfolio, pipeline, and commitment, please visit www.viivhealthcare.com.