

**Moving from Humiliation and Exclusion to Participation:  
Ending Poverty in All its Forms**

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After plans to live with my father in NH fell through, I ended up in New York City at the age of seventeen. This was my first time out of a rural island life. At least here I will experience life as a gay young man in a culture that empowered it.

Two years into my stay, I became infected with HIV. Funny thing about facing your own mortality. You either are going to get busy living or get busy dying. This for me meant there was no returning home. My island would not catch up with healthcare in this area for years to come, so my best chance for survival was to stay here.

In 1990, I moved to NH to live with my father until I could figure things out and maybe have some good memories with him.

What I discovered was a lot of racial biases towards people of color, who there's not much off, much less immigrants and in the midst of all this was the booming AIDS epidemic. In my quest for support I found my voice as an activist through the kindness of strangers.

In preparation for this, I met up and spoke with other migrants. In some cases the journey almost cost them their lives. Days without food or water. And these were children. One young man said he left to get away from drugs and gun violence only to live in a community here with the same problems.

Overwhelmingly people are leaving their countries because of lack of opportunities, jobs with fair wages, adequate healthcare and housing. Outside companies are moving in and building factories. They are not offering the same wages or benefits as they would have in their countries of origin. They are not paying into the system that supports our infrastructure.

Our natural resources are being overharvested to meet the needs of other more developing countries, our best and brightest are being recruited by other countries.

## International Day for the Eradication of Poverty – 17 October 2016

These all contribute to a constant state of poverty and violence. As long as things stay the same, we will continue to see more migration.

People wants to have a future and leave a legacy, something for future generations to be able to build on. We have the potential to be a lot but because of our situation, the storm that we live in, it's like the genie in the bottle. You could do great things but you're restricted to the bottle. Your fate rest in the hands of people in power. I am stuck in this bottle and there is nothing I can do about it.

It takes a lot of courage to stand in the shame of my own truth and here, on this Day, to bear witness for all, not just for me but for many others who have had to feel that their voices is silence. For them, and not for me, I am here.

Hear us and See us.

Behind there is no hope. We are not free to choose. Life is ahead of us. We just put one foot in front of the other and keep on moving. Hope is the funny thing to have, that brings people across deserts, in these boats across oceans. That's hope. That's an instinct to survive and that, for nothing else, we must respect.

When people are valued, they become participatory citizens. They are assured that they are counted. They participated because it is about all of us. That means that you could have pride in it, and you have stock in it. If we are not counted, if we are not part of the process, part of the ownership of all of it, then we are treated with a certain degree of disrespect. And I don't think anybody wants that. Participating makes people feels valuable. It makes them feel counted.

Back in the 90's, at the heights of the AIDS epidemics, there was this slogan: "silence = death". Let us not live in silence.