



## **World AIDS Day: Greater government and community response to HIV/AIDS epidemic is needed**

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On World AIDS Day, we mourn all the people we have lost to this dreadful disease — our lovers, our friends, our family members, our leaders. Our hearts go out to all those who are now suffering and dying. And we acknowledge with great sadness the reality that thousands more will become infected during the coming year, with no end in sight.

Here in the United States, the attitude of so many within our own community is that there's not a lot more to be done. That anyone who acquires HIV today has no one to blame but himself. That HIV/AIDS is most certainly not a gay disease. That it's time to move on.

We must do everything possible to end these attitudes or we will be going through these same grim World AIDS Day motions year after year, year after year.

We can no longer respond with silence to studies that show that nearly half of African-American gay and bisexual men in our large cities have HIV, and two-thirds don't even know it. Or shrug off the fact that of the 129 government-approved interventions to address HIV in African Americans, only one has been designed or adapted for black gay men.

We can no longer buy into the blame-the-victim mentality when the fact is that our government continues to slash funding for prevention programs.

We can no longer pretend to be mystified by the surge in HIV in young gay and bisexual men when, instead of abolishing the abominable and thoroughly-debunked 'abstinence-only' programs, the Democratic-controlled Congress is - this very day - considering giving them a huge increase in funding.

When - in a few weeks - the government announces statistics showing a huge surge in new HIV cases, we cannot let them explain it away saying, 'It's just because we are counting more accurately.'

We must break the mindset that this isn't our problem, when the fact is that gay and bisexual men are still the majority of people living with HIV and still the majority of new infections.

This has to be the year when our community brings HIV/AIDS back to the core of our agenda for complete equality.