Stigma Free

After her HIV-positive diagnosis, Tembeni Fazo started a dialogue to end HIV discrimination.

March 1, 2011 As told to Willette Francis

After I was diagnosed with HIV in 2001, the stigma I experienced in my family and community at large made me realize that people were uneducated about HIV/AIDS. They didn't know what the virus was about. As a result, I felt motivated to educate others about [people living with HIV].

I know that being diagnosed with HIV isn't something everyone can instantly accept. Through my work at African Services Committee in New York City, I'm able to help people [living with HIV] who have nothing—no family and no friends. My work as a peer educator to other Africans in the community gives people hope. We talk the same language, and we're all Africans dealing with the same issues.

My work as a community peer educator opens a dialogue where there is none. Once people start talking, communication creates a forward movement and opens a dialogue where there was silence. When people are quiet, everyone loses because there's no progress.

When people communicate, everyone airs their fears and we can address them. Talking is a way to empower others to stand up and be heard.

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http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/Stigma-Free-HIV-19988-6259