

**WELCOMING NOTE****Happy New Year!!!**

This month's newsletter is the first one to be launch as part of our commitment to promote health literacy and HIV/AIDS public awareness within Caribbean communities. Here, we will also announce youth's accomplishments on HIV prevention, workshops, upcoming events like our 2008 benefit concert and so on. If you would like to receive our newsletter, please go to our website and subscribe. We wish you a prosperous and healthier 2008!

**OPINION**

by Ariel Rojas, Executive Director

Back in May 2007, when the idea to create Transdiaspora Network came to my dreams, it had all the elements of a big utopia. My daily interaction with HIV positive individuals (West Indians, Latinos, African-Americans) has given me a sense of urgency and has made me a witness to the effects of the HIV epidemic that pervade every aspect of family members' lives – their emotional well-being, physical security, mental development and overall health. This helped me appreciate even more the importance of forging new alliances and strategies to better help under-served social groups and to promote good quality services.

As Transdiaspora Network's founder, I got the primary vision to transform negative facts into positive outcomes  $[(-) \times (-) = (+)]$  and I wanted to make our organization a good vehicle to bring more culturally meaningful solutions to the community on the HIV prevention topic. The Brooklyn-based Caribbean communities have three big challenges to tackle before it is too late. First, the HIV infection rate among youth is getting astonishingly higher every year. Second, Caribbean-descendent youth are not engaged at large in HIV prevention activities within their own communities. Third, the youth population faces barriers to access culturally-oriented solutions through the current biomedical and individualist approach on HIV prevention.

Transdiaspora Network is connected to the future because the youngest generation is holding those solutions we are looking for. Our main goal is not only to prevent HIV among at-risk Caribbean-descendent youth, but as social service professionals we also have the duty to be more innovative using the concepts of culture and tradition. We cannot do less than promote an inclusive environment in our approach.

**TRANSDIASPORA**  
n e t w o r k

**Talk Things Out!**

Transdiaspora Network is an HIV prevention and human capacity building initiative that offer community-based, culturally aware, preventive interventions for a population of youth at high risk. In addition, it facilitates identification of community resources, empowerment based interventions, and educational approaches to increase health literacy. Our projects – Afro-Caribbean Dance Mediation, Storytelling Dynamics and The Carib Youth Society (CYS) – provide solutions that increase self-awareness and immerse the youth into an assertive performance using the cultural strengths of his/her environment.

For more information about our organization, please visit [www.transdiasporanetwork.org](http://www.transdiasporanetwork.org).

**CURRENT ISSUE**

According to the most recent U.S. Census Bureau data, there are over 3 million Caribbean-Americans in the United States, and it is estimated that 500,000 are living in the New York metropolitan area (7% of the US Caribbean-American population,) with the highest concentration in Brooklyn. This quantity is large enough that U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer considers Brooklyn as the Caribbean capital of the United States. In fact, Marty Markowitz, New York City's Brooklyn borough president, said: "Brooklyn is a proud home to the largest Caribbean-American community of any city in the nation, and what affects the Caribbean region also affects Brooklyn." The HIV epidemic in the United States continues to affect disadvantaged racial/ethnic minority communities disproportionately, and those of Caribbean origin are no exception. Not only are new infections increasingly concentrated in these groups, but people living with HIV from these groups are less likely to receive timely and optimal care.

**CELEBRITY QUOTE**

"Nobody wants to say, 'AIDS is happening in my community.' Africa doesn't want to say, 'It's happening in my community.' America doesn't want to say, 'It's happening in my community.' It's very easy to be hopeful far and away when you're not being helpful to yourself right here and now. Talking about AIDS as an African problem is just another way of talking about AIDS as a 'gay-related immune-deficiency disease.'"

(Sharon Stone, POZ Magazine)