Mexicanos y HIV

Using deities to teach AIDS info

September 1, 2008 By Max Zimbert

Our Lady of Guadalupe, the holiest of Mexican images, dates from the 16th century. Among her modern blessings: encouraging immigrants from Mexico to discuss sex and HIV.

Mexicans arriving in the U.S. “[often] don’t know much about HIV,” says Javier Soriano, who created the New York City–based Mexicanos Unidos to help fix that. Using the image of Our Lady on the group’s website eases people’s fears, Soriano says, and “[helps start] a conversation” about HIV and sex.

Another familiar face on the group’s website: their health ambassador, Mexican pop star Bibyanna (see her at mexicanosunidos.org/video7.html). Bibyanna also promotes HIV prevention on her weekly radio show.

This past summer, Soriano’s project visited every Mexican health group in New York City, hosting workshops on HIV/AIDS, other STDs and fighting homophobia—offering many immigrants their very first stateside session on sex education.

For more, contact mexicanosunidos.org; 718.573.9179.

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