

# News

## Black Women United: AIDS panel discussion

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"If you're not gay, you're okay" is a common misconception among the black community concerning AIDS. With one and a half million people in the United States unknowingly carrying the AIDS virus and thirteen thousand of these in North Carolina alone, AIDS is far from being restricted to the gay community.

Myths such as this, along with the effect AIDS has on the black community, were the topics of a panel discussion sponsored by Black Women United. Panelists Godfrey Herndon, Dr. Audrey Johnson, and Jarvis Nathan each discussed different aspects of AIDS within the black community.

Godfrey Herndon, a volunteer at the Durham Health Project, discussed the ten most popular myths about AIDS:

**Myth #1:** *There is a cure around the corner.* — Due to a lack of knowledge there is no cure on the horizon.

**Myth #2:** *Only people who reside in a large city need to worry about the AIDS virus.* — AIDS exists in every city regardless of size.

**Myth #3:** *Only gay white men, hemophiliacs, drug users and foreigners are at risk.* — Everybody is at risk.

**Myth #4:** *There are few homosexuals in the black community so the black community is at low risk.* — AIDS is an equal opportunity disease; it's not who you are, but what you do.

**Myth #5:** *AIDS is God's wrath on a promiscuous world.* — AIDS doesn't know the difference between good or bad, rich or poor.

**Myth #6:** *AIDS was developed in a laboratory and released to destroy a particular group of people.* — Too many diverse groups have been affected.

**Myth #7:** *AIDS can be spread by mosquitos and casual contact.* — Not a single case has originated from either of these means.

**Myth #8:** *Other parts of the world are at greater risk from AIDS than is the United States.* — the United States has the highest number of recorded cases.

**Myth #9:** *Quarantine is an effective response to the AIDS virus.* — Locking up "high risk" groups will only give a false sense of security and provide "justified" reasons for discrimination towards minority groups.

**Myth #10:** *We can all relax and let the government handle the situation.* — The government is usually not motivated to act until there is a demand from the public.

Dr. Audrey Johnson, professor at the School of Social Work, discussed AIDS among black women. Although the black community makes up only twelve percent of the total population, blacks account for twenty-five percent of all reported AIDS cases. Fifty-two percent of AIDS cases among women are black, while fifty-four percent of children infected with the virus are black. The majority of black women with AIDS contract the disease from straight black men as well as those with homosexual tendencies.

James Nathan, a victim of AIDS, focused his discussion on support systems for AIDS patients. He addressed the need for more support groups.

Mr. Nathan also spoke about the AZT treatment program. His emphasis here was on the fact that AZT is not a cure. It cannot reverse or end AIDS. The most hope one can find in AZT is to prolong life.

All three panelists stressed that there is no cure for AIDS in the near future. However, they all emphasized that education and knowledge are the only ways by which the disease might be controlled.

### Answers to Previous Puzzle

#### Across

- 1 Crispus Attucks
- 3 Benjamin Banneker
- 7 Tubman
- 8 WEB DuBois
- 9 Cleaver
- 12 Douglass
- 13 North Star
- 15 Martin Luther King, Jr.

#### Down

- 1 CORE
- 2 Ames Derham
- 4 Phillis Wheatley
- 6 Nat Turner
- 10 Marcus Garvey
- 11 Black Power
- 14 Dred Scott

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Comments and editorials written in **The Black Ink** reflect the views of the writers and are not necessarily shared by **The Black Ink** staff.

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Kappa Alpha Psi. (photo by Kenny Pugh)