

FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

I started writing *one in two* at the end of 2018. I was approaching the 10th anniversary of being HIV+, and I found myself depressed and experiencing suicidal ideations. The shame I once felt about being positive reemerged. I knew writing would help me navigate through my shame, but it was difficult to



Donja R. Love. Photo by Brandon Nick.

just get out of bed to get my laptop off my desk. So I grabbed my phone from the nightstand and started writing this play in the notes app.

The more I wrote, the more I thought of a 2016 study released by the CDC, which projected, '*one in two Black gay and bisexual men will be diagnosed with HIV in their lifetime.*' I thought, 'This is absurd - and this play needs to reflect that.' The language, the characters, even the form, needs to be as absurd as that statistic. That thought cemented by something my genius director, Stevie Walker-Webb, once said during a workshop of the play, 'Being Black in America is absurd.' Thinking of the level of trauma we go through, his comment profoundly hit me. The more I reflected on his words, the more I realized the same is true for being queer and for living with HIV. The way we have to navigate the world to survive is absurd. Imagine living at the intersection of all three identities. Sometimes you have to laugh at the absurdity.

But after writing *one in two*, nothing was funny. I felt incredibly raw and exposed, so I decided not to share the play with anyone. I kept it in the note section of my phone and told myself it would stay there. A few weeks later, a friend reached out, asking if I could talk to a young man recently diagnosed with HIV. They shared that this young man was not taking his diagnosis well. He started heavily drinking, using sex to

numb his pain, and he stopped taking his meds.

After hearing this, the young man and I met that night. The entire time we held space with each other, I listened to him bravely share his experience of becoming positive and how everything has been a blur since. With so much of what he shared about his journey, I found myself thinking, 'I remember that being my experience, too.' As if what we went through is a rite of passage for Black queer men. Considering the CDC's statistic, one could argue that it might be. What I also remember from that night is his eyes. They had an incredible look of defeat like he was ready to give up, but they were also filled with hope.

After we parted ways, I could not stop thinking about that young man: his vulnerability and the look in his eyes. I also could not stop thinking about the play in the notes app on my phone. I realized it's not just my story, but the story of a community - a community that's in a hidden state of emergency.

At the end of *one in two*, Number Two cries out for help. He asks people to do something. With this play, I'm asking people to do something. Included below are resources to help us 'do something' - to help us make the CDC's projected statistic for us Black queer and bi folx nonexistent - to help end this epidemic and save our community.

— DONJA R. LOVE

NEW YORK AREA HIV/AIDS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

AIDS Center of Queens County (ACQC) **acqc.org**

Queens: 161-21 Jamaica Avenue, 6th Floor • (718) 896-2500
Jamaica Hillside: (718) 739-2525
Far Rockaway: (718) 868-8645
Long Island City: (718) 472-9400

Case Management, Housing, Legal, Preventive Education, Mental Health, Harm Reduction and a Syringe Exchange program for HIV-positive and HIV-affected people in Queens.

AJS Brooklyn Medical Practice **(AIDS Healthcare Foundation Healthcare Center)**

Brooklyn: 348 13th Street, Suite 201 • (718) 369-4850

APICHA Community Health Center **apicha.org**

Manhattan: 400 Broadway • (212) 334-6029
APICHA Community Health Center delivers affordable health care and support services focused on individuals identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT), people living with HIV/AIDS, Asian & Pacific Islanders and other people of color. Services provided are primary care, HIV specialty care, sexual health services, as well as prevention, health education and behavioral health programs.

Brooklyn Community Pride Center: Free HIV Testing

lgbtbrooklyn.org

lgbtbrooklyn.org/healthwellness

Brooklyn: 1360 Fulton Street, Ground Floor

Free, walk-in, on site rapid HIV tests by AIDS Healthcare Foundation.

Gay Men's Health Crisis

gmhc.org

Manhattan: 446 West 33rd St • (212) 367-1000

Social and supportive services for people living with HIV/AIDS, including case management and referrals, legal services, counseling, nutrition, wellness, workplace readiness, and more. Experience with transgender people, services in English and Spanish, and services for young people.

Harlem United Community AIDS Center

harlemunited.org

Manhattan: 306 Lenox Ave • (212) 803-2850

Harlem United provides help or advice for people in the community with HIV/AIDS. Since 1988 it has provided health and housing related. Later it became known as the Harlem United Community AIDS Center.

The HEAT Program:

Health and Education Alternatives for Teens

heatprogram.org

Brooklyn: 760 Parkside Ave, Room 308 • (718) 467-4446

HEAT is the only comprehensive care program of its kind that provides age and developmentally appropriate, culturally competent care for heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth who are living with or at very high risk for HIV/AIDS. The program is in a youth-friendly, discrete and easily accessible venue at the Center for Healthcare Services at Bedford-Stuyvesant. The HEAT Program operates a "one-stop" full service clinic, offering a full range of medical, mental health and supportive services that are tailored to meet the special health care needs of young people.

Hispanic Aids Forum (HAF)

hafnyc.org

Manhattan: 213 West 35th St, Floor 12 • (212) 563-4500

Queens: 62-07 Woodside Ave, Suite 300 • (718) 803-2766

Supportive services for HIV+ people. Queens location has support groups and services for women of transgender experience.

HIV Law Project

hivlawproject.org

Manhattan: 15 Maiden Lane, 18th Fl.

Serves HIV+ Bronx and Manhattan residents with housing, immigration, benefits, and healthcare. Bilingual English/Spanish.

Housing Works

housingworks.org

Many Locations in Manhattan and Brooklyn • (877) 296-9264

Services for low-income people who are HIV+, including: Medical, Dental, and Mental Health care; COBRA Case Management; ADHC; Emergency assistance and referrals; substance use counseling; Legal Services, Transgender Services, Transgender Support Group, and Transgender Transitional Housing Program.

NE2SS: Two-Spirit Specific Training

Contact Harlan Pruden, training@ne2ss.org • (646) 351-7360.

Two-Spirit Then and Now: Reclaiming Our Place of Honor enables participants working in behavioral health, mental health, substance/alcohol prevention and treatment centers and HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment programs to work more effectively with Two-Spirit people.

NYC LGBT Center: Gender Identity Project

gaycenter.org/gip

The Center's Gender Identity Project (GIP) works to foster the healthy development of transgender and gender non-conforming people, partners, family and community.

Staten Island LGBT Community Center

silgbtcenter.org

Staten Island: 25 Victory Blvd, 3rd Floor • (718) 808-1360

Offers free and confidential HIV testing. Please call to schedule an appointment. They have a comprehensive HIV/STI prevention program for 16-24 year old gay/bisexual men and transgender individuals which includes individualized risk-reduction counseling, a support group, and peer outreach training and activities.

LGBTQ DIRECTORY

Office of the New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer
comptroller.nyc.gov/lgbtq

NEW YORK STATE HIV PROVIDER DIRECTORY

Email hivproviderdirectory@health.ny.gov with any questions or concerns.

health.ny.gov › [general](#) › [resources](#) › [provider_directory](#) › [docs](#)

Access experienced HIV clinical care providers within New York State.

nyc.gov › [doh](#) › [health-topics](#) › [aids-hiv-care-resources-in-nyc](#)

HIV care and treatment services are available to all New Yorkers living with HIV, regardless of their ability to pay or immigration status. Visit the NYC Health Map or text "CARE" to 877-877 to find a provider near you.

ORGANIZATIONS

The Gatekeepers Collective

thegatekeeperscollective.com

Manhattan: 730 Riverside Drive, Suite 9E • 212-694-1607

Harlem Pride

harlempride.org

Manhattan: 42 Macombs Place • 646-858-3125

NYTAG (New York Transgender Advocacy Group)

nytag.org

Manhattan: 215 West 125th Street, Suite 2 • 646-643-6303

DBGM

dgbm.org

P.O. Box 284, New York, NY 10032

Adodi New York

adodi.org

Manhattan: 147 West 24th Street, 3rd Floor

Adodi National is an organization for same-gender attracted men of African descent that offers emotional and physical well-being. Their annual summer retreat is a support system for black HIV+ black same-gender-loving men.

TESTING SITES

THE CENTER The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center of NY

gaycenter.org

Manhattan: 208 West 13th St • 212-620-7310

nyc.gov › [site](#) › [doh](#) › [health](#) › [health-topics](#) › [hiv-be-hiv-sure](#)

You can find free or low-cost HIV testing locations near you by

- Visiting an NYC Sexual Health Clinic, where anyone 12+ can get a confidential, anonymous test.
- Searching the NYC Health Map.
- Texting "TESTNYC" to 877-877 or calling 311.

CLINICAL PROVIDERS

Gotham Medical Group/Medical Offices of Dr. Kris Bungay, Chelsea Village Medical Building

gothammed.com

Manhattan: 314 West 14th St • 212-620-0144

HIV/AIDS EDUCATION/INFORMATION

hiv.gov

New York State Department of Health

(NYSDOH) AIDS Institute (AI)

health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/providers/workgroups/hab
518-402-6809

cdc.gov/hiv/basics/livingwithhiv/resources

Find HIV care services external icon across the United States, including HIV medical care, housing assistance, and substance abuse and mental health services. Find your state HIV/AIDS toll-free hotline external icon to connect with agencies that can help determine what services you are eligible for and help you get them.