

Jako stresses choices in college are crucial

From p. 1

"We live in a culture that is very privileged."

She said that she felt like no one could ever love her again and her biggest fear was infecting someone else.

At 23, she met someone who was able to "look beyond her disease." They have been together for nine years and are now expecting a child.

She said that one of the main things she grieved about was the thought of never being able to have a child. She said that she could never allow her and her husband to be unprotected, so they did an "artificial self-insemination," something Jako said was hard and complicated, but she also laughed while talking about the unique process.

Jako has complete viral suppression and said studies show there is less than a 1 percent chance that the disease can be transmitted to her baby.

"Everyone has risks when having a child and this is our risk we're willing to take," she said. "We will love and support our child no matter what happens."

Matjiua Kauapira, Elon's Periclean-in-Residence from Namibia, attended Jako's speech and also had lunch with her earlier in

the day. Afterwards, she also attended Jako's Q&A session.

During that session, Kauapira commented that she thinks Jako is very brave and complimented her on her courage. She also asked Jako what she would do if she died or was not able to be with her child for any other reason.

Jako said she felt that was a good question and said, "I'm going to try to be there as long as I can. I think of death as a part of life now. I accept death much more."

She said she has lost a lot of friends over the years and two of the people in the documentary have died.

"I'm amazed to still be standing here today," she said. "We've got to take care of ourselves and we've got to take care of each other more than ever before."

Kauapira was surprised about the status of HIV/AIDS in the United States.

"I thought things were different here," Kauapira said. "I thought there was less stigma."

Raquel Corona and Rachel Copeland, Periclean Scholars from the class of 2006, attended the event with Kauapira.

Copeland said she feels the issue is cross-cultural.

"It was special for her because in

Namibia it's so much harder because it's everywhere," Copeland said. "It was also important for her to see Jako have so much courage, because in Namibia, the stigma attached to AIDS is very strong."

Corona said she thinks it is important that Elon students get to hear speakers like Jako.

"It really brings it home," she said.

Jako told the students in the audience that they are in college because they have hopes and dreams for the future. She also said it is good health that makes these things that we dream about possible.

"The choices you make right now can change your life," she said.

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Natasha Nader/Photographer
Jako was infected with HIV at age 18. She is now married and pregnant with her first child.

HIV/AIDS STATISTICS

-By the end of 2005, 40.3 million people were living with HIV/AIDS, including 17.5 million women and 2.3 million children under the age of 15.

-4.9 million people became infected with HIV in 2005, including 700,000 children. Of these, 3.2 million new

infections occurred in Sub-Saharan Africa.

-In 2005 alone, a total of 3.1 million people died of HIV/AIDS-related causes.

-Worldwide, only one in 10 persons infected with HIV has been tested and knows his/her HIV status.

Facts gathered from Global Health Council.

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