HIV Prevention, Care and Awareness Are Acts of Love

Investing in Black health means to invest in the mental, physical, emotional and metaphysical.

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Tamara Stephney

The following post is from guest blogger Tamara Stephney of Abounding Prosperities.

February is Black History Month, and each February 7 marks National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. Both are opportunities to celebrate and acknowledge the part of me that I call a “black woman!” My blackness has given me experiences in life that have exposed me to some amazing people and places. But it has also educated me that being equal and receiving equitable treatment in many walks of life has not always been the story. That’s my experience and the experience of so many people who look like me.

The month signifies the beauty of acknowledging our stories and understanding our differences, as well as the importance of the work still to be done. Being a single black mother raising four kids, I always stress the importance of knowing where your culture has been and where we are now. And that really speaks to the HIV/AIDS work that I do in and around the community. Not only do I stress those beliefs to my children, I bridge those beliefs in educating the community. Historically we have always been disproportionately impacted by HIV/AIDS and we still are.

Investing in black health is essentially who I am as a person. The stock of my investment is love. I say love because it is in my belief that it's the only universal investment we can give. Love can look like many things such as time, resources, a listening ear, availability, vulnerability, an open arm, and even a closed arm. Investing in black health means to invest in the mental, physical, emotional, and metaphysical. It is the opportunity to pour into all parts of the human experience and that is what I try to do personally and professionally.

As a mother, a daughter, an advocate, an ally, and member of this community, this month is a reminder that it is my duty to act under the responsibilities of all those roles to educate and invest in my community – even those who are not a part or supportive of it. Now more than ever we sit in a time where our social and political landscape gives people permission to dismiss people's feelings, rights, and respect. This makes me appreciate Black History Month and National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day even more today. They give me yet another platform to do the work in which my love and my life are anchored and to bring awareness and my own version of care and love to communities of color.

Tamara Stephney is associate director at Abounding Prosperities, a Southern HIV Impact Fund grantee. This blog is part of the AIDS United campaign, Honoring #BlackHistory Means Investing in #BlackHealth, to highlight partners and grantees working to address the persistent and disparate impact of HIV on Black communities in recognition of Black History Month and National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. Learn more about how you can raise awareness and end HIV stigma here.

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