

HIV

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zation, HIV/AIDS "numbers are running rampant" in the African-American community and we can no longer keep silent. HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of death among African-Americans between the ages of 25 and 44.

The march and rally was an attempt to protest about the silence surrounding this disease.

Only through the spread of information and action will the community be able to defeat this epidemic health problem.

The march and activities lasted until 3:00pm, allowing the community ample time to get involved and join the revolution.

Las Vegas F.A.C.T. aims to teach the community about taking action to help itself through creative education, music, poetry, dance and free confidential HIV testing to prevent the continuing spread of this disease.

Support group meetings for its clients are held each week at the organization's office to discuss and educate individuals about the disease, prevention and treatments to help those affected survive it.

Eileen Mason, Executive Director of Las Vegas F.A.C.T., spoke about the importance of this gathering: "We're looking forward to today to again tap into our community and, perhaps, some people and resources within our community to spread the news and spread the word about HIV and AIDS within our community... individuals of African-American descent are being touched by this thing, still, in massive numbers," Mason said.

Mason said optimistically, "We are feeling quite confident that the efforts we put out into the community will result in reducing the numbers of cases of HIV/AIDS [in our community]. So, once again we are gathered at the West Las Vegas Cultural Arts Center to provide this information through education, outreach and entertainment venues. Hopefully, it will be successful. We don't have the number (of people attending) that we would have liked to see, but we know that it's one step at a time, one day at a time and one foot in front of the other."

"About 50 people joined in the march from our office... and we've marched from Wheeler Peak, down Martin Luther King Boulevard to Lake Mead, and then here to the West Las Vegas Cultural Arts Center where we are joined by other supporters in the community," Mason said.

Mason credited State Assemblyman Harvey Munford (Dist. 6), US Congresswoman Shelley Berkley (D-Nev), Fan Club Entertainment, the Clark County Health District, and other service providers for their help and "collaboration in this effort."

Munford explained his concerns and reasons for participating: "Well, I think that this effort is trying to send a message to bring about some awareness and that people should realize the seriousness of this disease. We know that

on the continent of Africa that this is a serious matter. I'm sure that everyone can relate to someone who has HIV/AIDS, either a family member or friend or someone you know. This is something that we all should be on board about. That's why I am out here to do anything that I can to bring some awareness of this disease within my district."

Berkley attended the rally and spoke about the significance of the day: "Well, I think that this is a very important issue, and AIDS is a

[scourge] on our community. It doesn't matter if you're Black or White, if you're an American or an Asian, an African, man or woman; it's killing us."

Berkley said, "It's time that we educate the public so that they can protect themselves because, unfortunately, the Bush Administration isn't going to protect any of us. They're cutting funding for AIDS research, they're cutting funding for AIDS housing and help for people who have AIDS. So, it's going to be incumbent for

all of us to take care of ourselves, get educated, get tested, and join this revolution," Berkley asserted.

Former Clark County School District Administrator Anika Johnson Cunningham presented a thought-provoking perspective on the global AIDS crisis. She said, "I'm glad that there are people out here spreading knowledge and concern to help stop the spread of AIDS. One thing that troubles me greatly is that in 2005, I still very rarely

hear anyone talking about the origin of the AIDS virus. For those that don't know, it isn't a secret; it's been covered up, but it's not a secret. It's not a conspiracy, because the truth is out there: AIDS was created by our government, paid for...research was paid for by our tax dollars, for scientists to discover and create a virus for the sole purpose of targeting melanin-dominated people. That's why we are dying disproportionately... it's doing what it was supposed to do."



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