New Ad Campaign Confronts HIV Stigma in Spanish

October 15, 2008 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

They're only 15 percent of the population, but Latino people in the United States and its territories comprised about 22 percent of all newly diagnosed HIV/AIDS cases in 2006. As the fastest-growing segment of the general population, and as a group obviously at disproportionate risk for contracting HIV, Latino people increasingly need access to targeted HIV prevention messages, education, testing and treatment. National Latino AIDS Awareness Day (NLAAD)—commemorated annually on October 15—was created to address the needs of the Latino community.

Sponsored by the Latino Commission on AIDS, the Hispanic Federation and other Latino groups, NLAAD held its national kickoff event this year in New York City on October 9 in Spanish Harlem. Miss Universe 2008 Dayana Mendoza took a rapid HIV test at the ceremony, hoping to encourage testing for all Latino people—especially for young women.

"I hope that through my advocacy work on behalf of the Latino Commission on AIDS and HIV prevention, I will be able to reach a lot of young women, impart education and messages of hope," said Mendoza. To watch Miss Universe take her HIV test, click below:

Despite the fact that, after African-American people, Latino people are the second-most impacted minority group by HIV/AIDS domestically, there has never been a national Spanish-language ad campaign profiling HIV-positive Latino people and their loved ones—until now.

"Soy" ("I am" in Spanish) is the title of the new campaign, which debuts nationwide today and which will run throughout 2009. The Kaiser Family Foundation and Univision Communications developed the series of 12 public service announcements that will appear on the Univision, Telefutura and Galavision television networks, Univision radio stations and online.

"By helping to personalize HIV/AIDS through the individuals who opened their lives for this campaign, 'Soy' seeks to break down the stigma that allows this disease to spread," said Tina Hoff, vice president and director of entertainment media partnerships at the Kaiser Family Foundation.

To watch three brief spots from the "Soy" campaign (they're in Spanish with English

subtitles)—the first one introduces all of the participants; the second one highlights Damaries Cruz, who was diagnosed with HIV in 1991 and was engaged to be married; and the third one highlights the mother of Damaries Cruz, who is HIV negative—click below:

Other participants in the “Soy” campaign include: Elizabeth Mercado, a former intravenous drug user diagnosed with HIV in 1987; Rafael Ronce, a gay man diagnosed with HIV in 1998; and Grissel Granados, a female college student diagnosed with HIV at five years old.

Teresa Rodriguez, the Emmy-winning host of “Aqui y Ahora” on Univision, moderated a plenary session at this year’s United States Conference on AIDS introducing the “Soy” campaign. To watch Regan Hofmann, POZ’s editor-in-chief, interview Rodriguez about the campaign, click below:

Visit nlaad.org for more information on National Latino AIDS Awareness Day. Also, visit univision.com, keyword: “SIDA” (“AIDS” in Spanish), for more information in Spanish on the “Soy” campaign and to watch the other spots in the campaign.

Editor’s Note: This article has been updated to reflect that Damaries Cruz is no longer engaged to be married.

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