

## Spotlight on Arianna Lint: Women Making a Difference

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*The Well Project interviews Arianna Lint, Community Advisory Board member and A Girl Like Me blogger, for our "Spotlight: Women Making a Difference" series.*

### **What is the goal of your advocacy work? Do you have a specific focus?**

Advocacy work is innate in me, which is why I studied Law and Political Sciences in my country, Peru. When I became a refugee I became aware that we, TransLatinas, are misunderstood and misclassified. In the USA, we are second-class citizens. I think we all have the right to live in this country of opportunities with the same dignity of any citizen.

Proudly being a Transgender and Refugee woman makes me work for my community, a community that has always existed around us, and that never gave value to people in the Transgender community. It is my focus and my purpose.

### **Why is it important to you to reach out to women specifically?**

I believe that we, as women, are powerful and have the strength to understand others and in the end to always put our decisions out front and on the table. So as a transgender woman I feel proud to belong to this community and proud of having been invited by The Well Project to collaborate and add a TransLatin@s woman's voice, to work together. Many Latinas are getting infected every day, just by staying home as housewives. Or by simply being the negative partner helping her positive partner with the HIV treatment. Women have an important role in changing the structure and can provide valid ideas to achieve a better quality of life.

### **Do you think HIV positive women face unique challenges? What are they?**

Definitely, we all face challenges, especially in my community, the Transgender community, where studies indicate that most of us are infected by our own partners. And then the only treatment that many receive is in clinics where we are judged and don't receive the attention we need. Many of the doctors don't feel comfortable attending to us correctly. As positive women we face several challenges of stigma, sexism, having to negotiate safe sex, having to get educated to understand our lab reports, and learn how to navigate this illness without letting it take you or get you stressed. Women have the voice and the bond to work on improving the quality of life of each powerful and positive woman living in the USA.

### **What is the thing you are most proud of, professionally or personally?**

Professionally, I think I have demonstrated that my work is valued, that the projects that I have been in charge of have been completed and still exist, such as the program for transgender people that I created in South Florida. Now with my new agency I am working on creating respect awareness. Transgender women help and contribute to this country, to this society. But we need respect and tolerance. Often, being a positive Transgender woman is a death sentence, for all of us face so much violence and discrimination. Trans organizations should be welcomed and helped, not mistreated.

Personally I feel proud of being MYSELF, of being a transgender woman whose life has been based on breaking barriers of misunderstanding. But also, by being who I am, by living my own gender identity and being the woman that I am, I have demonstrated that work is the best credential. Who told us that life would be easy? No one, but it is best to live it with DIGNITY.

### **If you could visit one place in the world, where would it be?**

Definitely to return to my country as I am now, to reach my country a triumphant woman. Unfortunately TransLatinas who are refugees have no status, so it becomes impossible. I have a Withholding and Removal status, so I belong to an immigration status in which it becomes impossible for me to return to Peru, where my closest relatives live, those who supported me so much during this transition. This immigration status makes it impossible for me to even leave the USA; it's as if I live in a cage.

So given my circumstances, I would love to visit Hawaii. Taking a cruise there would be fabulous... that would make me happy.

### **What advice or information would you offer a woman newly diagnosed with HIV?**

The best advice is to get educated. I have always said that HIV is not the main problem and that the main problem is that we know nothing about HIV. Being able to say that you are positive and UNDETECTABLE is a bridge to educate others about this illness. Staying in treatment and being adherent gives us the strength to fight for our beliefs. A newly diagnosed person needs the help and support of everyone, especially those angels called PEERS.

### **Can you share a story that illustrates how you've been successful in working**

## with women living with HIV?

Unfortunately my community is in a state of emergency. Transgender women are misclassified in the MSM group, which only makes our lives more miserable and doesn't help at all. We don't have data to measure this problem. And the federal agencies play the part of Marie Antoinette in the French war. When told her people were hungry she answered, "If there is no good bread, let them eat cake." Agencies simply don't understand the problem. When it comes to HIV, the transgender community is being mistreated and ignored, no matter that many of us have proven that we do the work. The transgender women at ICE detention centers have to interrupt their treatment, since they are not provided long-term medication.

In reality transgender women are successful, but people prefer to label us and not see the reality. In the last 2020 National HIV Strategy we were completely ignored, in terms of data, prevention benefits and access to care. In order to be successful, what we need is data and numbers.

## How do you use The Well Project personally? In your work?

The Well Project is a family, in which we gather our strengths. United, the women are very powerful; by participating, we are collaborating with our own lives. Being on the right side of history makes me feel very comfortable with this great organization.

Professionally, giving me the opportunity to write a blog and share my voice and the ideas of the community in [Una Chica Como Yo](#) has proven that the Hispanic voice of trans-Latina women has a safe space. Hopefully we'll also receive some financial assistance, that's what we need.

## What difference has The Well Project made in your life and work?

A great difference is that I feel safe and protected by other women like me, who only wish the best for all of us. The Well Project has been a great support to start my own organization. We are a family and we all love and respect each other. The Well Project is THE BEST!!!

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