

# MAGIC JOHNSON

## On the Campaign to End Black AIDS

### Earvin "Magic" Johnson

In 1991 sports legend Earvin "Magic" Johnson, Jr., announced his HIV-positive status, immediately becoming one of the most prominent crusaders for AIDS awareness. The Magic Johnson Foundation supports a number of educational and prevention programs, including the award-winning "I Stand With Magic" campaign to end AIDS in the African-American community.

→ [magicjohnson.com](http://magicjohnson.com)



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Everything in my life changed seventeen years ago, the day I shared the news of my HIV status. I was in the prime of my career and, like most young people, felt invincible. So being told I was HIV-positive was a shock. While I'd heard of the disease, I didn't know much about living with it—back then it was perceived as more of a death sentence. I had to change my thinking and focus on the future and on living with the disease.

The hardest part was telling my wife, Cookie, who was pregnant with our son. I said I would understand if she didn't want to stay with me. That was the toughest moment. But she assured me that we were going to beat this together, and I felt that with her by my side, I could find a way to live with HIV.

There is no handbook passed out to those diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. I could have the best care and resources in the world, but it was up to me to educate myself. By working with my doctors to find the right medication and regimen, and by eating healthier and staying active, I've taken control of the disease instead of letting it take control of me. I maintain a positive frame of mind and wake up every day feeling blessed to be alive.

Prior to my diagnosis, I was aware of the disease and knew of others, such as Elizabeth Glaser and Arthur Ashe, who had contracted it. I admired Ashe because he never let HIV stop him from living or from working to increase awareness of the disease and of the importance of efficient health care. Elizabeth Glaser inspired me to take action and understand that my story could help others. By starting the Magic Johnson Foundation in 1991, I've been doing my part to encourage young adults to know their status and stay protected.

On December 1, 2006, internationally known as World AIDS Day, I launched the "I Stand with Magic" program, part of the "Campaign to End Black AIDS," in partnerships with Abbott, a global health-care company. The program seeks to reduce the stigma of HIV in the African-American community and increase awareness of testing, prevention, and treatment methods. Ultimately, my hope is to reduce the rate of new HIV infections among African-Americans.

The African-American community is the hardest hit in the United States when it comes to HIV/AIDS. Although they make up only thirteen percent of the population, they account for almost half of the estimated number of HIV/AIDS cases diagnosed in 2006. As alarming as the numbers are for all African-Americans, they are even

### FACT

The Magic Johnson Foundation has provided free HIV/AIDS testing to more than 38,000 Americans in 16 major cities. Additionally, the program has educated nearly 280,000 people about HIV and helped patients receive access to doctors/medicine through four AHF Magic Johnson Healthcare Clinics.



**FACT**

→ 64% of women living with HIV/AIDS in 2005 were African-American.

→ 74% of them contracted HIV through unprotected heterosexual sex.

more shocking for African-American women. A resounding 64 percent of women living with HIV/AIDS in 2005 were black, and HIV is the leading cause of death among black women aged 25 to 34 years. Those statistics have to change.

The strongest barrier to getting tested is often our own fear. We should be more afraid of being HIV-positive and *not knowing it*. Getting tested is the only way we can stop the spread of the disease.

Seventeen years ago we couldn't speak openly about HIV/AIDS without encountering tremendous fear and discrimination. That is changing. Today, our youth want to know the facts, and telling them the truth will motivate them to abstain, use protection, and get tested. I want to encourage young adults to be comfortable talking about sex and HIV/AIDS.

I hope that by visiting schools and colleges, I help young adults understand that they have to take responsibility for their own health.

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