Inspiring HIV Quotes From Gay, Bi, Queer and SGL Black Leaders

In honor of National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day 2020.

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The theme of this year's National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (NBHAAD) offers an important reminder for us that the work to stop HIV is a community process. Announced by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the theme "We're in This, Together" is a call to action for each of us.

To learn more about what this kind of collaborative action looks like in communities, AIDS United reached out to our FREE Leadership Development Program inaugural cohort of Black gay, bisexual, queer and same-gender-loving men working in HIV. This is what they had to say.

"My call to action is kindness: kindness to ourselves in thought and kindness to others in speech. We cannot effectively fight for a better, more equitable world without affording ourselves kindness."
—Lorenzo Lewis, THRIVE Support Services programs manager
Pronouns: He/Him/His

"I think we need to prioritize supporting novel, alternative and healthier masculinities for Black GBQ/SGL men. I see toxic, maladaptive masculinities as being one of the largest challenges impeding people feeling comfortable and safe enough getting something as simple as a screening [for HIV and sexually transmitted infections, STIs].... I think in recent years a lot of the conversation has focused on stigma, but the resistance and hesitation I see runs deeper. Creating more compassionate and affirming spaces for Black men existing as they are is crucial, but I also would like a national push to create the infrastructure to support larger cultural transformations within the Black community. This focus would impact not just Black SGL/GBQ men, but people that are frequently their sexual and romantic partners, including Black cis and trans women. They are also deserving of safety, and the lack or instability of it constitutes a public health emergency in its own right."
—Kendall Granberry, Chicago Center for HIV Elimination outreach specialist
Pronouns: They/Them/Theirs

"HIV continues to have a disproportionate impact in the Black community. We must continue to encourage HIV health screenings as a part of our routine care, for there is POWER in knowing!

Let’s encourage prevention and safer sex practices, provide education, awareness and advocacy. Let’s eliminate stigma, address racial and social justice issues regarding medical access, care and treatment for people of color. We must holistically support individuals who are living with the disparity. Together we can eradicate HIV!”
—J. Donté Prayer, North Carolina AIDS Action Network health access coordinator
Pronouns: He/Him/His

“At Abounding Prosperity, our call to action is to have the community join us for our grand opening of the new Hope Health and Wellness Center along with our Abounding Prosperity Community Pharmacy. We are calling on leaders and communities to support Black activists in a collective effort to seek social, political, economic and health justice for Black communities. We are also asking that the same people challenge their own bias, to celebrate the Black histories that have been so often negated from our cultural pantheon.”
—Dwayne Holmes, Abounding Prosperity, Inc. community intervention specialist
Pronouns: He/Him/His

“I got into doing this work because I wanted to educate myself and look at ways of supporting my friend as well as other people who didn’t have a support system. Several years later I worked as a case manager for people living with HIV and those at high risk. We are supporting our partner organization Empower U Community Health on NBHAAD.”
—Tremaine Jones, Freedom Fund project director
Pronouns: He/Him/His or They/Them/Theirs

“I would suggest…hashtagging #HIVisNOT and following it with empowering and educational statements. This would look like: #HIVisNOT a determinant of one’s value, #HIVisNOT a death sentence, #HIVisNOT is not a limitation, etc. I believe social media call to actions…are presently one of the best ways to reach our communities.”
—Walter Rucker, Pridelines case manager
Pronouns: He/Him/His

“I would hope that people could acknowledge the reality of HIV without stigmatizing it. I believe that in today’s world people either don’t take it seriously enough or it’s stigmatized. The only thing that will change this is learning more about it as well as education around prevention.”
—Ashlie Jacob Pollard, Pridelines director of administration
Pronouns: Any

“It is my desire that our community will focus on their health holistically. If we are to be successful, we all need to focus on self, protecting ourselves and knowing what we are doing and putting in our bodies. We all are well when we begin to protect ourselves, which in return protects our community. Testing is knowledge. Knowledge is power. And power is love.”
—Gjvar Payne, Capitol Area Reentry Program, Inc. deputy director
Pronouns: He/Him/His

As we mark National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, it’s important to remember that it will take all

of us to end HIV. How will you join the fight to stop HIV together?

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