Event Agenda

Encuentro 2026: Rooted en el Sur

Wednesday, October 28, 2026

Pre-Institute: COMPES

10:00 AM – 3:00 PM | Location: ReCity; 112 Broadway Street, Suite B, Durham, NC 27701

Pre-Institute: CBA Hands United

10:00 AM – 3:00 PM | Location: ReCity; 112 Broadway Street, Suite B, Durham, NC 27701

Enceuntro Registration

4:30 PM – 7:00 PM | Location: 21C

Networking Mixer

5:00 PM – 7:00 PM | Location: 21C

Thursday, October 29, 2026

Registration

8:00 AM – 9:00 AM | Location: Main Gallery

Breakfast

8:15 AM – 9:00 AM | Location: Main Gallery

Welcome & ViiV Opening Plenary: 101 Maneras de ser Humano / 101 Ways to be Human

8:45 AM – 10:00 AM | Location: Main Gallery

EXPANDING HEALTHCARE ACCESS

101 Ways to Be Human is rooted in a simple yet profound belief: Every person holds inherent worth. We are more than our nationality, culture, family history, and professional roles and titles. We are shaped and hold many identities, experiences, and ways of being that directly influence access, trust, and outcomes in HIV care and treatment.

Workshop Session I: From MIPA to Movement: How People Living with HIV Can Build Power to Transform Policy

10:10 AM – 11:10 AM | Location: Conference Room

PROTECTING PUBLIC BENEFITS

People living with HIV have been at the forefront of advancing HIV justice from the beginning of this epidemic impact in the U.S. Yet, today's rapidly changing political landscape demands more than our participation and storytelling. It requires organized community power capable of protecting public benefits, expanding access to high-quality care, and influencing policy at every level.

Using the Texas Strike Force (TSF) as a case study, this interactive workshop explores how a statewide coalition led by people living with HIV transformed lived experience into systems change. Participants will examine how TSF built leadership, developed policy expertise, cultivated relationships with decision-makers, and organized cross-sector partnerships to secure meaningful victories, including protecting access to the Texas AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP), expanding access to long-acting injectable HIV medications, advancing health insurance purchasing through ADAP, and advocating for sustainable local HIV funding.

Grounded in the Denver Principles and Meaningful Involvement of People Living with HIV (MIPA), this session demonstrates how communities can move beyond advisory roles to become architects of policy and systems change.

Participants will engage in a facilitated power-mapping exercise to identify priority issues in their own communities, map decision-makers and potential allies, and begin developing a coalition-building strategy that strengthens capacity to protect access to HIV treatment, prevention, and other essential public benefits. Attendees will leave with practical ideas, replicable organizing strategies, and a framework for building durable, community-led movements capable of advancing health equity long after individual advocacy campaigns have ended.

Speaker



Steven Vargas

Leadership Committee | Texas Strike Force

Workshop Session I: Raíces que Sanan, Comunidades que Resisten: Southern Grassroots Coalitions Building the Future of HIV Prevention Beyond Funding

10:10 AM – 11:10 AM | Location: Gallery 4

EXPANDING HEALTHCARE ACCESS

Across the U.S. South, HIV organizations navigate an increasingly difficult environment marked by funding reductions, political polarization, and growing barriers to culturally responsive care. For many communities, particularly Hispanic and Latinx populations, these pressures threaten decades of progress in HIV prevention, testing, and linkage to care.

This interactive working session argues that grassroots coalitions are no longer simply a best practice, they are essential public health infrastructure. Using nearly a decade of lessons from Central Florida's Talk Test Treat Latinx HIV Taskforce as a practical case study, participants will explore how community organizations can move beyond traditional partnerships to build resilient, shared systems.

Rather than a lecture, this workshop is designed for active participation and peer learning. We will examine coalition design as a strategy for sustainability: sharing leadership, leveraging trusted cultural spaces, and coordinating outreach. The model's efficacy is proven by embedding services in cultural spaces, the Taskforce reached over 1,750 community members, provided 361 tests, and consistently found that 28–53% of participants were first-time testers, while 35–67% had limited or no awareness of PrEP. Furthermore, they drove systems change by certifying 32 Spanish-speaking HIV testers to address regional workforce shortages.

Participants will engage in collaborative exercises to identify local assets and develop actionable implementation strategies. Attendees will leave with practical tools including a Coalition Blueprint and a First 30-Day Action Plan empowering them to strengthen community-led HIV prevention efforts where resilience, collaboration, and trust are just as important as funding.

Workshop Session I: Stages of Advocacy: Arts-based strategies for HIV education, advocacy, narrative change, and community defense

10:10 AM – 11:10 AM | Location: Gallery 5

CRIMINALIZATION & COMMUNITY DEFENSE

Discover how Descolonizarte Teatro (Desco), a Florida-based organization centering Latinx, immigrant, LGBTQ+, and other historically marginalized communities, uses theater and performance as tools for HIV education, advocacy, narrative change, and community defense.

This interactive workshop shares concrete examples from Descolonizarte Teatro's artistic and community-based work, including Forum Theater with people living with HIV, where scenes made experiences of stigma visible and invited audience members to intervene, explore alternatives, and collectively explore responses to stigma; Newspaper Theater through an HIV & AIDS timeline that uses newspaper headlines and media coverage from the beginning of the epidemic in 1981 to reveal prejudice and harmful narratives that continue to shape perceptions today; and Image Theater, storytelling, movement, and collective creation in QUEER!, a production developed alongside LGBTQ+ community members to explore identity, resilience, pride, and the power of narrative change.

Beyond exploring these examples, participants will engage in hands-on activities drawn from theater, movement, storytelling, and collective creation. Through concrete examples, games, creative exercises, and collaborative scene-building, participants will use their own lived experiences and existing strengths to explore how performance-based practices can advance HIV education, advocacy, narrative change, and community defense by amplifying lived experiences, sparking dialogue, humanizing complex issues, reducing stigma, and inspiring action.

Whether you are an advocate, educator, healthcare provider, organizer, or artist, this session offers practical, adaptable strategies for using creative approaches to strengthen HIV education, advocacy, and community engagement in your own work.

Workshop Session I: The Next Decade: Building the Future of LGBTQ+ Organizing in the South

10:10 AM – 11:10 AM | Location: Gallery 6

BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Across the South, LGBTQ+ organizations are navigating an increasingly complex landscape of legislative attacks, shrinking resources, shifting political realities, and growing community needs. In response, many organizations find themselves operating in a constant cycle of crisis management: mobilizing around the next bill, the next budget cut, or the next public attack. While this work is essential, it also raises an important question: Are we simply responding to the future, or intentionally building it?

This interactive strategy clinic creates space for experienced organizers, advocates, healthcare leaders, and community partners to step outside the urgency of today's political landscape and think collectively about what the next decade of LGBTQ+ organizing in the South should look like. Rather than presenting a prescribed model or set of best practices, Georgia Equality will facilitate a peer learning experience that draws upon the collective wisdom of participants to explore shared challenges, identify emerging opportunities, and strengthen movement leadership across the region.

The session is built around two collaborative activities designed to connect long-term vision with present-day organizational realities:

1) Participants will begin with Future Headlines, an exercise in strategic foresight where they imagine it is the year 2036 and write the newspaper headline they hope to read because of the work our movement chose to do. As a group, participants will identify recurring themes, discuss what systemic changes those headlines represent, and explore the strategic decisions required to make those futures possible.

2) The workshop then transitions into The Strategy Clinic. Upon entering the session, participants will anonymously submit the most significant organizational challenge currently facing their work—whether related to coalition building, funding, staff capacity, rural organizing, legislative advocacy, community engagement, faith partnerships, or another pressing issue. Georgia Equality will identify common themes and facilitate a collaborative problem-solving session in which participants draw upon their own experiences to workshop several of the submitted challenges. Rather than offering one "correct" solution, the clinic creates space for movement leaders to exchange practical lessons, challenge assumptions, and learn from one another's successes and failures.

The session concludes by bringing both activities together, asking participants to identify one concrete leadership commitment they can take back to their organizations over the next ninety days to help move their communities closer to the future they envisioned. Participants will leave with new strategies, stronger peer connections, and a renewed sense of shared purpose for building a more equitable South over the next decade.

Speaker



Dr. Christy Perez

Statewide Gender Policy Manager | Georgia Equality

Workship Session II: Con Cariño: Culturally Rooted Maternal HIV Care

11:20 AM – 12:20 PM | Location: Conference Room

PROTECTING PUBLIC BENEFITS

Pregnant Spanish-speaking people living with HIV face more than language barriers. They often experience fragmented healthcare, stigma, low health literacy, and discrimination related to culture, immigration status, gender identity, or sexual orientation. While interpreter services are helpful, effective maternal HIV care also relies on clear communication, cultural humility, teamwork, and strong community partnerships. These approaches help people stay involved in prenatal HIV care, support viral suppression, and prevent HIV transmission to babies.

This interactive workshop is led by a Mexican-American Outreach Medical Case Manager who brings real-world experience, cultural understanding, and proven practices to improve maternal HIV care. Participants will work through case scenarios based on real cultural situations and join in discussions. Together, they will practice cultural humility, learn inclusive communication practices, and find ways to better coordinate HIV, prenatal, and community services.

The workshop looks at cultural views on pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period that are common in many Mexican and Latino families. This includes the importance of family, relationship-based care, postpartum traditions, and community support. Participants will see how including patients' cultural beliefs, identities, and support systems in care planning can build trust and help people stay engaged in HIV care. The workshop also covers community resources that can support maternal HIV care, such as the possible role of bilingual HIV-informed doulas working with Ryan White case managers, prenatal providers, community health workers, and other healthcare team members.

Speaker

Ana Caren Jaramillo-Adams

Workship Session II: Advancing Equitable PrEP Access in the Latines Community Through Implementation Research in The South

11:20 AM – 12:20 PM | Location: Gallery 4

EXPANDING HEALTHCARE ACCESS

Due to systemic inequities, clinics often do not prioritize delivery of HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) to Latines. In our project, we created and studied community-co-designed, equity-focused strategies to improve PrEP expansion among Latines in the southern U.S.

Through a community/academic partnership (Latinos in the South and Duke University), we brought together a workgroup of local community and public health constituents with HIV/PrEP experience. The workgroup co-created health equity-focused clinic actions that centered the needs of Latines who would benefit from PrEP. The workgroup developed three clinic actions: 1) the Acción PrEP Access Assessment, 2) weekly one-on-one between a Latinos in the South staff member and a point of contact for the clinic, and 3) a bilingual, culturally tailored mass media campaign to raise awareness about PrEP. Workgroup members reported high satisfaction with the co-creation activities.

Our team then tested the co-created strategies for six months at two local clinics. We adapted our activities during implementation in response to site-level barriers. For example, hosting a sustainability planning workshop for each clinic.

To measure our success, we interviewed healthcare workers from the two implementing clinics as well as Encuentro 2024 attendees. The co-created strategies were found to be acceptable and feasible. Key determinants of successful implementation included time, resources, and leadership receptiveness. Our findings highlighted the importance of balancing rapid action with realistic implementation timelines. Future studies should test whether co-created clinic actions improves PrEP initiation and continuation among Latines.

Speaker

Samantha Fortier

Workship Session II: Informing the collective, civic classes with an organizing perspective

11:20 AM – 12:20 PM | Location: Gallery 5

CRIMINALIZATION & COMMUNITY DEFENSE

People are angry, and upset at representatives because of issues that are happening throughout the country, the world, our cities, we are losing rights, we are losing benefits, we as a people are angry and we are screaming however, many have no idea who we are screaming at or who to really hold accountable.

In Texas we are creating Civic education with an organizing capstone, we are not only teaching folks who controls what, but how to really demand answers, hold people accountable and create change locally, statewide to change outcomes in our city.

Speaker

Sofia Sepulveda

Workship Session II: De la pubertad a la perimenopausia: Fortaleciendo el liderazgo de Promotores de Salud en la salud sexual y reproductiva

11:20 AM – 12:20 PM | Location: Gallery 6

BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

La Iniciativa de Promotores de Salud de Planned Parenthood South Atlantic (PPSAT) comenzó en 2020 con poco más que una pequeña subvención inicial y un sueño. Hoy en día, cuenta con un equipo de veinte líderes de Promotores de Salud dedicados, especializados en salud sexual y reproductiva, que prestan servicios a comunidades latinas en Carolina del Norte, Carolina del Sur, y Virginia. Los Promotores de Salud de PPSAT se convierten en facilitadores capacitados, defensores compasivos de la comunidad y recursos de confianza en salud sexual dentro de sus comunidades. Promotores de Salud ahora es una parte clave del departamento de educación de PPSAT, trabajando en colaboración con el programa para jóvenes Teen Connections y con InClued, un programa enfocado en jóvenes LGBTQ+ y en profesionales trabajando con la juventud cuir. En este taller, compartiremos cómo Planned Parenthood está logrando expandir este programa mientras desarrollando un modelo sostenible de liderazgo comunitario que fortalece la capacidad organizacional. En cada etapa en el programa y en sus Promotores vemos algo desarollando, de¨la pubertad¨ de su liderazgo en la salud sexual hasta algo más maduro. Nuestros métodos pueden ser sencillos —un modelo basado en las fortalezas y recursos de la comunidad, junto con el valor fundamental de construir relaciones—, pero los resultados son poderosos.

Acompáñenos en esta dinámica presentación para conversar con los Promotores de Salud de PPSAT sobre el liderazgo, conocer historias de su desarrollo profesional y diseñar estrategias que fortalezcan el liderazgo dentro de su propia organización.

Speaker

Sergio Candelaria Morales

Lunch & Lunch Plenary

12:30 PM – 2:00 PM | Location: Main Gallery

Workshop Session III: Protecting Public Benefits

2:10 PM – 4:10 PM | Location: Conference Room

PROTECTING PUBLIC BENEFITS

Speakers



Will Ramirez

Director of Public Policy and Advocacy | Southern AIDS Coalition

Chris Cuevas

Workshop Session III: Expanding Healthcare Access

2:10 PM – 4:10 PM | Location: Gallery 4

EXPANDING HEALTHCARE ACCESS

Speakers

Rosy Mota
LCOA



William Torres
HIV/STD Social Worker | Wake County Goverment

Workshop Session III: Criminalization & Community Defense

2:10 PM – 4:10 PM | Location: Gallery 5

CRIMINALIZATION & COMMUNITY DEFENSE

Speakers

Sarah Chavez



Dr. Christy Perez
Statewide Gender Policy Manager | Georgia Equality

Workshop Session III: Building Organizational Capacity

2:10 PM – 4:10 PM | Location: Gallery 6

BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Speakers



Antonio Alanis
Artist / Grant Writer | Antonio Alanis Art



Julian Baro
Latino Commission on AIDS

Affinity Session: Trans Caucus Space

4:15 PM – 5:15 PM

Affinity Session: PLHIV

4:15 PM – 5:15 PM

Queereoke

8:00 PM – 11:59 PM | Location: Club Era; 305 S Dillard St, Durham, NC 27701

We're bringing a little Halloween spirit to Encuentro 2026 with a night of costumes & karaoke. Dress up, grab the mic, and spend the evening with us!

Friday, October 30, 2026

Breakfast

8:30 AM – 9:15 AM | Location: Main Gallery

Breakfast Plenary: Addressing Misinformation and Disinformation

9:30 AM – 10:15 AM | Location: Main Gallery

BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Speakers

Tony Macias



Charles Sanchez
Contributing Writer | POZ Magazine



Ariel Luna
Public Health Policy Strategist | Equality Federation

Panel of Experts + Table Work

10:45 AM – 12:15 PM | Location: Main Gallery

PROTECTING PUBLIC BENEFITS EXPANDING HEALTHCARE ACCESS CRIMINALIZATION & COMMUNITY DEFENSE BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Participants will engage in a work session, while hearing from experts about the growing impact of misinformation in shaping narratives about immigrant and LGBTQ+ communities. The panel will offer insights to help ground participants' discussions as they continue collaborating and strategizing about how to bring this work back to their communities.

Speakers



Will Ramirez

Director of Public Policy and Advocacy | Southern AIDS Coalition

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Rosy Mota

LCOA

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Sarah Chavez



Antonio Alanis

Artist / Grant Writer | Antonio Alanis Art



Roxana Guzman

Senior Research Associate | Latino Commission on AIDS

Lunch

12:30 PM – 1:30 PM | Location: Main Gallery

Day of the Dead Procession + Closing

1:15 PM – 2:00 PM | Location: Main Gallery