



I AIN'T IN THAT GROUP!

FT. Lauderdale, FL., When it comes to the conversation of HIV/AIDS many of us quickly dismiss ourselves from the conversation or paying attention because we feel, 'I ain't in that group!' You can't tell just by looking at someone what is their status, nor can you tell by where they live or what they do for a living. So the new news is we are all in that group.

Having spent time in various places in Ft. Lauderdale for the education, the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS related diseases one question keeps coming forward, 'How to reach the African American Community?' and exactly why would this question be posed? It is because these institutions are seeing an epidemic grow within our community. Although we represent 14% of the population in the US, we also represent over 50% of the new cases of HIV/AIDS. Broward County is the number one and the fastest growing county of AIDS and HIV cases in the United States. All groups are representative in these numbers - married, single, young, old, GLBT, and heterosexual.

This section of the paper is named Creating Community, Arts and Culture. Some things as a culture and as a community we need to focus on to stabilize and to stop this epidemic. Each week we bring a message of HIV/AIDS awareness through art and its message from the artist. This is a small contribution through expressionism of the visual arts to the problem that is rising in disproportionate numbers as a community. It is also a huge contribution for the artists to create the message, to expose their feelings and themselves for the community. So why use art? It is because art heals, everyone can see something in art that touches their soul or evokes an emotion which eventually leads to a conversation.

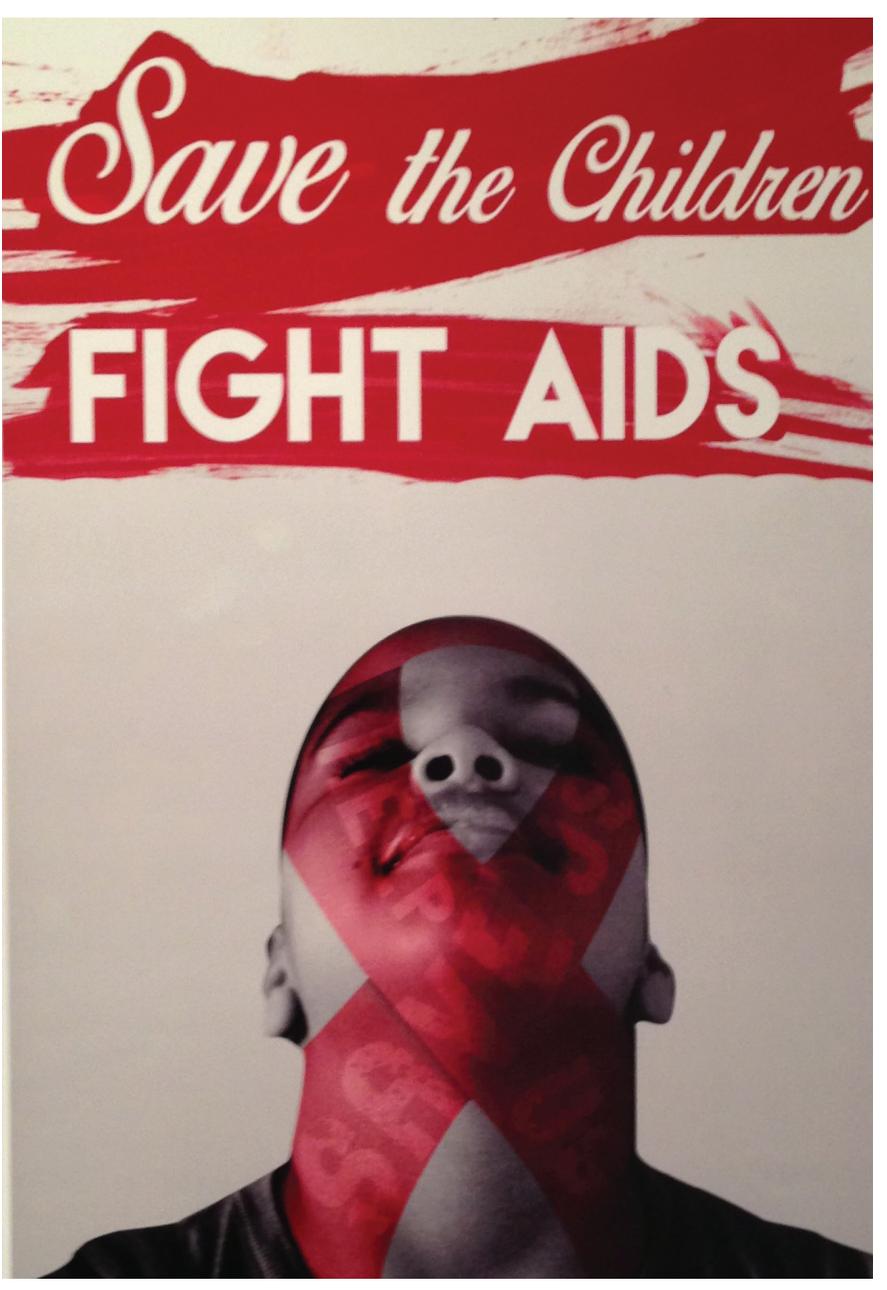
This leaves me as the writer and the artist to continue to seek each week a message that can start a conversation, continue a conversation, and for individuals/groups to take action. In honor of National AIDS Awareness Month and to you, the community. I have found the following excerpts from TheBody.com an online magazine for us to take notice and better care of ourselves. These are some of the causes for the AIDS epidemic in the BLACK community:

Low Health Literacy
Bethsheba Johnson, G.N.P.-B.C., A.A.H.I.V.S., Associate Medical Director, St. Hope Foundation, Houston

Health literacy is the ability to use written materials to function in health care settings and to maintain one's health and the skills needed to advocate for and request needed clarification. However, a shocking number of Americans, especially those of color, are lacking these skills. Previous research suggests that a low level of health literacy is an underlying factor that explains racial disparities in the prevalence and incidence of HIV/AIDS.

Stigma
Rae Lewis-Thornton, Activist, Blogger at Diva Living With AIDS, Chicago

The stigma around HIV created an enormous amount of shame for people living with HIV and their family. This stigma is embedded in American culture. In the 21st century it's become politically incorrect to talk negatively about HIV and people living with HIV openly, but the whispers float in our society just like the air we breathe. I can understand at one level the black community saying, "Not Me!" I mean who wants to admit that HIV is rampant in their community. Shoot, I kept my infection a secret for seven years because I was afraid that people would judge me. Still today, I get nasty tweets about my dating and sex life, but I tackle it head on.



Stigma for the most part drives this disease in many ways. Let me explain. People are afraid of going to get tested for fear that they will be judged. Many private doctors will ask their patient, "Why do you think you need an HIV test?" And by doing so, their behavior has been called into question. While other doctors have gone as far as to say, "You don't need a test, you're in a monogamous relationship" or "you're married." When in fact, everyone -- including the doctor -- needs an HIV test. Other options for testing are in a HIV clinic or at a Department of Public Health and many people are afraid of being "spotted" in one of these places.

Homophobia
Kenyon Farrow, Communications Manager, Housing Works, New York

Homophobia is a major factor that's driving HIV rates in black communities. We're told we're worthless by the churches we attend. Black LGBT youth are not getting a comprehensive sex education in schools that includes sexuality across the spectrum, so it's irrelevant to them.

But homophobia also makes straight black people vulnerable to HIV infection. As long as black women are only worried about if their boyfriends and husbands aren't bisexual, then they're less likely to consider practicing safer sex with heterosexual men, which is the overwhelming reason why black women are contracting HIV -- from heterosexual men -- but we don't hear that on black radio or in Tyler Perry movies.

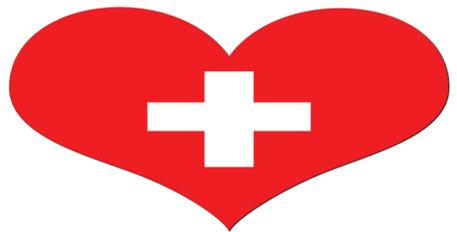
Lack of Comprehensive Sex Education
Kellee Terrell, News Editor, TheBody.com, New York

Thanks to former Presidents George Bush and Bill Clinton, since 1997, our federal government has invested almost 1.5 billion in abstinence-only education, while numerous studies have shown that these programs are completely ineffective in delaying sex. And in the end, what this means is that our youths have not received the crucial information that they need to protect them and ward off unwanted pregnancies and STDs, including HIV. And despite President Obama channeling more federal funds to comprehensive sex education, this does not mean that most schools across the country are incorporating these lessons into their curriculum or that these lessons are LGBT friendly.

The article goes on into additional areas such as:

- Mass Incarceration
- Untreated and Undiagnosed STD's
- Lack of Access to Quality Health Care
- Late Testing
- Poverty
- Gender Inequality

These excerpts were picked purposely because they echo those conversations by the groups who are here to best serve the community in the ever increasing epidemic.



When you see this symbol with the plus sign it means that you can have a conversation with the person who is wearing it to learn more about AIDS and HIV. Remember 1 in 5 do not know their personal status.

ribbons for the children

YOUTH ART EXHIBIT AND OPENING RECEPTION

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2015
 World AIDS Museum
 1201 NE 26TH STREET #11,
 WILTON MANORS

6:00PM - 7:30PM
 FEATURING
 Mr. Bobby Henry
 Program at 6:30 pm

TALENTED LOCAL YOUNG ARTISTS HONOR
 WORLD AIDS DAY THROUGH THEIR
 ARTISTIC INTERPRETATION

*Event is free and open to the public
 Refreshments will be served*

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT JEAN
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