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Overview of Campaign and Critique of Background:

The campaign [“Let’s Stop HIV Together”](#) is an HIV prevention and treatment campaign hosted by the CDC. Formerly known as “Act Against AIDS,” this campaign is also part of the 2019 U.S. Government initiative called [“Ending the HIV Epidemic in the U.S.”](#) It is important to note that the start date of this initiative was established to fully understand the progression of the stigma around HIV since the Nixon administration. The main goals of this campaign are to educate the public about HIV and HIV prevention, provide resources for testing and treatment, and break down the stigma of HIV. “Ending the HIV Epidemic in the U.S.’s” main goal was to reduce new HIV diagnoses by 90% in the U.S. by 2030. In order to meet their goals, they strive to scale up HIV prevention and treatment strategies and address different disparities which have contributed to the HIV prevention gaps.

It is important to talk about the stigma that exists around HIV and where it stems from. Those who believe only certain people can contract HIV, those who make moral judgments, people who think that certain people deserve to contract HIV, professionals should refuse to care for those with HIV, and professionals who refuse care, socially isolating those with HIV are problematic. The stigma and discrimination affect the nonprofits and campaigns as much as an organization against the efforts of educating, preventing, and treating HIV because it forces people with HIV into hiding out of embarrassment and shame.

The intended audience for this campaign covers a wide demographic. Specifically, they attempt to reach HIV/AIDS patients, all populations of people most at risk for HIV in the U.S., the LGBTQIA+ community, family members, friends, peers of individuals affected from HIV, the BIPOC community, intravenous drug users, pregnant individuals, economically disadvantaged individuals, and individuals who trade sex for money.



The HIV epidemic is a public interest because of the lack of education about the disease, and the fact that HIV can affect anyone and everyone, not just a specialized group of people. The stigma has people assuming certain communities are unaffected by and immune to contracting HIV, but that is not the case. According to a [2002 Program Announcement](#), “The geographic, demographic, and social characteristics of the epidemic — how infection and death rates are distributed over geographic and social space and the dynamics of change in that distribution -- have important implications for how societies experience and respond to the impact of HIV/AIDS.” Because of the trickle down effect that occurs from the disproportionately affected populations, there will be a lack of access to resources for these communities.

In contrast, this campaign doesn’t go into depth about the historical context of how the government has instigated the stigma about HIV/AIDS. We think it is important to add more information on how this stigma came to be in order to fully understand the danger of stigma and how it affected the past to bring us to the present day.

The stigmatization surrounding the HIV pandemic has really affected how people view the disease. When doctors first started noticing these unusual cases of men (who commonly identified as gay) with compromised immune systems, they weren’t sure what to think, first naming it the “gay pneumonia.” First, they thought only gay men could get the disease, then they thought it was intravenous drug users, then they even thought it was Haitians that could only get the disease. In 1984 Fauci tried warning other doctors that the disease could potentially spread to populations outside where it had originally started infecting people, and he was right. The other doctors, however, did not listen. Although the number of gay men dying from the disease in New York was happening at an alarming rate, in the years 1981 and 1982, only six stories were included in the New York Times. None of those stories were included on the front page. Following this, the Reagan administration hit public health agencies with budget cuts, such as the CDC.

President Reagan [did not even mention](#) the word “AIDS” until a press conference in 1985, and that was only because a reporter asked him a question regarding AIDS. It was not until 1987 that President Reagan held an official press conference to give a speech about the disease. By the time he held this press conference, over 36,000 Americans had already contracted the disease, and nearly 21,000 had died from it. [Even Reagan’s favorite speechwriter](#),



[Landon Parvin, suggested Reagan reach out to surgeon general](#), C. Everett Koop, for his speech, which President Reagan ultimately did not end up doing. Koop wanted President Reagan to write a report on AIDS a whole year prior to this. Many historians today credit President Reagan for helping jump-start the AIDS pandemic, because the outcome would have been entirely different if he and his administration did not stigmatize it and ignored it for as long as they did.

The Five Imperatives:

“Let’s Stop HIV Together” was successful in incorporating all of the Five Imperatives:

- To **join the community** they include multiple links on their website that lead to Facebook and Twitter pages that are centered around HIV. You can also sign up to get email updates. (New Power)
- For **communicating in images** they use lots of imagery on their website, most of it displaying a sense of family and community. They utilized national and local advertising, social media, and promotional print media that was spread around to public health organizations
- For **evoking emotion** they feature a short film as part of their campaign that tells the story of people living with HIV or people who have loved ones who have it. They use real people to show what HIV is and what it can be. They don’t shy away from facts. They have a section on their website where HIV-positive people tell their stories with HIV stigma. (New Power with transparency)
- They have many **calls to action**. The biggest one they did was a thirty-second PSA (Public Service Announcement) followed up by individual stories. Their PSA was the most successful. They charted 4.3 million views online and 4.1 billion on TV. Their calls to action are getting people tested and access to medications.
- How they can **tell better stories** it’s highlighted in their PSAs and also their short films. They have personal PSAs that showcase individuals experiences with HIV. A major part of the campaign is highlighting that HIV can affect anyone and everyone. Throughout our research, we could not find any backlash towards the campaign.



Since all five imperatives were included and went into depth it shows that it is a well-thought-out campaign that has the ability to infiltrate the intended audience and efficiently educate and change audience behavior.

Support for new campaign:

We developed a survey to assess our fellow classmates' current knowledge and opinions about HIV. Through this survey, we found out that many people are not as educated as society likes to think they are. In our results, we saw people making uneducated comments about HIV either because they know it is anonymous, or they simply are not educated. A lot of the comments from the question, "How is HIV transmitted?" were simple answers that are correct, but out of context would be problematic. Another question we asked was, "How do you prevent the transmission of HIV" and the majority of the answers we received were to use condoms.

Overall, the survey reached our intended audience and gave us insight into what others think about HIV and how we could better reach an audience using the general public's point of view about the disease. The limitation of our survey is that it was spread among college-educated individuals that at minimum have a high-school diploma yet are working toward a bachelor's degree. In order to better survey the general public, we would need a sample that is more diverse.



What is HIV?

10 responses

A disease that attacks the body's T-cells.
a disease
AIDS / an std that can be fatal
aids
Virus
Human immunodeficiency virus
A disease within human blood
Disease
Sexually Transmitted Disease

How do you prevent the transmission of HIV?

10 responses

use a condom
Clean needles and condoms
use protection. Clean everything.
Pre exposure treatment
Wearing condoms during sex
Condoms
Condoms
Celibacy
safe sex, don't share razors or needles

What are your thoughts when you hear that someone has HIV?

10 responses

That's not good
that it could lead to AIDS
I feel bad for them
Freddie Mercury
Scared for them
I feel bad, but treat them no different than I would anyone else.
Think more negatively about that person
Tragic

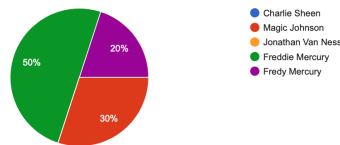
How is HIV transmitted?

10 responses

Blood transmission also sexually transmitted
needles or unprotected sex
Through needles and sex
through another person and through blood
Fluids go into Bloodstream
Through bodily fluids like blood, semen, etc.
Sexual intercourse
Sexually
Through blood

What celebrity do you think of when you think of HIV?

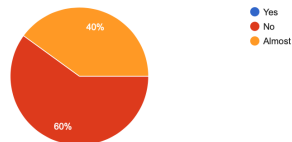
10 responses



● Charlie Sheen
 ● Magic Johnson
 ● Jonathan Van Ness
 ● Freddie Mercury
 ● Freddie Mercury

Is there a cure for HIV?

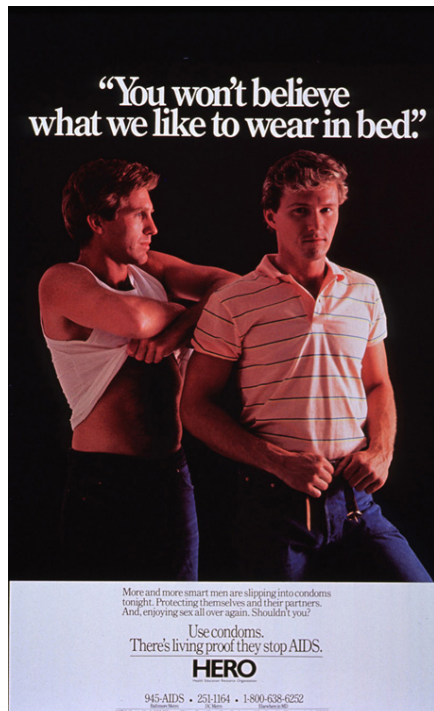
10 responses



● Yes
 ● No
 ● Almost

Background Information from an expert:

We talked to a Gender, Women's and Sexuality (GWSS) Professor who works for the school about the HIV epidemic. They were able to provide us with resources that helped us analyze and understand the background of our campaign. Some of the information we were provided was about 1980s condom [ads](#). These ads are a visual representation of how HIV prevention measures were done in the 80s. Another piece of information they talked about was how the AIDS crisis in the 80s was heavily targeted in the black community, specifically in Detroit's ballroom culture. The origins of [ball/ballroom culture](#) come from NYC. It grew into a community and allowed queer individuals to find communities and to find a home or a “house” that they fit into.



Improved Campaign Qualities:

Since this campaign effectively utilizes the five imperatives we think a priority should be to further the reach of the current campaign. It would be resourceful to have well-known individuals who have HIV become ambassadors of the “Let’s Stop HIV Together” campaign. For example, Magic Johnson is the ideal candidate to educate an audience about resources and the struggle to access resources due to privilege. Since Magic Johnson had the funds to pay for certain medical treatments, he was able to reduce HIV to the point where it is undetected in his body. Had he not had the funds he likely wouldn’t have had this improvement in his health. Yet, he is still a medical success story therefore he has the ability to talk about the innovation of medicine and how essential it is for everyone to have access. This platform is made possible



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because he is a very famous athlete and has respect from older and younger generations, broadening the audience for the campaign.

Another influential figurehead would be Jonathan Van Ness from *Queer Eye*. They already do an amazing job of advocating for the LGBTQ+ community through the show, their social media presence, and who they choose to collaborate with. If they were to join the campaign it would help reach a larger audience who may already be affected by this disease and how they can have access to resources not only for themselves but for their friends, family, and peers. Jonathan Van Ness also brings a humanistic quality to the disease. As discussed above with the results from the survey, when our sample was asked their thoughts about HIV, the majority said that they “feel bad for them”, or that it’s “not good” in one wording or another. These negative views severely impact the stigma of the disease and how others interact with their peers. But, when you see someone who publicly states they have this disease and are interacting with other public figures (such as Simone Biles for the Uber Eats commercial) it shows that people with HIV are no different from those without this disease, slowly showing an environment where the stigma has dissolved.

Lastly, Queen would be an essential involvement in the campaign. Not only did one of their bandmates die due to medical complications brought on by AIDS but they also had songs that were originally gay anthems that have been used in a different context for many years. Reclaiming these songs would pay tribute to the LGBTQ+ community, Freddie Mercury, those with HIV/AIDS, and those who have died from those diseases. During the height of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the stigma of being openly gay was negative, it also led to the sigma that if you had HIV/AIDS you were gay, which further ostracized the community. It would be important to reclaim the songs [*“We Will Rock You”*](#) and [*“We Are The Champions”*](#) as songs that support the LGBTQ+ community and the efforts to fight HIV/AIDS. Our recommendation is that Queen, surviving members Brian May and Taylor Rodger, put on a concert to fundraise to support research for the “Let’s Stop HIV Together” campaign and perform these songs in honor of Freddie Mercury and the efforts to reduce new HIV diagnosis by 90% by 2030. Currently, Adam Lambert has performed with the remaining members of Queen but it is my recommendation that Remi Malik performs with them because of his role in *Bohemian Rhapsody* since he has a tight hold on the younger generation.

Overall, having these influential figureheads that span multiple generations will help bring light to the campaign, which is deserving due to the quality of the content it provides. There is so much to learn from this campaign both as an ally and as someone who is affected by



HIV/AIDS. There are also many states in the United States of America that only teach abstinence ([Arizona](#), [Arkansas](#), [Florida](#), [Georgia](#), [Indiana](#), [Kentucky](#), [Louisiana](#), [Michigan](#), [Minnesota](#), [Mississippi](#), [Missouri](#), [Montana](#), [North Dakota](#), [Ohio](#), [Oklahoma](#), [Tennessee](#), [Texas](#), [Utah](#), [Wisconsin](#)) so this campaign makes up for the lack of education many Americans have. The resources that “Let’s Stop HIV Together” provides leave no question unanswered. Now more than ever it should be our prerogative that campaigns like this are available to everyone due to our political climate threatening and stripping the basic rights many individuals have. As former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, says [“Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family.”](#) Providing access to educational and medical resources makes a difference, all that we need to do is make sure that people see the campaign. In summary, “Let’s Stop HIV Together” needs influential and outspoken individuals to be part of their efforts. This would utilize the New Power method through the use of community and media.

Articles

- Performance as Intravention: Ballroom Culture and the Politics of HIV/AIDS in Detroit
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10999940903088226>
- https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=jqueBgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA221&dq=reagan+administration+hiv+aids&ots=Abvfco10bY&sig=ED_ovEkD5eJNUZPB4SG4yWrHjOI#v=onepage&q=reagan%20administration%20hiv%20aids&f=false
- <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2021/04/full-story-nancy-reagan-and-aids-crisis/618552/>
- <https://lithub.com/ronald-reagan-presided-over-89343-deaths-to-aids-and-did-nothing/>
- <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/visualculture/safesex.html>
- <https://mozartcultures.com/en/understanding-the-ballroom-culture-its-incredible-impact-on-the-world/>