Bringing U=U to My Hispanic Community

This is a guest blog by Lillibeth Gonzalez. Lillibeth shares why U=U is so important to her and how she gets the word out in her community. Lilibeth is a longterm survivor of HIV and currently works at GMHC in New York City.

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By Lilllibeth Gonzalez

When I first met Bruce was at the Reunion Latina in 2016, he approached me and asked have you heard of UEqualsU? I responded yes from you! I was already following him on Facebook. But I also had a thought, so “I’ve been undetectable for 13 years” and not knowing this information; my then-husband would remove his condom I was unaware of this of course he would tell me afterwards.

Meeting Bruce has changed my whole world, I had internal stigma due to providers always using the word “Infected” that stigmatizing language keeps you in a silent mode, suffering inside saying to myself God I’m infected - I don’t want to be responsible for passing HIV on to someone. That language is very damaging, up to this date they still use it - but now I interrupt them and explain.

I go to all communities (mostly Spanish) and speak about UEqualsU, I go to salons, tailor shops I inform everyone. I ask them have you heard of UEqualsU In Spanish & English? They do not know what I’m talking about, I let them know if someone is HIV positive and on treatment and undetectable, they cannot pass the virus. I inform them that this is evidence-based science! They are surprised, we talk about how HIV stigmatizes a person living with HIV, how liberating it is to know and share this information with your communities. They leave more informed and open to share what they have learned.

Lillibeth (center, in hat) with other U=U activists

I speak about UEqualsU to strangers in the train, taxi drivers, at family functions, in the street. I get very involved with the Latino community. My community is stigmatized both by society and peers, due to upbringing. We Don’t Talk about these things, you must be hush. I get a lot of push back from people, because they say this is no good, people are going to explore widely; I explain to them this is not a license to go sex crazy, this is solely for PLWH to get to undetectable levels so they can live a happy healthy life without stigma and continue to have healthy sex, and even have a relationship and or a family. Like me, I’m very happy due to UEqualsU #Bodegaopen

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