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The Full Story
 Bringing The Full Figured Into Focus
 A Chocolate Sizas Publication
 Sacramento, California
 DECEMBER 2008

Be Our Valentine...



Don't miss Chocolate Sizas' next big event! Tickets will go on sale soon for our annual Valentine's Day jam. Show us some love and buy a couple!

Check our web site frequently for updated information and to purchase tickets online. Visit us at www.ChocolateSizas.com.

HIV/ AIDS Awareness Urged

December is AIDS Awareness month—with December 1st being World AIDS Day—and in honor of that, Chocolate Sizas is dedicating this month's issue to that topic. HIV/AIDS has become a worldwide pandemic and as the disease continues to spread, communities of color are getting hit harder and younger.

Typically, our focus is on how things going on in the world and our communities relate to the full figured, but HIV and AIDS is indiscriminate—affecting everyone, no matter the size, shape, age, sex or color.

In 2007, it was estimated that 33.2 million people lived with the disease worldwide and that it killed an estimated 2.1 million people, including 333,000 children. As far as we're concerned, that's entirely too many for a preventable disease that we know so much about. For CS, this is about more than stats—it's personal.

With that in mind, we want to raise your awareness and inspire you to get involved in any way you can. As a community, we need to break the taboos and stigmas that surround this disease—our silence is killing us.



ABOVE: Chocolate Sizas co-founders Genoa Barrow and Tandra Madison met AIDS survivor/activist Earvin "Magic" Johnson in 2007. Learn more about Johnson on page 7.

AIDS Reality Hits Home

Editor's Note: Below, Chocolate Sizas co-founder Tandra Madison shares her mother's personal story with a special Q&A.

Tandra Madison: When did you first discover that you were HIV+?
Linda Brown: In the late 1980s.

TM: How, do you think, you contracted the disease?
LB: I think I contracted it from my partner at the time.

TM: After the initial shock, what was your thinking?
LB: I'mma die so... what the hell, I'm going out with a bang. I went on a (drug) mission like none other. I used drugs I'd never even used before.

TM: Who was the first person you told about

your status? Why?

LB: Vicky, my best friend because I trusted her and I needed to tell somebody.

TM: When did you go public or have you gone public with your status? What does "public" mean for you?

LB: I went public in 2004 when I got sick. Going public meant telling everyone who was part of my circle of friends, associates, partner(s) and family members, also speaking about it at podium level when I share at NA and/or AA meetings.

TM: Have you experienced any backlash?

LB: I have/ **Continued on Page 2**



Faith, medicine and her family's support see Linda Brown through.



Mother, Wife Shares Life-Changing Experience

Continued From Page 1:

not experienced any backlash, everyone has been very supportive.

TM: Do you know anyone else with the disease?

LB: Yes, lots of people. Friends and family.

TM: How has having HIV affected your life?

LB: Well, at first, it affected my life negatively. I was afraid I was going to die. I was afraid no one would want to be with me. I tried to commit suicide by using lots of drugs. And when God revealed to me that He had a purpose for me and I wouldn't die, I decided to get on with the business of living. I got clean and sober and I started to prepare my financial business so my daughter would be taken care of if something happened to me. Today, I live everyday like it's the last day because I don't know if I am going to wake up tomorrow or if I'll wake up tomorrow and I'll be physically incapacitated to do all of the things I want to do. I love life and I make sure that the people I care about know that I love them. I try to tell others about my story and encourage them to practice safe sex. I take my medicines and I trust that God is gonna direct me on the path that He saved me for.

TM: Please explain the difference between HIV and AIDS.

LB: You can be a carrier of HIV and it never develops into AIDS. Medically speaking, if your T-cells fall below 200, you're considered to have full-blown AIDS. If your T-cells are above 200, it's considered HIV.

TM: Is it possible to go from one to the other?

LB: Most definitely and it's possible to never go from one to the other.

TM: What is your current status? HIV+ or AIDS? And if you've gone to AIDS, but are no longer at that level, are you just HIV+ again, or in remission, or is there another term for it?

LB: In 2004 I was deemed full blown AIDS because my t-cell count was at 16, now that my t-cell count is at 600+ I don't think that the medical professionals go back and forth with their diagnosis. I believe once you're diagnosed full blown AIDS it remains that way regardless of your t-cell count.

TM: Are you on any medications for the condition? If so, what?

LB: Yes, Atripla—which is the new FDA approved cocktail pill. One pill, one time a day. Loving it! It's like taking a vitamin, except that it does have the side effect of

making me dizzy. So I usually take it right before I go to sleep at night. It also causes me to have really crazy dreams. Sometimes I wake up in the morning wondering if something really happened or if I dreamed it.

TM: What do you do to maintain your health and longevity?

LB: I don't use drugs, alcohol or cigarettes. I give all the glory to God. And I take my medications faithfully.

TM: How often do you think about the disease?

LB: Everyday, because I have to take a pill for it everyday. But I don't think about it in the way that I used to in that "I'm going to die." I consider myself as living with AIDS, versus, dying from AIDS.

TM: What is it like living with this?

LB: It's a combination of things. Sometimes it's sad, because I think about how I may not be here to see my grandchildren or that I may be so sick that I can't take care of myself. Sometimes, I consider it a blessing because I'm still living and I'm healthy and you can't tell that I have AIDS by looking at me. And because I don't take life for granted, as opposed to before I knew. Before I knew, I took life for granted thinking that I would have infinity to do whatever. Now, I don't feel that way. Now, I try to do whatever it is that I need to do...I try to get it all done because I just don't know what tomorrow will bring.

TM: Concerns for the future?

LB: I would have to say my major concern for my future is that I won't see my grandchildren.

TM: Plans for the future?

LB: I would like to establish a safe place for mothers and children to be able to live with HIV and AIDS. I would like for my family and friends to know how much they truly mean to me. And I'd like to go to heaven when I leave this earth.

TM: Are you involved with a local HIV/AIDS organization of any kind?

LB: I'm currently trying to establish a program in the area that I'm living because it's a relatively poor neighborhood and it seems that information regarding HIV and AIDS is not being readily disseminated to this community. So, I'm attempting to establish a program that will put that information out to the community.

TM: Any advice to our readers?

LB: Don't think it can't happen to you. Don't think that the person you're dealing with is safe. With today's medicine, there are so many people who are HIV+ on medications and living a healthy and long life, but that still doesn't negate the fact



that they're HIV+. Unfortunately, there are many others who are choosing to stick their heads in the sand and not even find out what their status is. It is nobody's responsibility to take care of you but you so make sure that no matter who you're with, what you're doing, or who you call yourself being in love with, that you always remember to love you the most. So protect yourself.

**** For more of Linda Brown's story, visit www.ChocolateSistas.com, click on CS Perspectives.**

The Facts on HIV & AIDS:

HIV is an acronym for Human Immunodeficiency Virus

AIDS is an acronym for Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

HIV is most frequently transmitted:

- 1) During male-to-male sexual contact
- 2) During high risk heterosexual contact
- 3) During injection/intravenous (IV) drug use
- 4) From mother to child (perinatal)
- 5) Through the blood, saliva and bodily fluids

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), "HIV is spread by sexual contact with an infected person, by sharing needles and/or syringes (primarily for drug injection) with someone who is infected, or, less commonly (and now very rarely in countries where blood is screened for HIV antibodies), through transfusions of infected blood or blood clotting factors. Babies born to HIV-infected women may become infected before or during birth or through breast-feeding after birth."

Churches Take Lead In Global Awareness Effort

The Balm In Gilead, Inc., lead by founder Pernessa Seele, is a not-for-profit, non-governmental organization whose mission is to improve the health status of people of the African Diaspora by building the capacity of faith communities to address life-threatening diseases, especially HIV/AIDS.

The Balm In Gilead's pioneering achievements have enabled thousands of churches to become leaders in preventing the transmission of HIV by providing comprehensive educational programs and offering compassionate support to encourage those infected to seek and maintain treatment. The Balm In Gilead spearheads a dynamic response to the HIV/AIDS crisis in the faith community.

For 19 years, The Balm In Gilead has mobilized The Black Church Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS, which engages Black churches to become centers for education, compassion and care in the fight against HIV/AIDS. In 2009, the week will be observed March 1-7.

The Balm In Gilead has established,

and continues to develop, educational and training programs specifically to meet the needs of faith communities that strive to become centers for HIV/AIDS ministries, education and compassion.

While continuing to broaden its work within African American communities, The Balm In Gilead is working in partnership with faith communities in Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania and Zimbabwe to effectively address the horrendous challenges of HIV/AIDS.

In the United States and abroad, the organization strives to:

- Develop and disseminate culturally appropriate educational materials to the Black Christian community.
- Provide training, organizational, and technical assistance to churches, church groups, AIDS service organizations and health departments through The Balm In Gilead's HIV/AIDS Technical Assistance Center, which is supported through a cooperative agreement with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Assist AIDS service organizations and health departments in deepening



Seele

their understanding of the African and African American community in order to engage the church in HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment through culturally appropriate programs.

- Provide the media industry with information about how the church meets the HIV/AIDS education needs of congregations and communities.

AIDS Quilt Makes Its Way To Sacramento Church

While others are slow to embrace those infected with HIV/AIDS Antioch Progressive Baptist Church lived up to its name last week, hosting a World AIDS Day event on December 1.

The church's Third Annual World AIDS Day Recognition was spearheaded by its Health Education for Abundant Living (HEAL) Ministry. As part of the lead up to the program, HEAL Ministry Chair William Green III arranged to have two 12'x 12' panels of The AIDS Memorial Quilt on

display.

"My personal goal for this event is to reveal the humanity behind the statistics," Green said. "The AIDS Memorial Quilt helps teach compassion, triumph over taboo, stigma and phobia, and inspires individuals to take direct responsibility for their own well-being and that of their family, friends and community," he continued.

In addition to the national panels, a quilt for late Antioch Progressive

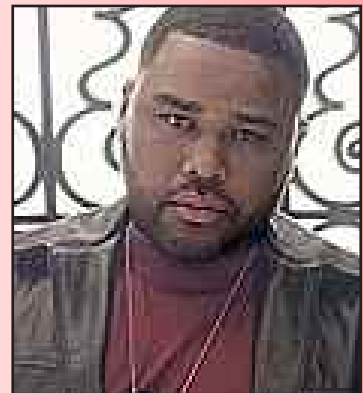


member and HIV/AIDS activist Jocelyn Graves was on display.

A Worthy Cause

As the search to find a cure for AIDS has grown, so has the list of people involved in the cause. Some more well-known than others, but none more important. The celebrities listed here are doing more than talking about the pandemic—they putting their money where their mouths are. And giving time. And sponsoring events. And walking and dancing and fundraising...all for the cause. We applaud them for not just talking the talk, but walking the walk.

Bill Clinton	Nelson Mandela	Bono	Elton John
Brad Pitt	Annie Lennox	Mariah Carey	George Michael
Aisha Tyler	Alec Baldwin	Yao Ming	Alfre Woodard
Al Gore	Alicia Keys	Al Pacino	Alyssa Milano
Amy Winehouse	Angelina Jolie	Anna Kournikova	Anthony Anderson
Arnold Schwarzenegger	Ashley Judd	Barack Obama	Ben Stiller
Beyoncé Knowles	Black Eyed Peas	Blair Underwood	Brendan Fraser
Britney Spears	Brooke Shields	Cameron Diaz	Carlos Santana
Carmen Electra	CCH Pounder	Céline Dion	Charlie Sheen
Charlize Theron	Cher	Chris Rock	Christina Aguilera
Chris Tucker	Clay Aiken	Clint Eastwood	Coldplay
Common	Daniel Radcliffe	Danny Glover	David Banner
David Beckham	David Bowie	Demi Moore	Denzel Washington
Dikembe Mutombo	Djimon Hounsou	Don Cheadle	Drew Barrymore
Dr. Phil McGraw	Eddie Murphy	Ellen DeGeneres	Erykah Badu
Eva Mendes	Faith Hill	Fergie	Forest Whitaker
George Clooney	George Foreman	Giorgio Armani	Prince Charles
Gladys Knight	Gwen Stefani	Gwyneth Paltrow	Heidi Klum
Hillary Clinton	Holly Robinson-Peete	Iman	Isaiah Washington
Iyanla Vazant	Jackie Chan	Jack Nicholson	Jada Pinkett Smith
James Earl Jones	James Gandolfini	Jamie Foxx	Jamie Lee Curtis
Jay-Z	Jeff Goldblum	Jennifer Garner	Jennifer Hudson
Jennifer Love Hewitt	Jessica Alba	Jet Li	John Legend
Jon Bon Jovi	Joss Stone	Julianne Moore	Julia Roberts
Jurnee Smollett	Kanye West	Katherine Heigl	Keanu Reeves
Keira Knightley	Kelly Clarkson	Kelly Osbourne	Kelly Rowland
Kevin Bacon	Kevin Kline	Kimberley Locke	Kim Cattrall
Kirsten Dunst	Kobe Bryant	Kurt Russell	Lance Armstrong
Laurence Fishburne	Leonardo DiCaprio	Lil' Kim	Lou Gossett Jr
Ludacris	Macy Gray	Madonna	Will Smith
Magic Johnson	Malcolm-Jamal Warner	Mandy Moore	Mariah Carey
Martha Stewart	Matt Damon	Matthew McConaughey	Meg Ryan



The Rich & Famous Are Not Immune...

Unfortunately, in the decades since HIV and AIDS has been discovered, there have been many casualties. Some became victims of the disease not knowing what it was, others became examples of lifestyles to avoid and some became heroes and champions for the cause. No matter the role they've played in the struggle, we want to honor a few of the people who gave their lives to this disease. And we want to thank them for their contributions—be that to society, sports, music, fashion, radio, television, movies, research or advocacy. They will never, ever be forgotten.

Eazy-E (1963-1995): Eazy-E, aka Eric Lynn Wright, was a rapper, producer and record executive from Compton, CA. Eazy was a Kelly Park Compton Crip during his teen years and openly associated with other Crips. He sold drugs during his early teen years and then invested the money he made into establishing Ruthless Records. Eazy is widely regarded as one of the founders of "gangsta rap" and rose to fame as founding member of the group N.W.A., Eazy is also credited with discovering the group Bone Thugs-N-Harmony.



Eazy-E

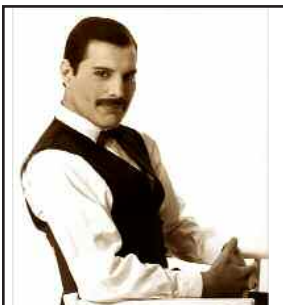


Ashe



White

Tom Fogerty (1941- 1990): Fogerty was a musician best known as the guitarist in Creedence Clearwater Revival and the elder brother of John Fogerty, the lead singer and guitar player in that band.



Mercury



Riley



Carangi

Paul Jabara (1948-1992): Jabara was an actor, singer and songwriter; author of Donna Summer's "Last Dance.." Jabara was also co-founder of the Red Ribbon Project, an artists' collective, and is believed by some to have conceived and distributed the first red AIDS ribbons.

Liberace (1919-1987): Wladziu Valentino Liberace, known simply by his last name, was a pianist and entertainer, famous for his flamboyant style.

Freddie Mercury (1946-1991): Born Farrokh Bulsara, Mercury was best known as the lead singer and pianist of the rock band Queen. He was known for his four-octave vocal range and onstage theatrics. As a songwriter, he composed many interna-

tional hits, including "Bohemian Rhapsody," "Killer Queen," "Somebody to Love," and "We Are the Champions." In 2005, MTV named Mercury the second-greatest singer in the history of popular music.

Ricky Wilson (1953-1985): Ricky Wilson was a guitarist and founding member of the music group, The B-52's

Arthur Ashe (1943-1993): Ashe was a professional tennis player, born and raised in Richmond, VA. He won three Grand Slam titles, putting him among the best ever from the U.S. In 1975, Ashe won Wimbledon, unexpectedly defeating Jimmy Connors in the final. He played for several more years, but

retired in 1980 after being slowed by heart surgery. Ashe remains the only African American player ever to win the men's singles at Wimbledon, the US Open, or Australian Open. He is one of only two men of African ancestry to win a Grand Slam singles title. After his retirement, Ashe wrote for Time magazine, commentating for ABC Sports and founded the National Junior Tennis League. He was elected to the International Tennis Hall of Fame in 1985. Ashe is also remembered for his efforts to further social causes.

Glenn Burke (1952-1995): Burke was a Major League Baseball player for the Los Angeles Dodgers and

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Gone But Not Forgotten...

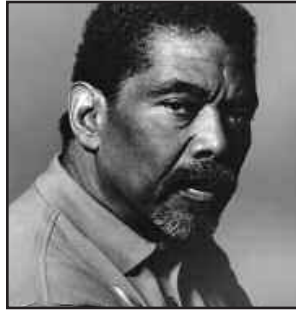
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Oakland Athletics from 1976 to 1979. Burke was the first MLB player to be out to his teammates and team owners during his professional career. When he started his career, scouts described him as the next Willie Mays. Burke is recognized as the player who invented the high five. In 1977, he ran out onto the field to congratulate his Dodgers teammate Dusty Baker for hitting a home run in the last game of the regular season. His celebration has since been imitated by athletes and fans in virtually every sport around the world.

Alvin Ailey (1931-1989): Ailey was a modern dancer and choreographer who founded the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater in New York City. Ailey was introduced to dance by performances of the Katherine Dunham Dance Company and the Ballet de Monte Carlo. The blues, spirituals, and gospel were his inspiration, and resulted in his most popular and critically acclaimed work "Revelations."

Today, the company continues Ailey's mission by presenting important works of the past and commissioning new ones to add to the repertoire. In all, more than 200 works by over 70 choreographers have been performed by the Company.

Gia Carangi (1960-1986): Carangi was a fashion model during the late 1970s and early '80s. Carangi was considered by some to be the first supermodel.

*Ailey*

Carangi was featured on the cover of many fashion magazines, including Vogue, Vogue Paris, Italian Vogue, and Cosmopolitan.

Perry Ellis (1940-1986): Ellis was an American fashion designer who founded a sportswear house in the mid-1970s. He was one of the first prominent American figures to succumb to AIDS.

Ryan White (1971-1990): White was a teenager from Indiana who became a national poster child for HIV/AIDS after being expelled from school because of his infection. A hemophiliac, he became infected from a contaminated blood treatment and, was diagnosed in 1984. Though doctors said he posed no risk to other students, AIDS was poorly understood at the time, and when White tried to return to class, many parents and teachers rallied against it. A legal battle ensued, and media coverage made White a national celebrity and spokesman for AIDS research and public education.

The U.S. Congress passed a major piece of AIDS legislation, the Ryan White Care

Act, shortly after White's death. The Act was reauthorized in 2006; its Ryan White Programs are the largest provider of services for people living with HIV/AIDS in the United States.

Rock Hudson (1925-1985): Hudson was a leading man on TV and in films spanning from the 1960s and 1980s. He completed nearly 70 motion pictures and starred in several television productions such as "Dynasty" and "McMillan & Wife." Hudson was one of the first major Hollywood celebrities to die from an AIDS-related illness.

Anthony Perkins (1932-1992): Perkins was an Academy Award-nominated, Golden Globe-winning American stage and screen actor, best known for his role as Norman Bates in Alfred Hitchcock's Psycho and its three sequels.

Robert Reed (1932-1992): Reed was an Emmy Award-nominated stage and television actor who played Mike Brady on the hit TV show, The Brady Bunch.

Howard Rollins (1950-1996): Rollins was an Academy Award-nominated television, film and stage actor known for his role in the daytime soap, Another World, as well as his role as Virgil Tibbs on "In the Heat of the Night." Rollins was also featured in the television film, "Roots: The Next Generations."

Kevin Peter Hall (1955-

1991): Hall was an actor famous for his roles in "Harry and the Hendersons," "Predator", and "Predator 2." He was frequently cast in monster roles due to his extremely tall stature—he stood 7' 2". He married full figured actress Alaina Reed ("227") in 1989 after appearing on the program. In the fall of 1990, Hall was involved in a car accident in Los Angeles and required a blood transfusion, which was later discovered to be contaminated with HIV.

Larry Riley (1952-1992): Riley was an actor, best known for his role as C.J. Memphis in the movie "A Soldier's Story," and as Frank Williams in the prime-time soap opera "Knots Landing." When Riley wasn't working as an actor, he was a respected craftsman who built Hollywood sets.

Willi Smith (1948-1987): Smith was one of the most successful Black fashion designers. At its peak, his company WilliWear Ltd. sold \$25 million worth of clothing a year. Smith was also the brother of model Tookie Smith. He also designed clothes for Spike Lee's 1987 film "School Daze".

Curtis Bridgeforth (1956-2007): Bridgeforth was the lead singer for The Platters (not the original group) as well as the founder of the C B R I D G E F O R T H Foundation—a non-profit dedicated to educating about issues concerning HIV and AIDS.

Three High Profile Survivors...

Earvin “Magic” Johnson: Johnson played basketball for the Los Angeles Lakers for several years—winning a championship and MVP award in his first season with the team. He went on to win a total of five championships with the Lakers during the 1980s. After announcing that he had HIV in 1991, Johnson retired abruptly, but then returned to win the MVP of 1992 All-Star Game. He retired again after protests from his fellow players, but returned in 1996 to play 32 games for the Lakers, before retiring for the third and final time. Johnson’s career achievements include five NBA championships, three MVP Awards, and three Finals MVP Awards. He also played in nine

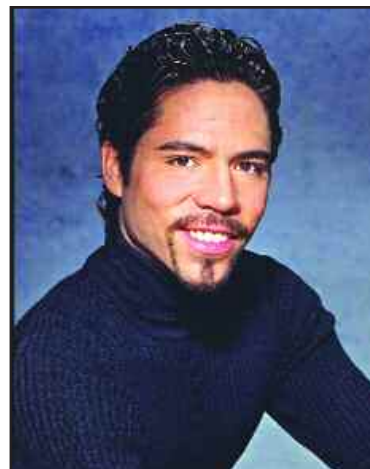
NBA Finals series, 12 All-Star games, and was voted into 10 All-NBA First and Second Teams. Most will remember that he was also a member of the “Dream Team” U.S. basketball team that won Olympic gold in 1992. Johnson was honored as one of the 50 Greatest Players in NBA History in 1996, and enshrined in the Basketball Hall of Fame in 2002. Since retirement, Magic’s been an advocate for HIV/AIDS prevention and safe sex, as well as a philanthropist, setting up the Magic Johnson Foundation to help combat HIV. Additionally, Johnson runs Magic Johnson Enterprises, which includes the promotional company, Magic Johnson Productions; a nationwide



chain of movie theaters; and a movie studio. The business magnate has also teamed up with Starbucks to build new stores in low-income, disadvantaged neighborhoods throughout California. It’s become quite apparent that Magic still has the “magic touch.”

Rudy Galindo: He’s a shining example of a “small town boy making good.” Galindo shined a spotlight on himself and his hometown of San Jose as he figured skated his way into America’s heart. In the course of his career, Galindo competed in both single skating and pair skating. As a single skater, he is the 1996 U.S. national champion and 1987 World Junior Champion. As a pair skater, he competed with Kristi Yamaguchi and is the 1988 World Junior Champion and the 1989 & 1990 U.S. national champion. Galindo was diagnosed with HIV in 2000, after a long bout of pneumonia kept him from competing in the Olympics that year. The disease, how-

ever, never slowed the 5’6” skater. Rudy continued to flourish during the 2001/2002 season of touring and exhibitions, including the grueling Champions on Ice Olympic Tour that lasted through August of 2002. After experiencing problems, Galindo underwent a hip replacement in 2003. New hips didn’t slow him down. Galindo worked hours each day afterward on and off the ice to get into the condition that allowed him to skate in the 2004 Champions on Ice tours. Rudy also appears, speaks, and performs at HIV/AIDS-related conferences, benefits, AIDS Walks, etc. He has tirelessly promoted AIDS awareness and education, while serving as

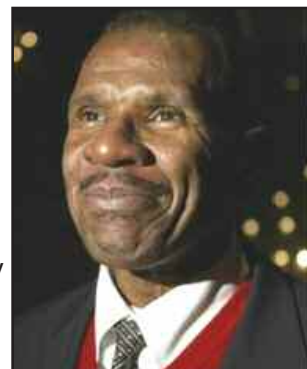


an inspiration to those living with the disease that they can still pursue their lives and dreams.

Roy Simmons: Football is a rough, tough sport, which can make for a pretty hostile environment for a gay man. Simmons played in the NFL from 1979-1984 as an offensive lineman for the NY Giants and with the Washington Redskins during Super Bowl XVIII in 1984. In 1992, he came out of the closet on the Phil Donahue Show and then promptly disappeared into obscurity. In the history of the NFL, only two other players that publicly admitted homosexuality, David Kopay and Esera Tuaolo. In Simmons’ autobiography, “Out of Bounds,” he

speaks of drug addiction, prostitution and promiscuity. In a 2004 interview with the NY Times, Simmons opened talked about learning that he was HIV-positive in 1997, a childhood rape, attempts at drug rehabilitation and his stint of homelessness. In the article, Simmons clarified why he was breaking his silence—he wanted to help others who might have shared similar experiences. He especially wanted to reach out to Black men—aiming to prevent them from contracting the disease and putting their partners in danger. In the article, Simmons discussed

the “down low” concept—an ever-increasing lifestyle where Black men live a closeted gay or bisexual life. Currently, Simmons works as a supervisor in a Long Island, NY drug halfway house.



TESTING 1,2,3

With no known cure or vaccine for HIV or AIDS, the best way to stop the disease is to prevent its spread. The first step in doing that is to know your status and get tested. There are community programs across the country that offer free, anonymous HIV testing and there are several ways to test.

Rapid Tests for HIV

Rapid testing for HIV has become one of the most prominent ways that people receive HIV tests today. In as little as 20 minutes, you can find out your HIV status.

Rapid tests work similarly to traditional HIV test: they look for antibodies to HIV, not the virus itself. Most commonly, a rapid test is administered by sampling the oral mucosa (the mucous that is everywhere in your mouth) and putting it through a test to see if HIV antibodies are present.

A rapid test runs for 20-40 minutes, after which you will receive a result. Rapid tests are extremely accurate. However, since rapid tests have a small margin of error (ranging from 1 to 3 per 1,000), all positive (reactive) results have to be put through a confirmatory test.

For testing locations call the California HIV/AIDS Hotline at 1-800-367-AIDS or visit www.aidshotline.org.

Orasure Test for HIV

The OraSure HIV antibody test method, approved by the FDA in 1996, uses a sample of oral mucus obtained with a specially treated cotton pad that is placed between the cheek and lower gum for two minutes. Testing oral mucus has also been called "oral mucosal transudate testing." It is similar to the rapid oral test. In fact, the same company makes both products. The only difference between the two is the amount of time that it takes to receive your results.

Note: the saliva and oral mucus contain antibodies to HIV, not HIV itself, so HIV is not transmitted through these fluids. Some public test sites offer this oral test as an alternative to blood testing.

Home HIV Antibody Tests

At this time, one company, Home Access, offers an FDA-approved at-home antibody test. This test costs about \$45 to \$70, depending on whether you pay for 72-hour results (they give you a pre-paid express delivery envelope to expedite shipping your sample to the lab) or standard 7-10 day results.

Home Access uses a blood sample from a finger prick, which you then send to a certified laboratory for testing. You must call a toll-free number to register your sample prior to shipping. Enclosed in the test kit is an identifying number. Results take three days to one week. To obtain results, you give the operator the ID number and they will look up the result of the test. This number system provides you with an anonymous test result so your result cannot be reported to anyone else.

The privacy of the home test offers some consumers more comfort than going to a public test site. Remember, as with testing at an anonymous or confidential site, you must wait three to six months (the window period) after your potential exposure to take the at-home test, to be certain if the activity you are concerned about did or did not infect you with HIV.

Urine Test for HIV

A test that detects HIV antibodies in urine was approved by the FDA in 1996. This test is not generally available to consumers. It is usually marketed to insurance companies and to other countries. Note: urine has antibodies for HIV, not HIV itself, so HIV is not transmitted by urine. Manufactured by Seradyn, it is called the "Sentinel" test. A sample of urine is tested at a certified lab and the test must be ordered by a physician; this means the urine HIV test, by definition, is confidential, not anonymous. Because it is less sensitive than a blood test, positive results must be confirmed by a traditional blood sample.

Anonymous HIV Testing

Free anonymous testing is available at Anonymous Test Sites in most counties in California. Anonymous testing means that no one has access to your test results since your name is never recorded at the test site.

Anonymous test sites are preferred by

some individuals because:

- The quality of the education and counseling is usually very good.
- The testing is reliable and automatically includes confirmatory tests.
- It protects you from any and all risks of discrimination or adverse impact.

People with HIV/AIDS are generally reported by name to local and state public health officials. Anonymous test results, however, are not reported to the government and cannot be because an individual's name is never provided. In addition, anonymous sites never give written results.

At some anonymous test sites, you must make an appointment; in others, appointments are not necessary—you can just drop in. You choose, or are given, a letter/number code that will match you to your test results. Most anonymous test sites provide pre-test counseling and risk assessment. A blood sample is sometimes drawn, but some now use rapid HIV testing, which can be done needle-free or utilizes blood taken from a finger-stick. You must return, in person, in a week or two to obtain results, unless the rapid HIV test is used, which can determine results in less than 20 minutes.

If you live in CA, visit www.aidshotline.org to find sites that offer anonymous or confidential testing or call the California AIDS Hotline, toll free, at 1-800-367-AIDS.

Confidential HIV Testing

HIV antibody testing can be ordered through a private physician, some clinics, and hospitals. If you give your name, even if the test site says your name is known only to them and not the lab, the test is technically confidential, not anonymous. Confidential antibody testing means that you and the health care provider know your results, which may be recorded in your medical file. There are also testing sites that offer confidential testing. Those who are tested confidentially and are found to be infected with HIV are reported to local public health officials so that the government can better track the extent of the disease in the population as a whole.

MORE FACTS...

HIV is transmitted through blood, semen, vaginal secretions and breast milk.

HIV CANNOT be transmitted through saliva, tears, sweat, feces, or urine. Nor through insect bites, casual contact or sharing food, donating blood, swimming pools and hot tubs, or pests/animals.

HIV is transmitted through unprotected sexual contact. HIV is transmitted through direct blood contact, including injection drug needles, blood transfusions, accidents in health care settings or certain blood products. HIV is transmitted mother to baby (before or during birth, or through breast milk)

Stats:

According to statistics from a study done by the CDC in 2006:

- Almost 3/4 of the HIV/AIDS diagnoses among adults and adolescents

were for men.

- Almost 1/2 of the new cases were transmitted through male-to-male sexual contact, but 33% were from high-risk heterosexual contact. When broken down even further, for the women that were part of that 33%, 80% were from high-risk heterosexual contact.

- Although African Americans made up only 13% of the population in the 33 states studied, they accounted for almost 1/2 of the new cases: 49%.

- People in the age range of 25-44 made up 58% of new cases. Add another 15% to that for people 13-24 years old.

- Women of color (especially African American women) are the hardest hit by the disease.

- Younger women are more likely to contract the disease than older women.

- AIDS is a common killer, second only to heart disease for women.

Ways To Get Involved:

Getting involved with the fight against HIV and AIDS is easy and depends on you. Finding ways to do so on a community level can be as simple as contacting your local health facility to find out what organizations they work with on HIV/AIDS education and getting active. A few suggestions from www.dosomething.org:

- * Educate yourself about HIV/AIDS and spread the knowledge.

- * Make sure all of your sexually active friends know how to properly put on a condom.

- * Buy a bag of red ribbons and give them out to your friends/co-workers.

- * Hold prevention discussions

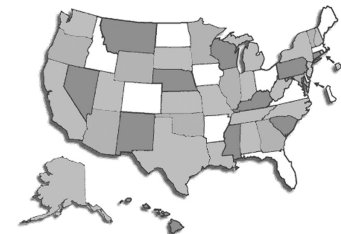
*****GET TESTED!!!

- * Endorse charities like Keep a Child Alive to support HIV/AIDS education for teens.

- * Organize letter writing campaigns to local, state and federal politicians

The 10 states reporting the highest number of AIDS cases in 2006 were:

- 1) New York
- 2) Florida
- 3) California
- 4) Texas
- 5) Pennsylvania
- 6) Maryland
- 7) Georgia
- 8) Illinois
- 9) North Carolina
- 10) New Jersey



about HIV/AIDS policies you want to see enacted or changed.

- * Participate in benefits/events that support the cause.

***AIDS Walks are held in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Wisconsin every year. The web site www.aidswalk.net can connect you to them.

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