



AFRICAN SERVICES

COMMITTEE

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Why Stand Campaign Continues to Take Over Harlem



Glance at the sidewalk while walking on 116th street and 8th Avenue in Harlem and you have seen them...look at a billboard in the subway and it may have been ours.

African Services has launched the "Would You Do It" campaign in a big way, and if you take a look around you just might see one.

After months of planning African Services launched our much-anticipated *Why Stand* campaign, aimed at targeting HIV stigma within the African and Caribbean communities. With the support of local community leaders, the message is being spread throughout the community...sometimes in rather unorthodox ways.

"We didn't want to simply place an ad and hope that people read it. We wanted to get out on the streets and connect with our audience," says Communications Director, Stephanie Kaplan, "By partnering with local organizations, leaders and students we have been able to reach much further than we had ever imagined."

In collaboration with St. John's University and The New School, marketing teams hit the streets with campaign t-shirts, postcards, matchbook condoms, stickers and key chains. It allowed us to spread our message, talk directly to our audience, and create an excitement around our slogan, "Would You Do It?"

Like most New Yorkers, if you saw people handing things out you would avoid them. However, our street team members had the opposite experience. They were bombarded with people asking for materials and curious on-lookers asking, "Would I do what?" Thus, a dialogue was opened...

Here are a few pictures of our street teams in action:



In addition to street teams, on the eve of our launch, we headed out in the dead of night to clean our message in to the streets of Harlem. From 125th Street and Lexington Avenue to the Clinton Foundation all the way to Le Petit Senegal we used reverse graffiti to grab everyone's attention. With the help of a New Jersey pressure washing company we cleaned our message into the streets. Check out a video with all the action:



African Services' staff are also getting excited and involved. Dale, one of ASC's part-time employees and aspiring hip-hop producer, was so inspired that he and a

few friends wrote an original song celebrating our message of acceptance and inclusion. Take a listen to his song, *Would You Do It* here:



All of this has been strengthened by subway posters featuring notable community leaders who have willingly lent their faces and voices to the campaign.

Imam Souleymane Konate, a well know Imam in the community and one of *Time Magazine's* most influential people, had this to say about his participation in the campaign, "People are coming up and asking me about it. We have created a dialogue where there was none, and that is only the beginning. I am honored to have been a part of this."

For more information about the campaign visit the homepage [here](#), and stay current on all Why Stand happenings at our Facebook page [here](#).

News and Activities

A Home Away from Home



For Ida, a quick trip to visit relatives in Virginia unexpectedly turned into a permanent one. Visiting from her home country of Sierra Leone, she had hoped to visit with cousins, earn a bit of money and return to Sierra Leone. However, things did not go as planned and a rapid deterioration in her health stalled her return.

"I got sick in April 2004, and none of the doctors could figure out what was wrong," she said.

The doctors speculated that it was her liver, due to prolonged Malaria infections, but Ida wasn't convinced.

"For more than six months I honestly felt like I was dying. I couldn't eat, I couldn't sleep, and all I thought about was how I didn't want

to die here in America away from my family."

Ida had always had a curiosity about the human body and illnesses, so she began doing some research of her own.

"It was my greatest fear...it couldn't possible be, but it was the only reason I could think of."

She went to the doctor and demanded an HIV test, which at that time took several days for results to return. Several days later she received a call from the doctor asking her to come to the hospital to receive her results.

Ida was HIV positive--relieved by a diagnosis and terrified at the prospect of death. All she knew about HIV was that it was a death sentence, but Ida refused to give up. Unfortunately, at that time Virginia offered no HIV treatment services to undocumented immigrants.

"I'm dying. I'm dying, and you say you can't help me? This is the United States, how can you not help me," pleaded Ida.

She was told she must travel further north, to Washington, D.C. to see if treatment options were available there. Thankfully, upon arriving she met Miriam, an immigrant from Haiti. Miriam told her that she needed to continue her journey North to New York, where treatment options and support organizations existed.

It was through Miriam that Ida learned about African Services Committee. Miriam directed her to visit the office and to speak with Claudette Francois, African Services' Senior Case Manager. Upon entering the offices, African Services embraced Ida and began the long road of getting her healthy, housed, and fed.

Claudette was able to assist her in stabilizing her health; offering her housing, nutrition support and linkage to hospital treatment services. In addition, thanks to the help of Aida Diallo-Diagne, our AIDS Housing Coordinator, she was able to get permanent housing. Ida also attends the bi-weekly women's support group where she can surround her self with other HIV positive women dealing with the same issues.

"I like to come here...I feel better with people like me, around me. We can share everything. African Services is like family to me."

It was a long and difficult journey, but Ida is coming out on the other side...happy and healthy, and with a bright future ahead of her.

--Lindsay Michaelson

Manataka Peace Retreat A Success



"We are strong & wise!" These are the words of the Manataka Peace Retreat mantra, a retreat recently held at African Services Committee from October 8-10. In collaboration with Committed to Freedom, the retreat assisted them in overcoming past traumas and enabled the women to celebrate their strength and wisdom in sisterhood,

"I wanted clients to see themselves in a new multi-

dimensional light. They are greater than a disease or a hardship. I think it helped them to see their inner strength, gifts and capacity for healing, and discover a resilience they never knew they had," says Andrea Panjwani, African Services' Staff Attorney and the catalyst for bringing the retreat to African Services.

With over 35 women participating from Friday to Sunday, the facilitators used music, art, movement and words to make the women feel safe and become active participants in their own emotional and spiritual healing.

"The goal is to help these women fully put the puzzle pieces together and to strategically live," said Sallie Culbreth, workshop facilitator and founder of Committed to Freedom.

By the end of the workshop the women banded together, uplifting their spirits and even the spirits of the facilitators, as they broke out in song. As the women left that weekend, their hearts were filled and their souls uplifted, feeling more prepared to face life and overcome their struggles.

Stephanie Colon, an ASC social work intern, who attended the event shared her thoughts.

"We were women of different races, ethnicity, and languages, that took equal ownership of 'our stories' and symbolically spoke with one voice as we encompassed the ending mantra: **We are strong & wise.**"

To learn more about Committed to Freedom, visit www.committedtofreedom.org.

--Stephanie Colon

ASC Continues to Grow

African Services continues to grow, and we'd like to introduce you to two of our newest additions:



Stephanie R. Colon is a Social Work Intern with the Advocacy, Communications and Family Case Management departments. Stephanie holds a BA in Interdisciplinary Studies from Friends World Program at Long Island University, certifications from Columbia Graduate Business School/ Institute for Not-for-Profit Management and Cornell University/Family Development Credentialing Program, and is a MSW candidate at Hunter College School of Social Work. For the last 35 years she has done direct-line service and managerial work in the non-profit and

public sector in Africa, Latin America and throughout the United States. Stephanie speaks Swahili and Spanish.



Dr. Abiy Meaza Tessema joins African Services as a Testing Center assistant, providing counseling and testing for HIV, TB, and STIs, and referring those in need of treatment. Abiy was born and raised in Dessie, Ethiopia, and recently immigrated to the United States. He holds a degree in Medicine from Addis



Ababa University, and has worked in various capacities since, including General Medical Practitioner, college professor, medical journal editor and director of an HIV treatment center. Abiy speaks Amharic and English.

Fun in the City

Staff Recommendations

world **Kim Nichols**, Co-Executive Director recommends...

ING New York City Marathon

<http://ingnycmarathon.com/>

Sunday, November 7th - 9:40 am - late afternoon



ASC Staffers, Stephanie Kaplan & Kate Stinson show off the ASC Why Stand campaign shirts they will be running in!

This Sunday 45,000 runners from all over the United States and the world will take on the challenge of running 26.2 miles through all 5 boroughs of New York City. Some of the fastest marathoners in the world are here and you don't want to miss seeing them as they run for a \$200,000 grand prize and international glory!

Several ASC staffers and friends will be running in the race, and **NEED** your support! Keep an eye out for the unmistakable red shirts with the "Would You Do It" campaign logo and support them as they join the thousands of athletes in conquering the NYC Marathon.

Click [here](#) for a map of the course, and [here](#) for spectator information. Make a sign or just bring your cheering voice...We hope to see you there!

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