What Would You Do?

March 20, 2013 By Lora René Tucker

POZ blogger Lora René Tucker is a social worker, a poet and an African-American woman living with HIV. In this edited excerpt from her blog post "What Would King Do?" she pays tribute to Martin Luther King Jr. and wonders what role he'd play if he were alive. A quote at a writer's workshop inspired her to write a commemorative poem.

I find myself deeply shaken by how people are treating each other. It is as if people are forgetting how to be an open community, closing ranks via a checklist titled "Like or Not Like Me" and not effectively engaging and communicating with each other. Isn't that crazy? In an era where there are more devices for keeping in touch, no one is really touching each other, let alone looking up.

In my shaken state, I started to wonder what would Martin Luther King Jr. do if he were around in the 21st century, in the age of AIDS, the Tea Party and so-called "post-racism"? What would he do with a country suffering from historical amnesia?

What would he say about an African American in the White House and African Americans becoming infected with hiv? How would he handle the new horrors of terrorism in neighborhoods from Newark, New Jersey, to Newtown, Connecticut? Could King be one of our senior leaders? I believe he would be constantly reminding us to wake up, don't fall asleep and don't forget.

I want to share part of a poem that I wrote in commemoration of MLK. Remember, I do not capitalize hiv/aids.

—Lora René Tucker
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(The quote, "Write what should not be forgotten," by author Isabel Allende inspired the poem.)

DO NOT FORGET

Do not forget that no one can get "full blown aids,"
That aids is full blown hiv
That people with hiv are more vulnerable to others' "cooties."

Do not forget that a kiss is just a kiss,
That status is not attached to an acronym;
that an acronym does not mean damaged goods,
And that a disease does not identify an individual.

Do not forget that love does not mean sex
but safe sex means loving oneself,
and people deserve to love without judgment.

Do not forget that the chemical warfare
saving many lives is not a cure,
That silence equals death, stigma kills,
and hiv does not discriminate.

Do not forget that ACT UP
acted up for all of us,
That GMHC helps everyone in crisis,

That it isn’t enough to be straight but not narrow,
But it is important to be straight up.

Do not forget
That aids is not just an acronym
That life is not just a four letter word.

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