# National Latino AIDS Awareness Day [VIDEO]

October 15, 2008 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

Black people are by far the most disproportionately impacted by HIV/AIDS in the United States, but Latino people are unfortunately next in line. Promoting HIV prevention and testing in the Latino community is an urgent need.

That's why I was thrilled to attend last week the New York City kickoff event in Spanish Harlem for National Latino AIDS Awareness Day (NLAAD), which is observed annually on October 15. The highlight of the event was an appearance by Miss Universe 2008 Dayana Mendoza taking a rapid HIV test (and yes, she is stunning in person).

I enjoyed the diversity of the participants at the event. The multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-racial aspects of the Latino community were well represented. What was most satisfying to me, however, was that LGBT folks were not forgotten.

The necessity of combating homophobia in the Latino community as a way to address HIV stigma was mentioned by Lillian Rodriguez Lopez of the Hispanic Federation and Guillermo Chacon of the Latino Commission on AIDS. Also, Andres Valdez of the Hispanic AIDS Forum talked about the results of a new study on HIV stigma and homophobia in the Latino community (unfortunately, the results confirmed what many of us believed--HIV stigma is high in the Latino community and straight Latino men in particular equate HIV with gay men).

The example of LGBT awareness that made the most impact on me took me by surprise. Walter Perez, a choreographer of tango and other Latino dances, presented an all-male dancing duo. The room grew eerily quiet. I looked for reaction from the crowd as the men performed. As the sensuous dance progressed, the discomfort on the faces of many people in the audience turned into joy. That moment gave me unexpected hope for the success of outreach to the Latino community on HIV prevention and testing.

Watch Miss Universe 2008 take her HIV test during the NLAAD event:

Click here to read "New Ad Campaign Confronts HIV Stigma in Spanish" on poz.com about a series of public service announcements launched today by the Kaiser Family Foundation and Univision featuring the real stories of Latinos living with HIV and their loved ones.

Also, please click here to read “Reaching Latinos with New Media for National Latino AIDS Awareness Day” on the AIDS.gov blog in English (clic aquí para leer este artículo en español)--it features Liliana Rañón, director of NLAAD, and me (self-promotion, I know, but it’s a good read nonetheless!).

---

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.poz.com/blog/national-latino