

# BLACKGWINNETT MAGAZINE

African, African American and the Black diaspora of Gwinnett County, GA | Holiday Edition • December 2023

**We Embrace the Spirit  
of December Holidays**

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Celebrating Kwanzaa 2023

World AIDS Day 2023

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Black Women and HIV:  
Confronting the Disturbing  
Reality





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**Black Gwinnett Magazine** informs and speaks out for and to Black communities of Gwinnett County, Georgia.

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# BLACKWINNETT MAGAZINE

Lawrenceville, Georgia USA | Holiday Edition - December 2023

## Black Women and HIV: Confronting the Disturbing Reality

*by Cheryle Renee Moses*

As we recognize World AIDS Day on December 1, 2023, I reflect on the memories of family members and friends who lost their lives to HIV. It is important to honor their names and remember their stories, such as Gary Wallace, Jonathan Ricky Martin, Jeffery Murray, Vickie Palmer, and Gregory McKinney, who bravely fought HIV before transitioning back to the Most High God.

I remember Vickie Palmer, a sweet and beautiful woman whom I graduated from high school with. In the late 1990s, Vickie believed she had found the love of her life, a handsome man who treated her like a queen. Tragically, this relationship became the cause of her demise as he knowingly exposed her to HIV through unprotected sex. When he developed full-blown AIDS, Vickie realized her fate. She stood by him during his hospitalization and eventual passing. Vickie's family and friends supported her until she too transitioned back to the Most High God on June 12, 1999, as a result of AIDS.

Fast forward to 2023, and the reality is that Black women account for more than half of the HIV cases among women. Heterosexual contact is responsible for 91% of new HIV infections in Black women. Today, HIV infection rates among Black women surpass

those of women from other races and ethnicities.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) acknowledges that racism, systemic inequities, social and economic marginalization, residential segregation, and other long-standing barriers contribute significantly to the disproportionate impact of HIV in Black or African American communities in the United States. Recently, the CDC discovered that Black transgender women accounted for 62% of HIV infections among transgender women living with HIV in seven major U.S. cities.

These statistics regarding HIV in the Black community are alarming and indicate an epidemic. In a society where the respect for Black women is lacking and a community influenced by hip hop/rap music, mainstream movies and TV shows that often glorifies unbridled sexual encounters, we must address this crisis head-on.

Black Gwinnett Magazine has taken the initiative to publish educational information about HIV, testing, and resources for care and treatment monthly, both digitally and in print. Additionally, we aim to be at the forefront of providing access to PrEP, a medication that significantly reduces the risk of contracting HIV through sexual activity or injection drug use. Our goal is to ensure equitable access to HIV prevention for everyone who can benefit from it.

Happy holiday to you! Please stay safe, and take care of your health.





## We Embrace the Spirit of December Holidays!

*by Matthew Moses*

Every year, the African American and Black diaspora communities in Gwinnett County embrace the spirit of the December holidays. From Christmas, Hanukkah, Bodhi Day, Saint Nicholas Day, Our Lady of Guadalupe and Kwanzaa, Black people create and share a tapestry of traditions, customs, heartwarming experiences. Black communities weave unique traditions into the fabric of the county's holiday festivities, adding a touch of soulful warmth and joy.

In Gwinnett County, Black churches play a key role in fostering a sense of community and spirituality during the holiday season. Congregations come alive with soul-stirring sermons, spirited worship, and heartwarming fellowship. From the majestic voices of gospel choirs to the soulful melodies of hymns, these church services evoke a profound sense of togetherness and gratitude among the community.

December holidays emphasizes family and close-knit relationships. Families gather around the table, sharing traditional food dishes that have been passed down through generations. Mouthwatering feasts that embody the love and warmth of the season are gifts in themselves during this season.

Community organizations and local businesses contribute to the festive atmosphere by



hosting events and initiatives. From tree lighting ceremonies, holiday markets, and cultural performances, the holiday season pays homage to a rich and diverse heritage in Gwinnett County.

In addition to the cultural celebrations, Gwinnett County is home to a thriving group of Black-owned businesses offering an array of quality products and services. Gwinnett County Black Chamber of Commerce (GCBCC) provides an online directory giving easy access to connect with Black-owned businesses in and serving the area. On the GCBCC business directory, you can find:

- fashion boutiques specializing in unique African-inspired clothing,
- quality accessories,
- genuine stones,
- artwork,
- galleries showcasing the talent of local Black creatives, and
- organizations providing business strategies, grants/loans, wealth building and legacy foundation road maps.

Visit [blackchambergwinnett.com](https://blackchambergwinnett.com) to connect with a Black-owned business in the area today.

There are many #BuyBlack opportunities to support the Black-owned businesses in Gwinnett County. As we celebrate the holidays, you can find meaningful and distinctive gifts from Black businesses for loved ones and friends.

As the holiday lights sparkle and the songs fill the air, Gwinnett County can serve as a shining example of the power of unity, the beauty of cultural diversity, and how to support Black-owned businesses. We embrace the spirit of December holidays by making memories that embody the true essence of the season, #BuyBlack and keep money circulating in the Black community.







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Embracing Your African American Difference

# *Celebrating Kwanzaa 2023*

*by Betty Ann Stephens*

**K**wanzaa, an African American Christmas tradition that emerged in the 1960s, serves as a joyous celebration of history, culture, and unity. Created by civil rights leader Maulana Karenga, Kwanzaa provides an opportunity for African Americans and even Black Britons to come together, reflect on their past, and embrace their shared values. With its distinctive symbols, principles, and colors, Kwanzaa offers a unique and enriching experience that resonates with individuals and communities throughout the year.

Kwanzaa commences after Christmas, starting on December 26th and continuing until January 1st. This intentional timing allows people to honor their heritage

while also immersing themselves in the festive atmosphere of the holiday season. By designating a dedicated seven-day period, Kwanzaa becomes a standalone festival, offering African Americans an occasion to celebrate their own rich history and culture.

At the heart of Kwanzaa's visual representation lies the kinara, a candle holder featuring seven candles. Three red candles reside on the left, three green on the right, and a central black candle takes the lead, symbolizing unity and the African people. Each day, a candle is lit, alternating between red and green, representing the seven principles or Nguzo Saba.

Alongside the kinara, Kwanzaa incorporates six other symbols. The Kikombe Cha Umoja, a shared unity cup, signifies family and community. All participants drink from it, and a small libation is poured to honor ancestors. Mazao, which represents shared crops, highlights the importance of collective work and responsibility (Ujima). The Muhindi, an ear of corn for each child in the family, symbolizes the future and the hope it holds. Lastly, Zawadi, the gifts exchanged during Kwanzaa, often have an educational or cultural significance, fostering a connection to African heritage.

Kwanzaa's colors, black, green, and red, hold significant meaning.



Black represents the African people, green symbolizes the fertile land of Africa, and red signifies the bloodshed and resilience of African ancestors. These colors, derived from the Pan-African movement, embody unity among people of African descent worldwide.

The seven principles of **Kwanzaa**, known as the **Nguzo Saba**, guide individuals and communities in their pursuit of growth and progress throughout the year. These principles include:

**Umoja (Unity):** Encouraging unity among African Americans and Black Britons.

**Kujichagulia (Self-Determination and Responsibility):** Emphasizing personal agency and responsibility.

**Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility):** Highlighting the importance of collaborative community development.

**Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics):** Promoting economic empowerment and entrepreneurship within the community.

**Nia (Purpose):** Inspiring individuals to remember and restore black culture, customs, and history.

**Kuumba (Creativity):** Celebrating creativity and artistic expression as essential elements of cultural revitalization.

**Imani (Faith):** Encouraging faith in oneself, the community, and the future.

Kwanzaa is a profound celebration rooted in African American history, culture, and tradition. With its symbols, principles, and emphasis on unity, this festival provides a vital opportunity for individuals to honor their past, celebrate their present, and envision a brighter future. By embracing Kwanzaa

alongside Christmas, the Black community can fully immerse themselves in these traditions and find joy in their own unique identities. As a festive event that impacts lives throughout the year, Kwanzaa serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of heritage, unity, and collective progress.

## GWINNETT COUNTY KWANZAA EVENT

Join the Gwinnett County Black Chamber of Commerce for the '**Gwinnett County Kwanzaa Celebration: Nia 2023**' on **Saturday, December 30, 2023, 1-4 p.m.**, at the **Gwinnett County Public Library - Norcross Branch** at 5735 Buford Hwy, Norcross, GA 30071. Family-friendly. Register free at [blackchambergwinnett.com](https://blackchambergwinnett.com). Performers, creatives, artists and exhibitors wanted for the event - 404.590.4716.

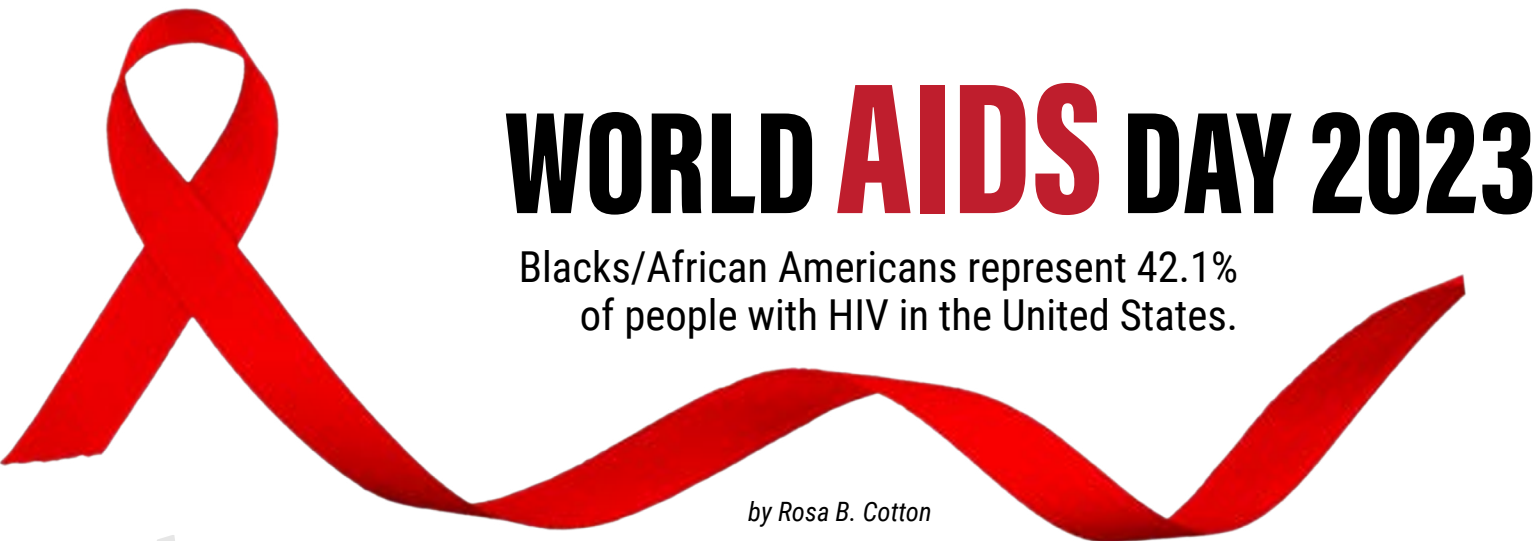


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Blacks/African Americans represent 42.1% of people with HIV in the United States.

by Rosa B. Cotton

Annually, December 1st is designated as **World AIDS Day**. As the globe marks another World AIDS Day, it is important to both acknowledge the significant strides made in the global battle against HIV and recognize the persistent challenges that remain. HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is a virus that attacks the body's immune system. If HIV is not treated, it can lead to AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome).

While the United States had seen a slow decline in the overall number of new HIV infections from 2017 to 2021, a closer look at the data reveals persistent disparities largely borne by LGBTQ people and communities of color.

Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino communities are disproportionately affected by HIV compared to other racial/ethnic groups. For example, in 2019, Blacks/African Americans represented 13% of the United States population, but 42.1% of people with HIV. Black/African American women account for more than half of the HIV cases seen in women.

In 2021, Gwinnett County had 3,347 people living with HIV. Here are the demographics of those infected with HIV at that time.

*Sex | HIV Infected in Gwinnett*

Male .....	74.1%
Female.....	25.9%

*Race/Ethnicity | HIV Infected in Gwinnett*

Black .....	57.4%
Hispanic/Latino.....	19.9%
White .....	15.2%

*Age | HIV Infected in Gwinnett*

13-14 .....	4.8%
25-34 .....	21.9%
35-44 .....	22.6%
45-54 .....	23.7%
55+ .....	27.0%

Addressing the disproportionate impact of HIV on the Black/African American community in Gwinnett County and the United States requires a multifaceted approach. On the front line of the fight against is PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis). PrEP is a medicine that reduces your chances of getting HIV from sex or injection drug use. When taken as prescribed, PrEP is highly effective for preventing HIV.

Gwinnett County had 1,110 users of PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis) in 2022.

*Sex | Using PrEP in Gwinnett*

Male .....	91.0%
Female.....	8.9%

*Age | Using PrEP in Gwinnett*

13-14 .....	13.8%
25-34 .....	38.0%
35-44 .....	24.2%
45-54 .....	13.1%
55+ .....	11.2%

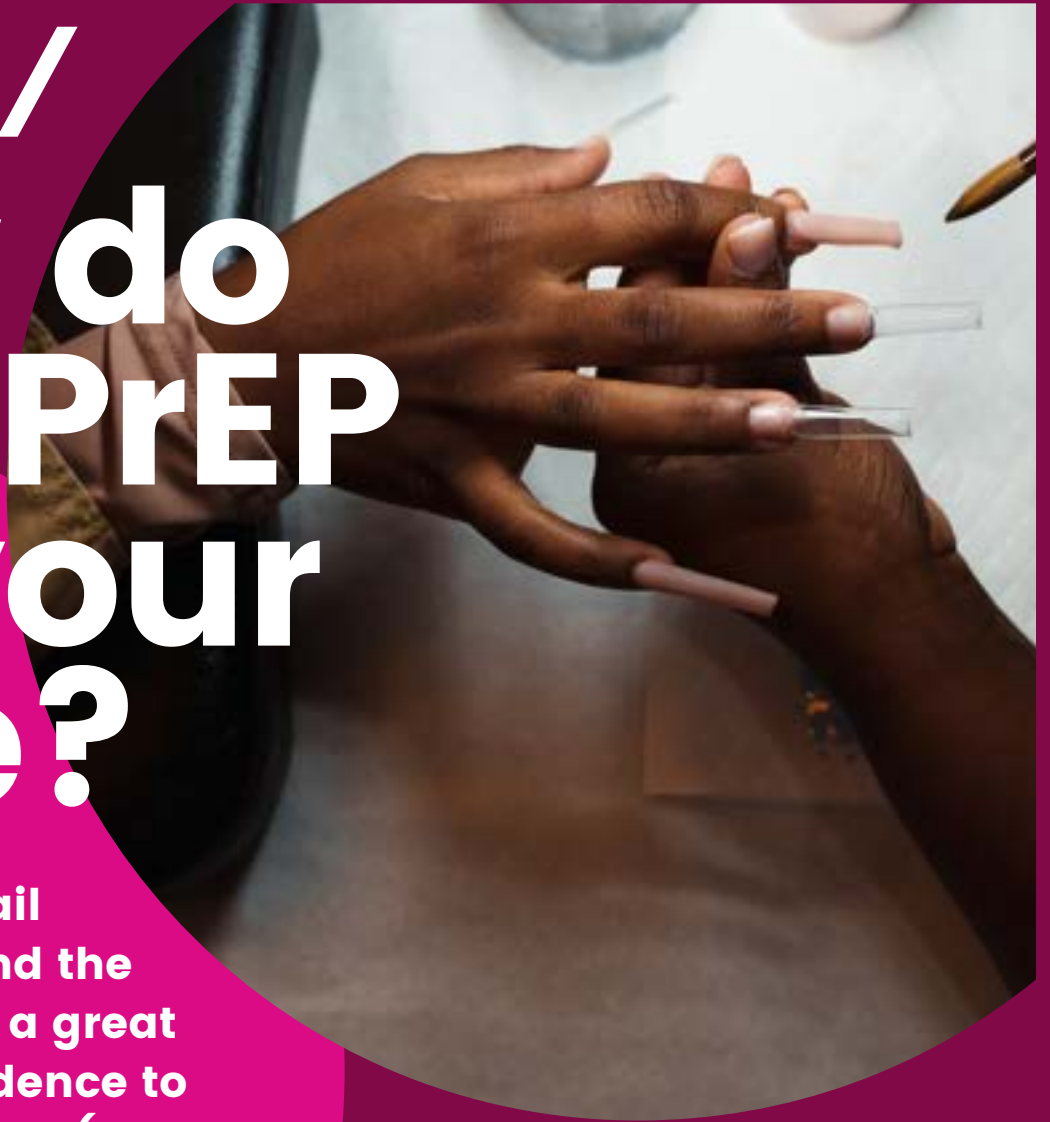
In addition to promoting PrEP usage, it is crucial to prioritize comprehensive sexual health education, destigmatize HIV testing, and ensure equitable access to healthcare services. By implementing these strategies, we can strive towards reducing new HIV infections and achieving health equity for all. World AIDS Day serves as a reminder that the fight against HIV/AIDS is far from over, and it is our collective responsibility to work together to eliminate disparities and create a future where every individual, regardless of their race or ethnicity, can lead a healthy and fulfilling life free from the burden of HIV. *Data source: AIDSvu.org.*





# How do you PrEP for your date?

With hair care, nail appointments, and the perfect fit, PrEP is a great way to add confidence to your next date. PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) is a once-a-day pill that can reduce your chance of getting HIV from sex by 99% when taken as prescribed.



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