What National Women & Girls' HIV/AIDS Awareness Day Means to Me

March 10, 2011 By Hydeia Broadbent

Today is National Women and Girls' HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. I am very excited about this opportunity to share my feelings and insight with Real Health about living with AIDS and to be able to spread awareness about the disease.

I feel America has really turned a blind eye on the topic of HIV/AIDS. I truly feel sorry for today's generation because when I was growing up in the '80s and '90s there were all kinds of HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns. AIDS was in your face all the time and it was cool to know your status. Now, because we have life-saving medications and people are no longer walking around looking like death, we have grown complacent.

But the reality is that the number of people becoming infected with the virus has not gone down by any means. It is estimated that more than one million people are living with HIV in the United States and more than half a million have died after developing AIDS.

What I question is, why have we grown silent about this deadly epidemic that is affecting so many of our brothers and sisters in communities across America?

It is estimated that 390,000 women above the age of 15 are living with HIV or AIDS in America. What's more, African-American and Hispanic women account for 80 percent of all AIDS cases in our nation.

As women we have lost our voices and our sense of self in our sexual relationships, and therefore our lives have been put in danger. Too often we feel as if HIV has a face and we can tell if someone is infected. Often, we feel that when it comes to HIV/AIDS it is someone else's problem. Well, the numbers tell me that it is everyone's problem.

Women must learn to talk to their sexual partners about being tested for STDs and HIV. This is your health we are talking about and women cannot continue to play Russian roulette with their own health. Knowing your status as well as your sexual partner's status is a big step in the fight against AIDS. It is estimated that of the more than one million people living with HIV in the United States, one in five (21 percent) of them is unaware of their infection.

I'll leave you with this thought: Think back to how many sexual partners you've had in your lifetime without both of you going together for an HIV test. Any one of those people could have been the one in five.

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