# No Fear

Can compassionate parenting go one-on-one with HIV?

December 4, 2008 By Kate Ferguson

---

When his former teammate John Amaechi came out publicly in 2007, NBA superstar Tim Hardaway launched into a diatribe, declaring: “I hate gay people.” In essence, the homophobic rant revealed that he was afraid of gay people, a sentiment shared by others whose irrational bias toward gays is perhaps unconsciously rooted in fear. This fear, often fed by ignorance, stigmatizes gay men, a dynamic still prevalent in the African-American community, where it fuels a rise in HIV.

But who are these gay men—or, as many are called today, “men who have sex with men” (MSM)? Simply put, they are people like you and me, people with parents and families and loved ones who care about them regardless of their sexual preferences. That innate family connection lies at the heart of an advertising campaign titled My Son Is My Life, launched by New York City-based Gay Men’s Health Crisis (GMHC).

My Son Is My Life was introduced in late summer, shortly after the Centers  for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced revised estimates of new HIV infections in the United States—53 percent of the 56,300 new infections in 2006 were among gay and bisexual men. In addition, in New York City alone, health officials cited a 33 percent increase of HIV infections among young gay men in the past six years—77 percent of them among black and Latino men.

In an effort to show the important role parents play in HIV prevention, GMHC papered New York City telephone kiosks with its campaign and distributed palm cards to community-based organizations, local businesses, bars and clubs. Apart from its advocacy function, the campaign was a clever strategy. Using family values as its platform, the ads employ a simple but dramatic visual—a father talking with his son. What an effective way to dismantle fear.

“HIV infection is fueled by ignorance and intolerance,” says Thomas Powell Jr., an HIV-positive GMHC client. “Compassionate parenting should start at home and through educational skills-building. Parents should first study the issues around HIV. This way, they would be better at educating their children as well as themselves about this vicious virus. Lack of education and supportive parenting gives the virus the power to grow. With education and supportive parents—plus safer sex practices, condom use and needle exchange—we can reduce the spread of the virus.”

As for Tim Hardaway, he later expressed remorse for his comments. On a personal campaign of enlightenment, he visited a gay rights advocacy children’s group and expressed his need for education and awareness. Clearly, Hardaway had faced his fear.

---

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/hiv-positive-child-15730-4337