



NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US

A manifesto by people who use illegal drugs

We are among the most vilified and demonized groups in society. Simply because we use illegal drugs, people and governments often deny us our rights and dignity.

We are the “junkies” and “crackheads” of the popular media.

We are tagged as “undeserving troublemakers” even among some of those who provide services to us.

We have been hard hit by the epidemics of HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C.

We are often sent to prison or to compulsory detoxification and rehabilitation, instead of having access to the evidence-based prevention and treatment programs we need.

We suffer oppression and human rights abuses in countries waging a “war against drugs” that all too often has turned into a war against people who use drugs.

We are regularly excluded from the decisions that affect our lives and those of our brothers and sisters.

We are your sons, daughters, fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters.

And we have the same human rights as everyone else.

We have the right to meaningfully participate in decision making on issues affecting us.

We have the right to be able to make informed decisions about our health, including what we do or do not put into our bodies.

We have unique expertise and experiences and have a vital role to play in defining the health, social, legal and research policies that affect us.

Today, we demand to have a say.

We have the capacity to:

- educate and be educated;
- form organizations;
- manage funding;
- represent our community;
- serve on government consultative committees; and
- be employed in a variety of roles.

We need to:

- be treated as equals and respected for our expertise and professionalism in addressing drug use, HIV, hepatitis C, overdoses and the other health, social and human rights issues that affect our lives;
- be recognized for the work we do, often without funding, in addressing the problems facing people who use drugs;
- be adequately funded and provided with the resources to represent and address our needs;
- be supported when demonized and attacked in the media and by the community because of who we are;
- be supported in fighting the fear, shame and stigma that keep us from fully participating in our communities and from accessing health services, and that contribute to health problems like HIV and hepatitis C;
- be supported to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to be good peer educators and advocates and to run professional organizations;
- be meaningfully involved at all levels of the organizations that provide services to us;
- be included in consultative processes, as well as in decision-making or policy-making bodies and advisory structures dealing with issues affecting us; and
- be involved in research that affects us, including through community review committees and community consent processes.

As organizations of people who use drugs, our organizations have an important role to play in advocating for our rights and for our health and well-being. Our organizations:

- need to work towards being governed, managed and run by people who use illegal drugs, with power and control held by people who use drugs;
- are often best placed to ensure appropriate representation to governments, non-drug user organizations and other relevant stakeholders;
- need to be recognized as valid and valued participants in any policies and programs dealing with drug use, and must be supported and strengthened;
- need to be recognized as participants also in policies and programs dealing with other health and social issues that affect our lives, such as mental health, housing, welfare;
- must be treated with respect in all partnership arrangements with governments and other organizations;
- have a responsibility to the larger movement of people who use drugs to strive to empower and include all people who use drugs, regardless of the types and routes of drug consumption, by promoting tolerance and fostering a culture of inclusion and active participation, and respecting the diversity of backgrounds, knowledge, skills and capabilities;
- need to devote particular attention to meaningfully including women who use drugs and to ensuring that the needs of women who use drugs are addressed;
- are committed to the principles of harm reduction, peer education and support, and community development; and
- fight for the health and human rights of people who use illegal drugs.



Through collective action, we will challenge existing oppressive drug laws, policies and programs, and work with governments and international agencies to formulate evidence-based policies and programs that respect our human rights and dignity and protect and promote our health.

And we stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in other countries who often suffer great abuses of their human rights. We demand that our governments take action in our countries, but also at the international level, so that our health and human rights are respected, protected and promoted, and we are involved in all decisions that affect our lives.

*We are part of the solution,
not part of the problem!*



This manifesto was made by people who use drugs who participated in the consultations of the project on greater involvement of people who use drugs undertaken by the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, the Open Society Institute Public Health Program, and the International HIV/AIDS Alliance. It is based on a similar manifesto developed in Canada (as part of work undertaken by the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users, and CACTUS Montréal), and is endorsed by the International Network of People Who Use Drugs (INPUD). Participants in the project expressed their hope that people who use drugs around the world will either adopt this manifesto, or use it as the basis for creating their own manifesto.

Copies of this manifesto and other documents on greater involvement of people who use drugs are available on the websites of the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network (www.aidslaw.ca), Open Society Institute (www.soros.org/initiatives/health/focus/ihrd), International HIV/AIDS Alliance (www.aidsalliance.org), and International Network of People Who Use Drugs (www.inpud.org). Reproduction of the manifesto is encouraged, as is adaptation of its contents. For further information, contact the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network at info@aidslaw.ca.

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