HIV and the Black Community

February 7, 2012 By Aundaray Guess

If you're reading this on Tuesday February 7th, then you probably may or may not be aware that it's National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. Before its stated I feel that every day should be an awareness day when it comes to HIV/AIDS and that such a important issue should not only focus on the black community.

But with that we must realize that when it comes to HIV/AIDS, the greatest impact is happening in the 'black' community. And the disease has morphed and has shown no bias, thus anyone and everyone is affected. Especially if you're having non-protective sex. And this includes those in a monogamous relationship. You may be monogamous but your partner may have a different definition of what monogamy means.

I feel this day is a day to really focus on the awareness of HIV and to put some thought into how it involves us. I truly do feel that we all have HIV as we are either infected or affected. Some may feel they are not affected in any way, but the insidious thing about HIV is that because of the stigma of it, you may have a person close to you who is infected but has not disclosed to you based on their fear of being rejected. They're not disclosing to be deceptive but because they're coming from a place of fear. I should know as I kept my status only to myself out of fear of what people thought of me or choosing to no longer associate with me. I now know its their lost if they have ended our relationship but that realization took years for me to discover.

Awareness means knowing your status. It's an opportunity for those in a relationship to go get tested together. Testing shouldn't be used as a tool of whether or not there's mistrust but used as part of the building of a healthy relationship. It's not a time to place blame on black men or accuse someone of being on the DL. A condom shouldn't signify trust issues but instead be seen as a 'care' issue. A time when two people can say I care enough about you that I want us to practice safe sex. For those not in a relationship yet having sex, awareness means you're being proactive with your health and not waiting until something develops before you take action. By waiting you may do more damage when you had the window of opportunity to slow down the effects of the disease. In addition not putting others at risk simply because you 'don't know' your status.

Awareness is educating yourself on what this disease is and showing compassion and understanding to those who have it. Avoiding someone with the disease is not compassion as well as pretending you're not affected. Unfriending someone on social media sites such as Facebook or putting a mandate of 'don't ask, don't tell' as a condition of your relationship is not showing compassion. For that person who has the disease they may be at a point where they need support and you have that ability to either save a life as mental health issues like depression usually follows a person being diagnosed or you can be the one that helps them discover what it means to have HIV at the same time learning yourself what it means.

Awareness is starting to put our health first. We may be dealing with poverty, racism or other ism’s as well as other b.s. society throws our way, but without your health you have nothing. It must rise from the bottom of the list and be in the first position.

Awareness is knowing that it’s not just a black disease or a man disease or a gay disease. Although we’re taking a day to recognize a particular group, we shouldn’t get lost in the naming but really looking at the word ’awareness’ and ask ourselves, whether we’re infected or affected, what does this day means to me. And hopefully you come to the realization as stated before.

We all have HIV.

Be aware.

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/blog/hiv-and-the-black-co