



***The District of Columbia's HIV/AIDS crisis is so severe that the rates are higher than West Africa and are on-par with Uganda and some parts of Kenya.**

***The District's rate of newly reported HIV/AIDS cases is higher than those of neighboring Baltimore, as well as Philadelphia, New York, Detroit and Chicago.**

***Although nearly every Ward in the District is impacted by HIV/AIDS, Wards 3, 5, 6 and 8 consistently have the highest numbers of residents diagnosed with HIV/AIDS.**



FACTS:

***Although African-American men and women account for only 13% of the U.S. population, they account for about 49% of new HIV/AIDS infections.**

***Oftentimes, African-American men and women do not have much money and are not always able to receive good healthcare and information on HIV/AIDS resulting in their not living as long as other people of other races and ethnic groups with HIV/AIDS.**

The nation's capital is in the midst of an enormous and rapidly growing healthcare epidemic; 3% of its population is living with HIV/AIDS and 76.3% of these people are black.

Even worse, the numbers are likely to be severely undercounted as the race to identify more residents who unknowingly are HIV positive or have full-blown AIDS continues.

What is behind the crisis? According to experts, a dangerous blend of not knowing who has HIV; poverty and lack of healthcare; people having more than one relationship and unprotected sex; the "down-low" phenomenon and the stigma of being honest about one's sexual choices; the politics of needle exchange; and the lack of outreach to black gay and bisexual men.



“HIV/AIDS was always, to me, a white gay man’s disease never affecting me at all. It was only when I noticed I was losing energy and weight that I decided to go see my doctor. I knew I had done my share of ‘dirt’ but didn’t feel I had much of a reason to worry. My doctor asked if I wanted to take a HIV test. I thought, ‘what for’ but took the test anyway. A week later, I found I had tested positive for HIV and probably was for some time now.”

Sam-Brookland, NE/DC

FACTS:

***African-American men comprise approximately 30% of all new HIV/AIDS cases in the District.**

***African-American men tend to have late diagnosis of HIV/AIDS due to denial and lack of insurance coverage.**

“I never thought my husband was unfaithful. He was loving, attentive and affectionate in every way a wife would want! How surprised I was to find my husband had been living a ‘secret life’ – long before we met and later married. Due to his ‘secrecy’, I now have tested positive for HIV. My husband had been the only man I had ever been with sexually; he has now since passed from this disease. But, I live on – not only for myself but for my son I am left to raise alone as well.”

Cassandra-LeDroit, NW/DC



FACTS:

***African-American women account for 94% of all newly reported HIV/AIDS cases in the District.**

***African-American women are infected with HIV/AIDS at a rate of 61% versus men at a rate of 25%.**

“I never made it a point to discuss HIV/AIDS testing or anything else with any of my sexual partners. I always believed that if you looked ‘okay’ and weren’t showing any obvious signs of HIV/AIDS disease, having sex with you was not an issue. I never got tested personally but I have friends who have been tested. Some have gotten good results while others have not fared so well... I’m always told ‘knowing is better than not knowing’; but, I don’t think I can deal with the anxiety of waiting for the results AND seeing someone I might know while getting tested! Maybe one of these days I will get tested. Perhaps my curiosity will get the best of me and my fear of testing will subside.”

Xavier-Ft. Dupont Park, SE/DC



FACTS:

***African-American men having sex with men is the primary risk factor for about 48% of black men with HIV/AIDS with high-risk heterosexual contact being the primary risk factor for 22% of them.**

***African-American men in DC currently account for 64% of persons living with AIDS and die from HIV/AIDS at a rate of 75% - compared to 22% of whites and 2% of Hispanics.**



FACTS:

***African-American women are 23 times as likely to contract HIV/AIDS that white women.**

***African-American women currently account for, nationally, the majority of new AIDS cases among women at a rate of 67%.**

“My girls and I always are talking about the “DL” guys in our communities. How can these sisters not know they’re involved with homosexual and bisexual men?! As an out and secure lesbian, it’s never bothered me what people thought of me and my sexual preference. But, as a sister of a closeted bisexual brother, I can understand some of the reasoning behind not wanting to disclose one’s sexual preference. It’s the dishonesty I can’t accept. I would encourage condom use, no matter what...you can never be too sure. And, that would go for the sisters, and brothers, that date my sibling, too.”

Joan-Waterfront, SW/DC