

## Why we... *Speak Out Loud!*

Too often HIV-Positive people suffer the Stigma of HIV/AIDS. On top of handling life altering news and new health challenges, they sometimes face rejection by family and friends when they need them the most. People with HIV/AIDS may be forced out of homes, lose their jobs or even become victims of violence.

## *We want to change that!*

So often when people speak about HIV/AIDS, they speak in terms of statistics and forget the faces that make up the epidemic.

Having someone share the story of how HIV affected their life, engages the audience and teaches that behind the statistics every individual offers a unique story that defies stereotypes, transcends categorization, and reminds us that we are all human and need compassion.

*Enlist a Positive Champion to speak at your next event and help end discrimination, stigma and fear.*

## Who We Are

Positive Champions Speakers Bureau is a committed and diverse group of HIV-Positive people who know first hand the effects that HIV has on communities.

Positive Champions educate about HIV/AIDS and the issues of living with the disease. Our mission is to end the myths and stigma associated with it.

## See Us on You Tube

Still not sure? Hear a sample of our stories. Visit Positive Champions on YouTube.com, use the link below to listen now,



**or visit us at:**  
**PositiveChampions.org**

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## Faces of HIV/AIDS

Every 9 ½ minutes, someone in the US is infected with HIV. An estimated 1 in 4 individuals that have HIV don't know it. Meet some faces of HIV who make ending HIV & Stigma their priority.



### Mary Benefield

*"HIV has no stereotypes. I come from a background of faith. The sanctity of marriage and monogamy in a relationship is important to me. But that didn't stop me from becoming infected. It is critical to realize that you only KNOW what you have done."*

### Roderick "Omar" Mayes

*"When you are young you think you are invincible... I served my country as a U.S. Marine. I was having fun. I was alive. I was diagnosed with AIDS at 26.*

*It generally takes 8 to 10 years for an untreated HIV infection to become AIDS. That means I may have been infected the FIRST time I had sex.*



### Jim Geary

*"I wanted people with AIDS to be different; if they were different then I was safe. But in forming the nation's first AIDS support group in 1981, I found we were more similar than different. AIDS could happen to anyone, even me. The same is true today. The faces have changed, but not the Stigma and need to be valued, accepted and LOVED."*



### Gary Richardson

*"HIV does not discriminate. It touches all walks of life...doctors, lawyers, even celebrities. You don't have to look or feel sick to be HIV-Positive. That is why it is important to get tested regularly. Being HIV-positive is not the end of the world, we can now live LONG, vibrant lives."*



## What is Behind AIDS Stigma?

Discrimination & stigma fuels the epidemic. Fear of rejection and confidentiality prevent many from getting tested. This means they may spread HIV to others without knowing it. It also prevents people from talking about their status with sex partners or people with whom they share needles.

- ▶ HIV is a deadly disease that many people fear.
- ▶ Some still wrongly believe that they can catch HIV through casual contact, such as sharing a drinking glass or a toilet seat. This greatly increases their fear about being near people who are infected.
- ▶ Many people connect HIV/AIDS with behaviors that are already stigmatized, such as sex between gay individuals or injecting drugs.
- ▶ Some people believe that having HIV/AIDS is the person's fault. They might think it's the result of moral weakness and deserve to be punished.

## How is HIV Spread?

You may have heard rumors or myths about how HIV is transmitted. Here are the facts:

- ▶ Not using a condom when having sex with a person who has HIV. All unprotected sex with someone who has HIV contains some risk.
- ▶ Having multiple sex partners or the presence of other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) increases the risk of infection during sex. Unprotected oral sex is also a risk for HIV transmission, but it is a much lower risk than anal or vaginal sex.
- ▶ Sharing needles, syringes, rinse water or other items used to prepare illicit drugs for injection.
- ▶ Being born to an infected mother—HIV can be passed from mother to child during pregnancy, birth or breast-feeding. Treatments are available to reduce the chances of passing HIV to the baby.

**We need to protect ourselves from the HIV virus, not people with AIDS**

## How can HIV be Prevented?

The most common ways HIV is transmitted is through anal or vaginal sex or sharing needles with a person infected with HIV. It is important to take steps to reduce the risks associated with these activities.

- ▶ Know your HIV status. Get tested for HIV at least once. If you are at increased risk for HIV, you should get tested at least once a year.
- ▶ Abstain from sexual activity or be in a mutually monogamous relationship with an uninfected partner.
- ▶ If you have HIV, get medical care, treatment and support, to help you stay healthy and reduce your ability to transmit the virus to others.
- ▶ Limit your number of sex partners. The fewer partners you have, the less likely you are to encounter someone who is infected with HIV.
- ▶ Use condoms consistently and correctly. Latex condoms are highly effective at preventing transmission of HIV.
- ▶ Do not use injection drugs. If you do, do not share needles or works.