

In Spite Of Dangers

Survey Says Gay Men Have Risky Sex



MINORITY BUSINESS — Donald A. Pais (right), General Motors vice president in charge of the Materials Management Staff, accepts the National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC) Leadership Award from Harriet Michel, NMSDC President, in recognition of the automaker's support of minority business development. In 1989, General Motors purchased more than \$1.15 billion in goods and services from minority-owned and operated suppliers and carriers. The awards ceremony was held recently at the New York Hilton Hotel. Other honorees included John H. Johnson, chairman and CEO of Johnson Publishing and Joseph A. Unanue, President of Goya Foods.

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A nationwide survey indicating that nearly half of black gay and bisexual men practice unsafe sex - in spite of knowing the danger - illustrates an urgent need for more education programs directed at the black community, members of an AIDS research group said.

"Prevention messages have generally not penetrated the veil of denial and fear within our own community," said Phill Wilson, health training coordinator for the National Task Force on AIDS Prevention.

The task force, the research branch of the National Association of Black and White Men Together, conducted the survey of 982 black men who have been sexually active with other men. They released the results of the survey this week.

Eighty-nine percent knew that about the human immunodeficiency virus, and 97 percent knew it can be transmitted through unsafe sex. But only 54 percent said they always or almost always practiced safe sex, according to the task force.

"These statistics are shocking but come as no surprise when you look at some of the other survey data," said Reggie Williams, executive director of the task force.

"Less than half the men surveyed have attended a safer sex workshop, slightly more than half have attended an AIDS education program," he said. "Yet 80 percent of the men believe education is the key to safer sex practices."

The study also found that "most people think they are better informed than they really are." Additionally, "many respondents are inconsistent and find ways to rationalize occasional unsafe sex," the report states.

And while one third of the men polled said they had sex with women, only 31 percent, "always or almost always use a condom" during intercourse with them, the study found.

The task force said its study, funded with a grant from the U. S. Centers for Disease Control, is the first of its kind. Previous nationwide studies have not focused solely on the black community, they said.

Williams said he was not aware of any nationwide study of the sexual behavior of gay and bisexual white

men. But in San Francisco, a March 1990 random phone survey of gay and bisexual white men found that 30 percent of those polled did not practice safe sex.

"It says that up until now, the educational and previous efforts directed at the white gay male population has been successful," said Beverly Hayon, spokeswoman for the San Francisco Department of Public Health.

"But the work in the minority communities needs to take a different tack," she added.

The problem of addressing AIDS in the black community is complicated by real or perceived homophobia — an atmosphere that hinders and open discussion of AIDS education and prevention, Wilson said.

Black men can be devastated by homophobia because they see the black community as a sanctuary from racism, then get kicked out by homophobia, he added.

Only 40 percent of those surveyed

felt strongly that they could talk about AIDS with members of their families and that their families would be supportive if they contracted AIDS.

Because of these and other cultural constraints, the black gay or bisexual man is "living in a sexual schizophrenia," Williams said. "They are the AIDS war's walking wounded."

Gay and bisexual black men do not "segregate themselves into gay ghettos as white men do," Williams said. As a result the need for culturally specific education and support is increased.

Williams cited a lack of self-esteem among black gay and bisexual men as the root of the discrepancy between knowledge and behavior. Only 6 percent of the men surveyed privately think of themselves as heterosexual, however, 35 percent identify themselves as so publicly, the study found.

Miami Drops Welcome Resolution For Mandela After Cuban Protest

MIAMI (AP) — The City Commission dropped a planned welcome resolution for Nelson Mandela last Friday and some Cuban exiles called for demonstrations during his visit here to protest Mandela's praise for Fidel Castro.

Mandela is scheduled to address a labor convention in Miami Beach on June 28 as part of his U. S. tour.

The political furor arose over Mandela's comments last Thursday on ABC in which he thanked Castro, as well as Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leader Yasser Arafat and Libyan President Muammar Gadhafi for their longtime support of the one-outlawed African National Congress (ANC).

Those remarks also prompted criticism from American Jewish leaders.

The statement "pained many, many members of the Miami

community," said Mayor Xavier Suarez, a Cuban-American.

"There was an unwillingness to analyze other struggles for freedom," Suarez said. "It was sort of 'He's my ally and my ally can do no wrong.'"

A proclamation welcoming Mandela and praising his struggle was dropped because such measures are traditionally approved by unanimous vote, and two Cuban-American commission members — Victor DeYurre and Miriam Alonso — have now objected, Suarez said.

The mayor added that he also was troubled by the comments, although he said he strongly supports Mandela's campaign for a non-racial democracy.

The Miami reaction was not only on an official level. Phone lines on Cuban talk shows lit up with almost all callers condemning Mandela.

"We Cubans should go protest," one caller to Radio Mambi said. "Out with Mandela — we have enough communists here."

Tomas Regalado, the station's news director, said Cubans felt Mandela was hypocritical.

"This guy has a double standard on human rights," Regalado said. "He wants human rights for black people in South Africa, but he's denying human rights to the black people in Cuba."

Mandela said Western leaders should not assume that their enemies are the same as the ANC's enemies. He said Castro, Arafat and Gadhafi had been staunch supporters of the ANC at times when the West ignored the black South African cause.

In New York, leaders of Jewish organizations also criticized Mandela.

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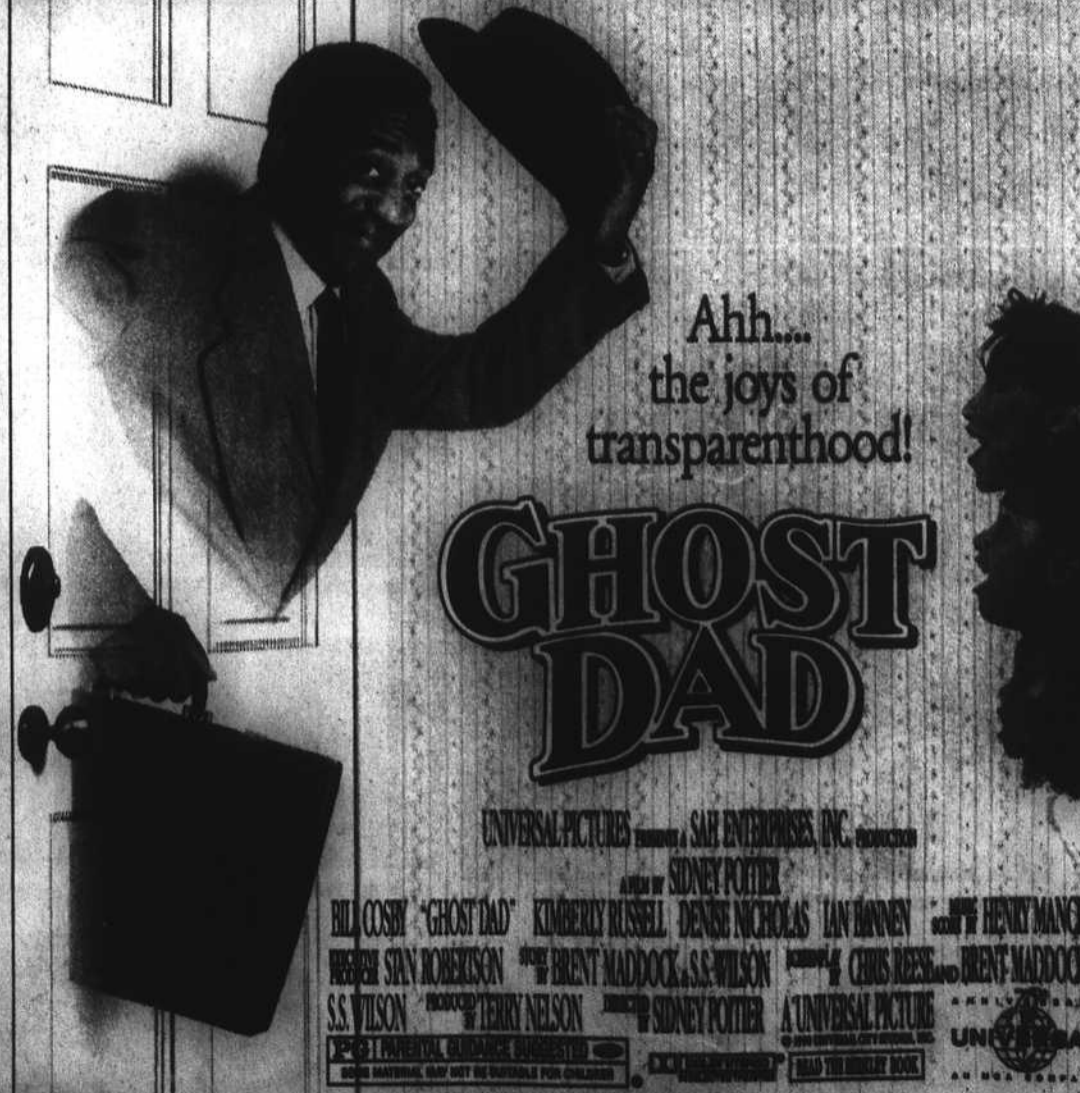
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