



For Immediate Release

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## **NMAC ANNOUNCES SPEAKERS AND PERFORMERS FOR 2018 UNITED STATES CONFERENCE ON AIDS**

**Aug. 21, 2018** - A Parkland shooting survivor, a founder of Black Lives Matter, a legendary disco diva, a veteran “RuPaul’s Drag Race” contestant, and an a cappella drag quartet will all appear at the [United States Conference on AIDS \(USCA\)](#) Sept. 6-9, 2018, at the Hyatt Regency in Orlando, FL.

The conference’s opening plenary on Thursday, Sept. 6, at 11:30 AM will feature:

- Parkland shooting survivor and activist **David Hogg**
- Black Lives Matter co-founder **Alicia Garza**
- **Abigail Echo-Hawk**, Director, Urban Indian Health Institute
- **Richard Zaldivar** of The Wall Las Memorias Project
- **Naina Khanna**, Executive Director, Positive Women’s Network – USA
- A special performance by **Thelma Houston** (“Don’t Leave Me this Way”), who will pay tribute to the legendary disco performer Sylvester

Larry Kramer had been scheduled to speak at the opening plenary but had to withdraw. He will send video remarks.

“Our opening plenary is focused on the importance of activism,” said Paul Kawata, NMAC’s Executive Director. “Activism in the fight against HIV intersects many communities: youth, LGBTQ, elders, and communities of color. We want to show how different activist movements can intersect with the fight against HIV and strengthen our forces for change.”

The conference will also feature two special performances and one documentary film screening:

- On Thursday, Sept. 6, at 8:00 PM, [Ongina](#), from the first season of “RuPaul’s Drag Race,” will perform at an opening reception. Ongina was the show’s first contestant to be open about living with HIV.
- On Friday, Sept. 7, at 7:00 PM, the documentary film [“When the Beat Drops”](#) will be screened. Drop into the electric and subversive underground dance scene known as “bucking.” As voguing exploded out of the ballroom scene of NYC, bucking was boldly pioneered in the clubs of the Deep South as a new form of self-expression. This film presents a fresh glimpse into the magnetic artistry and flair behind this emerging dance culture.
- On Saturday, Sept. 8, at 7:00 PM, the [Kinsey Sicks](#), billed as “America’s Favorite Dragapella® Beautyshop Quartet” for nearly a quarter of a century, will perform.

“Ongina’s disclosure of her HIV status brought great awareness to viewers about the HIV epidemic and the emotional toll it can take on people living with the virus,” said Kawata. “Since then, she has been a great example of how a person living with HIV can not just live but thrive and excel.”

“‘When the Beat Drops’ features great insight into the culture of gay, black men in the South,” said Kawata. “In order to fight the HIV epidemic in communities of color, we need a full understanding of the cultures of those communities so we can frame our approaches to be most effective.”

“Bringing the Kinsey Sicks to USCA is both a privilege and a pleasure,” said Kawata. “They have not only entertained audiences for nearly 25 years, they have brought awareness and activism to those audiences. The Kinsey Sicks will bring both fun and a call to action to this year’s USCA.”

*NMAC leads with race to urgently fight for health equity and racial justice to end the HIV epidemic in America. Since 1987, NMAC has advanced our mission through a variety of programs and services, including: a public policy education program, national and regional training conferences, a treatment and research program, numerous electronic and print materials, and a website: [www.nmac.org](http://www.nmac.org). NMAC also serves as an association of AIDS service organizations, providing valuable information to community-based organizations, hospitals, clinics, and other groups assisting individuals and families affected by the HIV epidemic.*

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