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# The Carolina Times

THE TRUTH UNBRIDED

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Freddie Ayers is an American funk, soul, and jazz composer and vibraphone player. Ayers and his band performed at Hayti Heritage Center for two shows Nov. 29 and 30. Ayers, bottom right, delighted the audiences.

Spec. 1 is World AIDS Day

## Some Hopeful Signs in the HIV/AIDS War

By Jazelle Hunt  
NNPA Washington Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Lewis Thornton likes to live in a tranquil tea time be- expanding her brand and pills she has to take each at that's nothing compared 21 pills she was taking in the best days of battling full-AIDS.

Thornton was diagnosed with AIDS at 23 years old after at- tending to donate blood. The following year she shared her story and made the cover of Es- sence magazine, instantly be- coming the face of HIV/AIDS among young, successful, hetero- sexual black women, catapulting her into a life of activism and advocacy. Today, she continues to educate, teach, and welcome the world into her life through her winning syndicated blog, *Living with AIDS*.

She certainly is living. Now 51 years old, Thornton is an Emmy-Award winner, author, life coach and motivational speaker, jewelry designer, and avid reader.

"Everything I've done is live incredibly well with this disease," says Thornton, who lives in Chicago. "Don't confuse my HIV now with how it used to be. Now, they can keep you here and you can live a full life, but it is a very hard life."

In 2010, the HIV/AIDS mortality rate is 2.7 (per 100,000), down from 8.3 in 1990. Thanks to ad- vances in research, treatment, and global management, HIV-positive people are living longer, better lives. It's a mixed bag. We are still saddened by every new infection, and they're still happening so rapidly," says Tammy Tenner, executive director of D.C.-based nonprofit, Metro Teen AIDS. "But it's not like the past, when we were burying people very quickly after diagnosis. We spend so much time looking at what's broken, we don't often look at what's working."

There is a lot that is working. In D.C. for example, where the infamous infection rate has been reduced to that of developing nations, the Department of Health is touting a 50 percent decline in new infections over the past four years, thanks to a battery of free services and community awareness campaigns. Globally, the rate of infection for black women is on the decline. Globally, the rate of new infections dropped 33 percent since 2001.

"In 2013 are very, very, very different than it was in 1982, or 1992, or even 2002," says Phillis K. Williams, founder and director of the Black AIDS Institute. "The treatments available today are better, more effective, and less toxic than ever before."

It's not an overstatement to call the first generation of antiretrovirals toxic. HIV/AIDS medications are designed to block the enzymes that allow the virus to replicate; but in the 1990s, the drugs blocked both the virus and the body's ability to generate healthy cells, thus crippling tissues and organs. Side effects included nausea, diarrhea, concentrated fatty deposits in some areas and natural-fat deterioration in oth- erwise healthy areas, hepatitis, bone loss, and even nerve damage.

Patients had to take a handful of these pills, several times daily. And usually, doctors wouldn't start giving these pills until after the virus' symptoms became dire.

Today, someone who's diagnosed early and begins treatment immediately might take three pills a few times a day, with few, if any, dietary restrictions, and with mild side effects.

Thornton has been living with HIV for 35 years.

"I live an active life. I work, some would say too hard. I run, hike, swim, and go to the beach. I do a white water raft - none of that would be possible without treatment," he says. "And I'm not afraid. It's not like I have secret access to something others don't have access to."

The improved treatment has also unexpectedly given rise to the development of preventative measures like the condom.

Tenner, of Metro Teen AIDS explains, "We know that if we can get people on anti-virals early it improves their outcomes, but it also makes them less likely to transmit to others. You literally become less contagious. So what's coming down the pike is how HIV negative people can protect themselves. We're going to put more tools in the box for people at higher risk of contracting HIV." (Continued On Page 7)



Thornton on the cover of Essence.

## Young Black Voters Pay Higher 'Time Tax' at the Polls

By Freddie Allen  
NNPA Washington Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) -As the American electorate becomes more diverse, new voting laws threaten to disenfranchise young black and Latino voters in what a new report called "the largest wave of voter suppression since the enactment of the 1965 Voting Rights Act."

The report by OurTime.org and Advancement Project, titled "The Time Tax," details disparities in the excessive wait times that millennials (18-29 years-old), especially millennials of color, endured to cast votes during the 2012 November elections.

According to the report, millennials are expected to account for 40 percent of the electorate in less than eight years including a higher proportion of young minority voters.

During the 2012 November elections, millennial voters (18-29 years-old) accounted for 19 percent of the electorate. While turnout for Latinos, Asians and the youngest voters decreased (18-24 years-old), voter turnout for blacks increased.

Yet, blacks "waited an average of 23 minutes to vote, compared to only 12 minutes for whites," stated the report.

## Kan. agency urges black families to do histories

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) - The Kansas African American Affairs Commission is urging black families to compile oral histories through interviews this year after Thanksgiving.

The commission is calling the project "A New Black Friday." The title is a play on the nickname for the Friday after Thanksgiving, typically the busiest holiday shopping day of the year.

The commission is encouraging people to speak with grandparents, great-grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, or any other elders about their memories. It even has posted a brochure with potential topics for interviews on its website at [www.kaaacs.ks.gov](http://www.kaaacs.ks.gov)

The commission is asking people to write short essays about their interviews and submit them by Jan. 1.

Commission Executive Director Mildred Edwards said compiling the histories will add to the knowledge about the state's heritage.



Tafari Ali: 'Stigma Exists.'  
[NNPA Photo by Freddie Allen]

## Conference Tackles the Stigma Surrounding HIV/AIDS

By Freddie Allen  
NNPA Washington Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - In 1992, Beverly Becton, addicted to drugs and suffering from pneumonia, began to scream as she sat in a hospital room alone at the D.C. General Hospital in Southeast, Washington, D.C.

"Oh, god why me! Oh, God why me!" Becton screamed. Becton had just learned that she was HIV-positive at a time when many in the black community and health care providers still believed that a positive test was an automatic death sentence. Becton said that the doctor who told her that she was HIV-positive, left her in the room without providing any treatment information, counseling or referrals. Becton called a niece and told her about the diagnosis.

Her niece freaked out. Later, Becton would tell the niece that she "was just playing" that she hadn't contracted HIV. Becton's older sister told her not to tell anybody else.

"My sister sent me into total denial," said Becton. She continued to use drugs and avoided treatment as she waited to die.

The virus that causes AIDS that had killed so many others didn't send her to her grave.

"One day I just got tired of dying, killing myself," said Becton. Seven years after receiving her first diagnosis, Becton decided to get help, tackling the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS head on.

Becton, 52, now an AIDS activist, shared her story at the International Conference on Stigma at Howard University last week. The event featured lectures and panel discussions on the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS and other health issues in an effort to raise awareness about what conference organizers called "a major barrier to prevention and treatment of HIV and a violation of human rights."

The audience included health care providers, students, community leaders, activists, and people living with HIV/AIDS and their family and friends.

Jeanne White Ginder, Ryan White's mother, was the keynote speaker during the morning session. She talked about how her son, desperately wanted to be treated like everyone else at time when little was known about HIV/AIDS.

In 1984, Ryan White, born with hemophilia, gained national prominence when he was barred from attending school following an AIDS diagnosis at 13 years old, making him one of the youngest hemophiliacs to be diagnosed with AIDS. White won that battle, but after facing discrimination, protests and threats of violence in his hometown of Kokomo, Ind., White's family moved and White transferred to a new school in Cicero, Ind., where students received HIV/AIDS education and training from physicians and health care providers before he arrived. Students and school officials at the new school welcomed White with open arms.

White died in April 1990 following complications from a respiratory infection. Four months later, Congress passed the Ryan White Act. (Continued AOn APage 7)