Mom and Son Are Both LGBTQ Ministers Honored for Their HIV Work

The duo runs Relationships Unleashed, a Black-led LGBTQ group in Tennessee that helps folks living with HIV.

May 3, 2021 By Trent Straube

Gwendolyn Clemons lost a transgender sister to AIDS in 1991. She didn't want to see another family endure that ordeal, so in 2014, she and her son, Davin, founded Relationships Unleased, a Black-led nonprofit in Memphis that focuses on helping people living with HIV/AIDS. This spring, the 32nd Annual GLAAD Media Awards, which honor fair and accurate LGBTQ representations in the media, shined a spotlight on Gwendolyn and Davin, both of whom are ministers and identify as LGBTQ.

> https://t.co/NeZJUZ21FW Thank you @memphisnews for the local news coverage of @UnleashedKWAM non profit work here in Memphis, TN. For more information visit https://t.co/DQ7KGkkX48 @geequeme_gwen GET READY! GET READY!! #iamunleashed #blacklivesmatter @glaad
>
> — Davin D. Clemons (@DavinClemons) April 22, 2021

During the awards ceremony, they appeared in a video that highlighted their work (watch it at the top of this article). "Our goal is to liberate Black and brown people through education, empowerment and enrichment," Davin said in the GLAAD video. "We offer all types of treatment and support for people who are living with HIV. We help them take care of themselves and their families—especially through this year, this pandemic."

Gwendolyn has an MBA and has worked in criminal justice for over three decades; Davin has a doctoral degree in leadership in ministry. He's also a former police officer and LGBTQ liaison with the Memphis Police Department, which he sued in 2014 for discrimination.

Both mother and son are elders at the Cathedral of Praise Church of Memphis. They also founded The Unleashed Voice Media Marketing Firm, LLC, which has produced a radio show, a podcast and a national LGBTQ magazine.

NEW PODCAST ALERT!

Posted by Relationship Unleashed a Nonprofit 501 c3 Organization on Saturday, May 1, 2021

The Memphis Commercial Appeal newspaper and The Associated Press recently highlighted their accomplishments at Relationships Unleashed, noting that, according to AIDSVu, "Memphis has high rates of HIV: In 2018, 6,090 people were living with HIV in Memphis, and 84% of that population was Black."

Last year, the nonprofit received a grant from the COMPASS Initiative—the name stands for "COMmitment to Partnership in Addressing HIV/AIDS in Southern States." Gilead Sciences, which manufactures numerous blockbuster HIV medications, launched the COMPASS initiative in 2017, dedicating $100 million over a decade to tackle HIV in the South. Each year, the initiative awards millions of dollars in grants to local groups.

In general, the grantees receive COMPASS funding for programs that reduce HIV stigma, raise awareness of HIV, build organizational capacity, tackle substance use and promote mental health, trauma-informed care and well-being. The grantees are selected by four organizations referred to coordinating centers. They include:

- Emory University Rollins School of Public Health
- Southern AIDS Coalition
- University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work
- Wake Forest University School of Divinity.

To learn more about COMPASS on POZ.com, read about the 2019 grantees, the 2020 grantees, the

debut of the initiative, the launch of seven new interventions to reduce stigma and the launch earlier this year, thanks to a $5 million grant, of faith-based coordinating center to address the HIV epidemic in the South.

Thank you @memphisnews for the local news coverage of our non profit @UnleashedKWAM Relationship Unleashed! Our work is hard but it is very necessary and we love ❤ what we do! #iamunleashed #38126 #frontpage #BIGGOD @glaad pic.twitter.com/zPoCYHAeQN

— Rship Unleashed (@UnleashedKWAM) April 25, 2021

Did you know that in 2019, African Americans represented 13% of the U.S. population but 43% of new HIV cases? In the South, they accounted for 52% of HIV diagnoses. You can learn more about HIV among African Americans—and several other minority populations—by visiting the HIV/AIDS Basics on POZ.com and clicking on the “HIV in Specific Populations” section. And check out the information in the write up for 2021’s National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (#NBHAAD).

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