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A Girl Like Me: Using Technology to Cross Borders



*Iris House: Women as the Face of AIDS Annual Summit
May 2, 2016*



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Speakers



Maria Mejia, Global Ambassador, Community Advisory Board, *A Girl Like Me* Blogger, The Well Project



Tiommi Jenae Lockett, Communications Coordinator, Community Advisory Board, *A Girl Like Me* Blogger, The Well Project



Krista Martel, Executive Director, The Well Project (*moderator*)



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Agenda

- About The Well Project and *A Girl Like Me/Una Chica Como Yo*
- Why Race and diversity matter
- Creating an online dialogue
- Addressing diversity through personal narratives
- Leveraging technology to cross racial borders and focus on common experiences



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About The Well Project

- Non-profit organization with a mission to change the course of the HIV/AIDS pandemic through a unique and comprehensive focus on women and girls
- Leverages technology to improve health outcomes and increase quality of life for women and girls living with HIV
- Focus is to provide accessible and comprehensive #information, #community support, and #advocacy building
- Access our resources and join our community at www.thewellproject.org



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About *A Girl Like Me/* *Una Chica Como Yo*

- Blog where women living with HIV can share experiences, publicly or anonymously, in a safe, supportive community
 - *A Girl Like Me* established in 2009; *Una Chica Como Yo* in 2015
 - Published more than 500 blogs from more than 60 bloggers around the world
- *A Girl Like Me/Una Chica Como Yo* aims to:
 - Decrease stigma and isolation
 - Provide platform to voice issues and advocate
 - Help normalize HIV and AIDS among women and girls

a girl like me

a program of The Well Project

A Girl Like Me (AGLM) is a program of The Well Project and is an online "blog" where women of all ages can share their stories and promote understanding of HIV through online storytelling. There are millions of women around the globe who are living with HIV and AIDS, yet many feel they are alone in their disease and isolated in the experiences they go through each day. The goals of AGLM are to help normalize HIV and AIDS in women and girls, and create a safe space for women living with HIV from around the world to speak out and share their experience of what it is to live life with HIV.

Recent Blog Posts



Video chat with my daughter about HIV

Apr 12, 2016 - IleshiaDKScott

Knowing when and how to answer questions regarding your status is hard, especially when they're coming from our children. Giving the correct information is key, while keeping it age appropriate will...

READ MORE >



Spring Is in the Air

The question was: Why do I make myself look attractive if I have HIV?



Submitted on Mar 24, 2016 by Mariatmeja

sharethis 2302 Tweet 39 G+1 1 Like 566

I am Maria Hiv Mejia-Laing. I am here as a living example that HIV/AIDS is not the end! I am here to let you know that we can live with this condition and still be beautiful inside and out! We are not dirty! We are not unclean! We are just human beings living with this condition! WE ARE MILLIONS AND MILLIONS around the world. If you are newly diagnosed I want to tell you that there is hope! That if you take your medications, live a healthy lifestyle, eat well, drink lots of fluids and exercise !!! you will live a long life with this condition. Please do not feel ashamed and feel like you will never find anyone that will love you! YOU are deserving of everything and a person that is educated on this subject will understand that if the proper precautions are taken, HIV will end with you and me! For those folks that don't know, we have a pill called PrEP that prevents HIV! We have condoms, which is a very important tool to use! And for us that are living with the condition of HIV, TASP: Treatment as prevention! Meaning: if I am living with the virus and I take my medication my part



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Celebrating with "Pride" 2015



Submitted on Oct 15, 2015 by tj30trust

sharethis 25 Tweet 5 G+1 0 Like 22



In my home state of Arkansas, in the capital city of Little Rock, on October 11, 2015 the city held its annual Gay Pride. I needed a distraction from my thoughts and so when I was asked to go to Pride, knowing I would be off work, I quickly said yes. I was a bit nervous because I've...

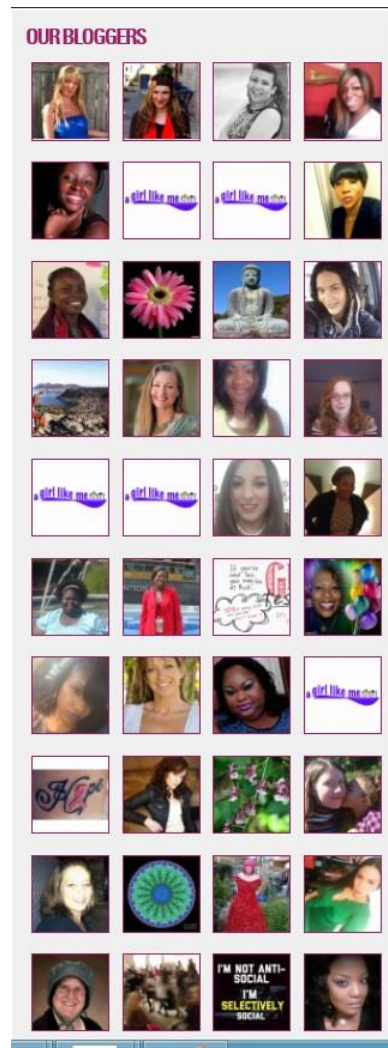


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Diversity and *A Girl Like Me/Una Chica Como Yo*

Of the 60 *A Girl Like Me* and *Una Chica Como Yo* bloggers:

- Countries represented: 12 (United States, India, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Namibia, Belize, United Kingdom, Argentina, Nepal)
- United States represented: 20
- Youth (<30): 8
- Latina: 5
- Transgender women: 3
- Black women: 25



#impact

How has The Well Project impacted PLWH's:

Self-care behaviors?

54% were more likely to engage in better overall self-care (moving more, eating better, getting enough sleep)

29% were more likely to take HIV medications daily as prescribed

Communication with providers?

47% were more likely to talk with health care providers about how HIV impacts women differently than men

43% were more likely to communicate better with health care providers

Quality of life?

58% were more likely to feel more hopeful or positive about the future

56% were more likely to feel more confident or experience greater self-esteem

38% were more likely to feel less alone or less isolated



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Race Matters: Women and HIV

- Around the world, the "female face of HIV" is overwhelmingly black or brown
- Half of all people living with HIV are women; most live in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia
- Transgender women are nearly 50x more likely to be living with HIV than the general adult population
- In U.S., about one in four people living with HIV is a woman
 - African-American women and Latinas make up nearly 80% of these women, though they account for <30% of U.S. female population
 - American Indian/Alaskan Native communities experience third-highest HIV rate of any racial group in the U.S.
 - While Asian/Pacific Islanders may not be as heavily impacted by HIV, cultural factors may leave these women vulnerable to becoming HIV+/
make it harder for them to connect to HIV care



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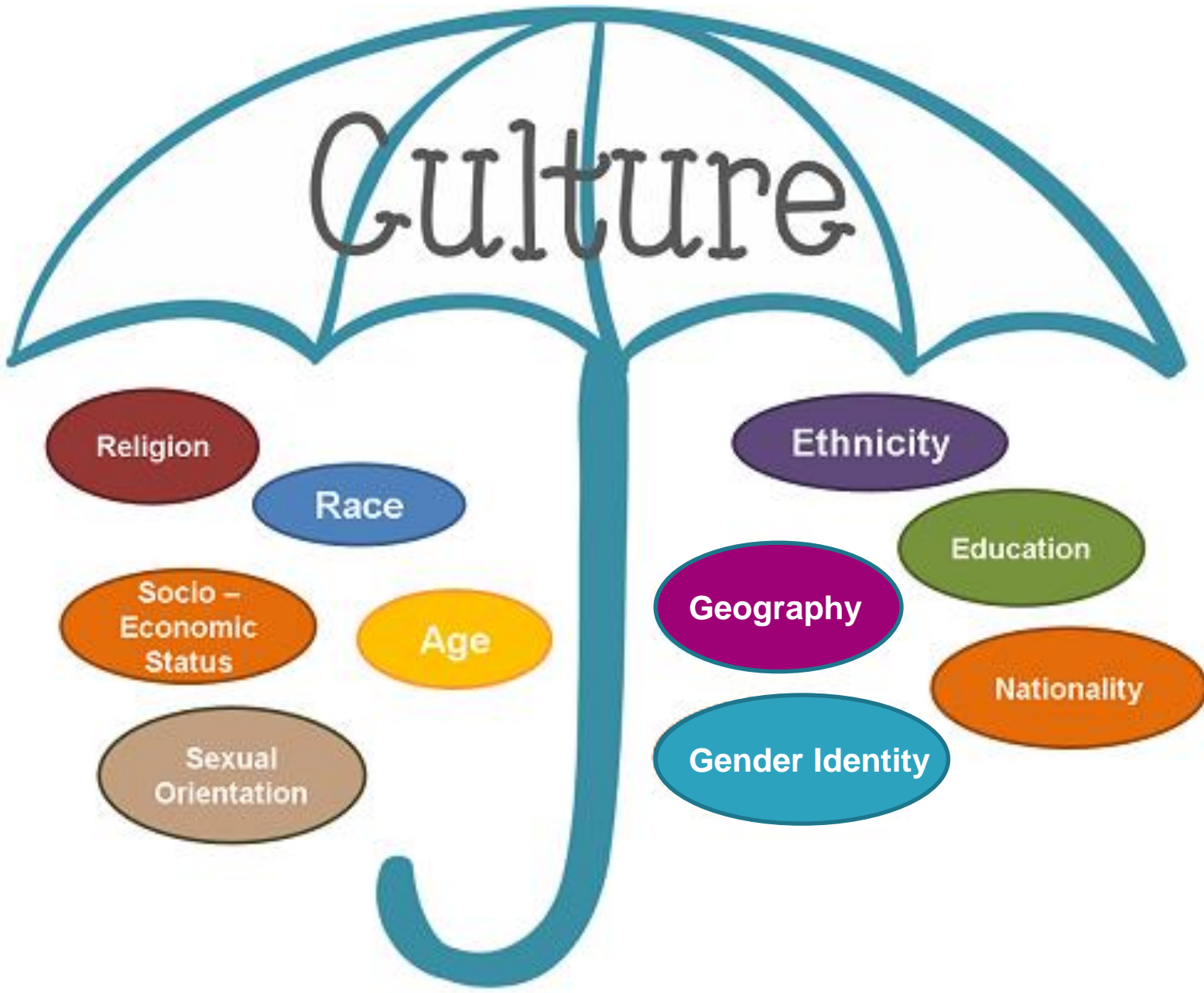
Diversity

What is diversity?

- The fact or quality of being diverse; difference
- A point or respect in which things differ
- The ways we are different; the condition of having unique characteristics

Why is it important to understand diversity?

- **Diversity is more than just tolerating differences. It is:**
 - Respecting, appreciating, and understanding the varying characteristics of individuals
- Everyone is unique and no single person is a representative of a certain group





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AGLM: Creating an online dialogue

- Address diversity through personal narratives
- Leverage technology to cross racial borders and focus on common experiences
- Unite women from around the world, creating network of advocates with global reach and impact

“I am a Latina, HIV positive, a lesbian and a woman! 4 strikes against me...but I am not out! Many know the struggles we go through if we have any of these categories with stigma and discrimination! Imagine having 4 working against you and still trying to show you are worthy and that you can make it! No matter what is against us, we must never let anything stop us or bring us down!”

-- *Maria Mejia*



“I have to make it known that even I face adversity and people should realize that I am a person. I'm humbly asking you to stop compartmentalizing me and see that I am a fellow human being. My being transgender is constantly under a secret attack.”

-- *Tiommi Jenaë Lockett*





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Questions & Answers



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The Well Project 2016 Survey



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Your Voice Counts! The Well Project 2016 User Survey

Now open! Please provide your input and help us improve our programs and better serve the needs of women and girls living with HIV!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TWPSurvey2016>

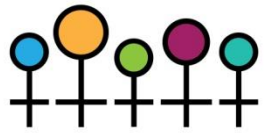




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Learn More!

- To learn more about this topic, please check out these fact sheets:
 - [Why Race Matters: Women and HIV](#)
 - [Transwomen living with HIV](#)
 - [Women and HIV](#)
- For more fact sheets and to connect to our community of women living with HIV, visit:
 - www.thewellproject.org
 - www.facebook.com/thewellproject
 - www.twitter.com/thewellproject



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Thank you!!