Redemption Song

NBC’s crime drama finally gets HIV right.

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The stories on *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit* are often “ripped from the headlines,” so it’s no surprise that the hit series often borrows from Fox News’s playbook: fear mongering and sensationalism. Remember the down-low and gay HIV superstrain plotlines?

But its October 28 episode, “Retro”—about an HIV-positive mother and her AIDS denialist doctor on trial for murder because they refused to give her daughter antiretrovirals—shocked us in a good way.

“Retro” shed light on issues often overlooked on television, such as the importance of starting treatment early when needed and the reality that HIV-positive mothers can have HIV-negative babies. It also debunked the myth that HIV does not cause AIDS. Granted, the episode had its fair share of melodrama. We get it; it can’t come off as an hour-long PSA.

While we’re not giving the show’s creator Dick Wolf a pass for his past depictions of HIV, storylines like this one make us feel less like special victims.

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