Are We Ready for 2013

January 8, 2013 By Phill Wilson

On behalf of the Black AIDS Insititute, I'd like to wish you a Happy New Year. We hope your holiday season was a joyous one.

One of my holiday traditions is to spend the evening with Alvin Ailey dance theater. Anyone who is an Alvin Ailey fan or aficiando knows the classic piece, Revelation, a tribute to Alvin's talent and an artifact of his artistry. My favorite dance from Revelations is "Ready" in the second movement. The refrain of the song goes, "I wanna be ready." The piece probably resonates with me because my own personal mortality is never far from the top of my mind. I regularly ask myself, "If the other shoe drops. am I ready to go?"

I try to challenge myself to live my life without regrets. As we prepare for a new year, a new chapter, a new opportunity to end the AIDS epidemic, this might be the time to collectively ask ourselves, "Are we ready to end the AIDS epidemic?" Do we know what we need to know and, if not, how do we learn it? Do we have the tools that we need, and, if not, how do we build it? Do we have the commitment to do what's necessary and, if not, how do we find it?

In 2013 the Black AIDS Institute is launching a new strategic vision on how to end the AIDS epidemic in Black communities. We've developed 5 strategic objectives to help us get there:

1. First and foremost, we need to fully implement the Affordable Care Act. That includes Medicaid expansion, advocating for appropriate essential health benefits and focusing on creating health exchanges that respond to the needs of people living with HIV.
2. We want to help people living with HIV to live open lives without fear of discrimination, violence and/or death.
3. We want to increase demand for treatment.
4. We want to integrate biomedical interventions with behavioral interventions.
5. We want to help institutions in our community retool to be better prepared to deliver services in a post-healthcare-reform world.

We're restructuring our organization and our programs to implement those objectives and to accomplish that vision -- jettisoning programs that don't fit and creating new initiatives that align with where we want to go.

We believe any efforts to end AIDS in Black communities have to focus on helping the estimated more than 500,000 Black Americans livings with HIV reach viral suppression. All of our new strategic objectives are in service of that goal.

We are at a fork in the road. Now is the time to make change. Now is the time to make a difference. Are you ready?

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