

SPEAKER BIOS

Darwin Thompson | Senior Director | Gilead Sciences Inc.

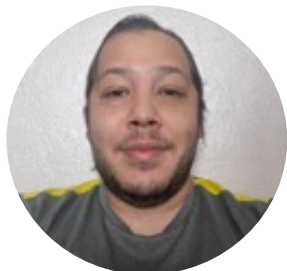


Darwin is the Senior Director of Public Affairs for Gilead Sciences. Darwin provides oversight for Gilead's US-grantmaking, develops strategic initiatives, and serves as a thought partner for Gilead's CSR leadership. Darwin has 15+ years of experience working with community-based nonprofits that provide support for marginalized populations. He previously served as the Executive Director at NAESM, Inc., a community-based HIV prevention nonprofit in Atlanta. Darwin oversaw the organization's community-based programs, managed and evaluated grants, and designed innovative programs. Additionally, Darwin is trained in several CDC behavioral interventions including Couples HIV Counseling and Testing, and Many Men Many Voices. Darwin is a graduate of Morehouse College with a BA in Sociology and a graduate of the Satcher Community Health Leadership Institute at Morehouse School of Medicine.

Elias Diaz | Executive Director | Eagle Pass SAFE

Elias co-founded the first LGBTQIA Non-Profit Organization, EP SAFE, in his hometown Eagle Pass, TX, serving the rural communities on the Southwest Texas Border. As a mental health clinician for ten years, he also serves as a Compliance Officer to improve social services and mental health systems. His work increases awareness of preventive measures for HIV and STIs, decreases barriers to preventive care, and addresses stigma about the LGBTQIA community, people living with HIV, and people with mental illness. Diaz is involved in projects including CDC's Let's Stop HIV Together, Greater than Aids Texas Spanish language campaign, and more. Elias also wrote and produced PreParadas!, an anti-stigma campaign for LatinX matriarchs focused on HIV prevention and how to best support their LGBTQIA sons.

Fernando Mendez | HIV Services - Community | Borderland Rainbow Center



Fernando has historically volunteered for queer advocacy organizations that prioritize building community and sexual health education. Growing up in the LGBTQ+ community, he experienced firsthand the importance of community support and health education for preventative care. In 2020, Fernando joined the Borderland Rainbow Center to facilitate peer support and education for HIV positive individuals. As a community worker for Borderland Rainbow Center, he organizes numerous community events and assists with their management to ensure proper engagement with the community.

Ian Haddock | Executive Director | The Normal Anomaly Initiative, Inc.



Ian is the Founder and Executive Director of The Normal Anomaly Initiative, founded in 2021. He is a contributing columnist for Outsmart Magazine and has written for The Grio, Logo/NewNowNext, Houston Chronicle, and The Statesman. He has appeared on The Jennifer Hudson Show and is a GLAAD Media Award Recipient, a Legend Award Honoree at the Legends Ball. He has received the LGBTQ+ Innovator Award by Montrose Center, Lifetime Achievement Award by The Academia Society, Living Legend by Houston Precinct One Commissioner Rodney Ellis, Black History Maker by United Black Ellument at The Resource Center Dallas, Trailblazer of the Year by the African American State of Emergency Task Force, Emerging Leader of the Year from the National African American Gay Leadership Conference, and more.

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Jordan Edwards | Deputy Director | The Normal Anomaly Initiative



Jordan is a Deputy Director for the Normal Anomaly Initiative. Jordan serves the Black, Queer plus community by developing curriculum, increasing opportunities for transportation and linkage to care services for those living with HIV and those interested in PrEP. His first experience with HIV was when he watched a family member pass away from AIDS complications in early 2000, but the shift in his life changed once he got his HIV positive results in 2013. He became a 2024 White House Rising Leader and a Greater Than HIV Ambassador through his development in the HIV sector. He can be found in The Advocate, VoyageHouston, and Outsmart.

Kerri Garrett | Director of Youth Programs | NBAF - House of Productions



Kerri is an artist and creative producer from Columbus, Ohio. As Director of Youth Artist Programs at the National Black Arts Festival, she leads HIV-centered residencies in Atlanta Public Schools that use film, dance, and photography to empower youth storytelling and wellness. A Clark Atlanta alum, Kerri brings 5+ years of experience in narrative change work centering Black queer life. She is currently building a storytelling guide with GLAAD's Community Consulting Group to integrate narratives of people thriving with HIV into film and media. She has been featured on BET, REVOLT, and at the Pan African Film Festival. She also co-wrote and co-directed BLEACHED for the NAACP Cinematic Shorts Competition. Her latest project, A Westside Love Story, is supported by Gilead's Emory COMPASS Center Transformative Grant.

Kevin Anderson | Founder/Chief Executive Officer | The T.R.U.T.H. Project, Inc.



Kevin is the Founder/CEO of The T.R.U.T.H. Project, Inc., a Houston-based nonprofit dedicated to advancing mental, emotional, and sexual health through art and advocacy within Queer and Trans Communities of Color. With over 19 years in HIV related public health, his work spans prevention, education, and community mobilization, shaped by lived experience and a culturally responsive approach. Kevin is a certified trauma informed trainer and master facilitator who has developed programs focused on healing, stigma reduction, and empowerment. A recent accomplishment includes directing Southern Son Shine, a follow-up to his award-winning documentary, And We Rest on Giants, which centers the lives of those thriving with HIV. His leadership has earned honors from Houston's LGBTQ Advisory Board and named 2024 Pride Houston Male Identifying Grand Marshal.

Linda Dixon, Esq | Health Law Director | Mississippi Center for Justice



Linda is the Health Law Director at the Mississippi Center for Justice, where she has led efforts to advance equitable access to health care since 2008. With a background in law and public policy, Linda has dedicated her career to addressing health disparities, combating HIV-related stigma, and ensuring underserved communities have a voice in shaping health outcomes. Before joining the Center, she served in the Mississippi Secretary of State's Office as Assistant Secretary of State for Elections, following roles as Senior Attorney and Director of Elections Training and Education. Linda holds a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice from Southern University at New Orleans and earned her law degree from the Mississippi College School of Law.

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L Nicole Stringfellow | CEO & Founder | FABRIC, Incorporated



L. Nicole is the Founder and CEO of FABRIC, Incorporated, and owner of Stringfellow Strategic Solutions, LLC, where she curates meaningful experiences and strategic solutions. With over 30 years in community outreach and development, she specializes in grassroots engagement, leadership training, program compliance, and capacity building. Since 1993, her work has centered on HIV prevention, advocacy, and mobilizing communities across the South, especially Black women, youth, and faith institutions. She has led impactful initiatives including three “GOSPEL” screenings and dialogues in 2024, and two “Help Me Help You” gatherings reaching over 100 Black women in the Mississippi Delta. Her nonprofit also conducted multi-year research with faith communities, awarding mini grants to 15 churches to expand their health ministries to include HIV testing and prevention.

Marco Quiroga | Founder and Executive Director | Contigo Fund



Marco is driven as a direct result of his experience as an immigrant, queer person of color raised and politicized in Florida. He is the Founder and Executive Director for the Contigo Fund, launched due to the horrific massacre that occurred on Latin Night at Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida in June 2016 targeting Queer POC. Contigo historically became the first and only Queer Latinx fund in the United States and largest grantmaking organization in the South supporting Queer communities of color. Contigo has awarded over \$5 million to LGBTQ led and affirming grassroots organizations across Central Florida. In recognition of his leadership, Marco was presented the Voice for Equality Award by Equality Florida and the Community Vanguard Award presented by Grantmakers for Southern Progress.

Noelle Esquire | U.S. Portfolio Lead | Elton John AIDS Foundation



Noelle has worked in HIV program management for over fifteen years. Her career began with Keep a Child Alive, supporting community-based clinics and orphan care programs in sub-Saharan Africa and India. Then, she worked with ICAP at Columbia University managing large cooperative agreements with the CDC, including the population-based HIV impact assessment (PHIA) project in sub-Saharan Africa and Haiti. Now with EJAF, Noelle focuses on grant-making in the U.S. south, investing in projects that are increasing capabilities of the HIV health workforce, improving access and uptake of HIV prevention and care among communities in greatest need, addressing stigma, and pursuing policy change. Recently, EJAF launched its new Rocket Response Fund to help bridge gaps for current partners who are impacted by USG funding cuts.

Dr. Shakita B. Jones | Founder & Executive Director | Central Alabama Alliance, Resource & Advocacy Center



Dr. Jones is a Montgomery, AL native. She is a graduate of Troy State University with a B.S. in social work, a Master's and Doctorate in social work from the University of Alabama. Shakita also holds a Master's degree in public administration and a Nonprofit Management certification from Auburn University Montgomery. She is the Founder and Executive Director of Central Alabama Alliance Resource & Advocacy Center (CAARAC), where she spearheads several programs to address prevention, education and health equity related to HIV in the Black community, specifically for Black women. CAARAC's Girl's Night Out has recently been a staple program in the Montgomery community boasting growing attendance and has increased HIV testing and PrEP education for Black women.

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Senator RaShaun Kemp | Georgia General Assembly



Senator RaShaun Kemp is a lifelong Georgian and the first openly gay Black man elected to the Georgia General Assembly. He represents Senate District 38, which includes parts of Fulton County, where he advocates for public education, safe communities, and social equity.

He holds leadership roles on the Agriculture and Consumer Affairs, Education and Youth, Government Oversight, State Institutions and Property, and Urban Affairs Committees. He also serves as Senior Director at the National Charter Collaborative, supporting Black and Brown charter school leaders nationwide.

Before public office, he was a high school principal at age 27 and led statewide initiatives at the Georgia Department of Education. He has also served in roles in local government and chaired Atlanta's Neighborhood Planning Unit K. Sen. Kemp is a proud member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., and a committed volunteer in Metro Atlanta. He lives in South Fulton with his husband, Dr. Ken Kemp, and their children, Jaden and Brooklyn. The family worships at Impact United Methodist Church.

Senator Rod Hickman | Mississippi State Senate



Senator Rod Hickman is a native of Shuqualak, Mississippi, and currently serves in the Mississippi State Senate representing District 32, which includes Kemper, Lauderdale, Noxubee, and Winston counties. He is a lifelong public servant and advocate for justice, education, and health equity across rural Mississippi.

He serves on several key committees and brings to his legislative role a background as an attorney and college professor. Prior to his election in 2021, he made history as Noxubee County's first African American County Prosecutor and also served as Municipal Prosecutor for his hometown.

Before entering elected office, he taught law and mentored emerging leaders committed to public service. His legislative focus includes expanding healthcare access, improving rural education, reforming the criminal justice system, and strengthening local economies.

Sen. Hickman is a strong supporter of community-based HIV awareness, stigma reduction, and health equity initiatives. He believes in the power of collaboration between faith communities, grassroots advocates, and policymakers to address health disparities in the Deep South.