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## **Young Women Will Not Be Shamed To Talk About Their Bodies & Lives!**

Young women will take the stage at the HIVR4P2018 Closing Ceremony! Their message is: our choices, our voices and our priorities must be heard.

At this conference, we have heard a lot ABOUT young women, but too little FROM young women.

Yesterday, we as the Young Women's Leadership Initiative – young women leaders and advocates – took over the Advocates Corner to make our voices heard to the researchers, policy and decision makers of this conference.

We joined a long history of activists for the rights of women living with HIV in raising a Visible Panty Line. The Visible Panty Line symbolises the things that we as women are told to keep hidden, to be quiet about and to be ashamed of. We refuse to hide. We refuse to be silent. We refuse to be ashamed.

The Marriott Madrid Auditorium Hotel management forced us to remove the panty line – or they would tear the Advocates Corner down. They told us our panties – and therefore our advocacy – was offensive.

The voices and experiences and leadership of young women is not offensive. It is absolutely necessary if we are to end this epidemic and fulfil the rights, choices and agency of everyone living with or vulnerable to acquiring HIV.

We come here today to raise the Visible Panty Line and to say this: without us you will not end this epidemic.

Any HIV prevention conference has a duty and an obligation to ensure our presence, our inclusion and our leadership. You talk about developing HIV options for US – well, we are here. Ask us what we think. Our challenge to you is this: as you leave this conference, carry our voices and our message with you.

The YWLI will lead the action but will be supported by the community of prevention advocates, in solidarity. Among the speakers are: Maximina Jokonya (Zimbabwe), Gcobisa Madlolo (South Africa), Cleopatra Makura (Zimbabwe), Nakato Martha (Uganda), Namwanje Sahakirah (Uganda) and Audrey Nosenga (Zimbabwe).

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