In Their Words

A new anthology by and for black gay and bisexual men

November 1, 2008 By Kellee Terrell

“The AIDS [community] rarely speaks about black gay and bisexual men, and when they do, they speak for them,” says Pato Hebert, associate director of education at the AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLA). To reverse this dynamic, APLA published *To Be Left With the Body*—a collection of prose, poetry, essays and photography that gives voice to 16 artists of color. The compilation explores topics ranging from homophobia and racism to antiretrovirals and self-love.

Given that in parts of the United States, almost half of all black men who have sex with men (MSM) are HIV positive, Hebert stresses we must view this epidemic through a different lens—the lens of those who are disproportionately affected. “We understand HIV from a biological point of view, but we want to look at the social, spiritual and cultural context of how [the disease] impacts these men’s lives.” He hopes the artists’ contributions provide insight on how to better prevent other black MSM from contracting HIV.

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