

Excerpt from [Pandemic]

By

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Performance Theatre Class at BCHS

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NOT FOR DUPLICATION

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Scene 5: School versus reality: How much do we actually know

Set of seven black chairs facing stage left, on stage left is your regular health classroom, teacher giving class instruction and on stage right side HIV 101 (uninhibited information)

STUDENT:

Lights up on the everyday classroom setting stage left, students file in to health class to continue their standards based education on hygiene, physical fitness, and the ever popular Sexually Transmitted Diseases. Lights up stage right, we have a HIV/AIDS 101 class offered by a variety of institutions and clinics that spread awareness about the disease. The following responses given by students are not manufactured but ones we encountered while researching and interviewing a range of ages, professions, and orientations

TEACHER:

Good morning class, on the board is your daily warm-up exercise: You are to free-write for three minutes on the subject of HIV/AIDS. Do not be inhibited by grammar, spelling, and/or stereotypes, simply write the first words that come to your head.

Students begin working, as each student says their line they will stand on top of their chair and face the audience for the duration of their line, as soon as one sits down another stands up, timing is important here.

STUDENT A:

I hate these exercises, free-writes for three minutes on topics we know nothing about to make us realize how we don't know anything about something we already know we knew nothing about, has it been three minutes yet.

STUDENT B:

Okay...HIV...AIDS

STUDENT C:

Kick back tonight...hello new girl

STUDENT D:

Creeper staring at me again, maybe I can move seats

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STUDENT E:
Anybody...contact...infection

STUDENT F:
Homosexuals

STUDENT G:
Please I hope nobody says gays

STUDENT H:
I really don't want to share

The pace quickens here and some lines may overlap to tighten up dead space

STUDENT A:
Three minutes

STUDENT B:
AIDS...HIV

STUDENT C:
Hello girl

STUDENT D:
Creepier again

STUDENT E:
Contact...infection

STUDENT F:
Gays

STUDENT G:
Please nobody say

STUDENT H:
Don't share

In this last segment, pace should be quickened once again and then time students stay standing after their lines.

STUDENT A:
Minutes

STUDENT B:
AIDS

Girl
STUDENT C:

Again
STUDENT D:

Infection
STUDENT E:

Gays
STUDENT F:

Please
STUDENT G:

Don't
STUDENT H:

Alright stop...anyone like to share
TEACHER:

Entire class sits down

Homosexuals
STUDENT F:
(Student Reactions)

Settle down
TEACHER:

Gays
STUDENT F:
(Student Reactions)

That's enough
TEACHER:

Fags
STUDENT F:
(Student Reactions)

Stereotypes
FACILITATOR:

What?
STUDENT F:

Labels...stigmas...words...they don't mean anything. Where
did you learn that from?
FACILITATOR:

STUDENT F:

What do you mean?

FACILITATOR:

Those thoughts, that mentality, where did you learn from, it had to come from somewhere.

STUDENT F:

My parents; what of it

FACILITATOR:

So it's a homosexual disease

STUDENT F:

Yes

FACILITATOR:

Are you sure?

STUDENT F:

Again yes

FACILITATOR:

I would agree

STUDENT F:

You would

FACILITATOR:

Yes-a homosexual disease...oh and a heterosexual disease...a transgender disease...a bisexual disease...and a questioning disease...that about covers everybody I think.

STUDENT F:

No

FACILITATOR:

Oh yeah, you see the great thing about HIV is that it doesn't discriminate its equal opportunity for everybody: you, me, her, him, your teacher, all of you. Unfortunately, your not protected by your stereotypes, you can't hide behind your labels; it doesn't care. AIDS is not a label disease it's a human disease...and well...that means you too.

STUDENT F TURNS BACK AROUND

Teacher:

Quiet down...let me make this clear...it is not

STUDENT F:

A homosexual disease, it affects everybody; every person.

TEACHER:

That's correct; umm thank you. HIV Human Immunodeficiency Virus is the virus that is transferred from person to person. The virus infects the immune system and destroys/impairs T-cells that are essential to fight off disease. The end result is deficiency in the immune system. AIDS Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome is a diagnosed condition based on signs, infection, symptoms, and/or cancers that are associated with a deficient immune system: basically the body cannot fight off diseases.

STUDENT B:

How is it transferred?

TEACHER:

Through blood, sexual intercourse, needle sharing in drug use

STUDENT B:

What about oral

TEACHER:

Oral what

STUDENT B:

Sex

FACILITATOR:

I got this

Student B and F turn

STUDENT B:

Can it?

FACILITATOR:

Yes, it can happen...any type of sex

STUDENT B:

So by?

FACILITATOR:

Yes

STUDENT B:

And also?

FACILITATOR:

Yes

STUDENT B:

And finally?

FACILITATOR:

YES!!!!!! Any...and...also...everything and anything you can think of. Basically, anyone who engages in risky behavior is at risk for infection.

STUDENT B:

What about kissing?

FACILITATOR:

It's rare; but there have been cases of it.

Student B and F turn around

TEACHER:

I don't think it's appropriate to discuss

STUDENT B:

Don't worry about it I answered my own question.

TEACHER:

Alright moving on...question?

STUDENT A:

I don't understand how this affects us?

TEACHER:

What do you mean?

STUDENT A:

I don't sleep around, I don't do drugs, and it doesn't concern me.

STUDENT C:

I'm not even sexually active

STUDENT D:

See, this type of thing doesn't happen to people like us.

TEACHERS:

But it could

STUDENT D:

But it won't

STUDENT C:

We're careful

STUDENT A:

But it hasn't happened-

FACILITATOR:

Yet

(CONTINUED)

Student A, B, C, D, and F turn
around in their chairs

STUDENT A:

Yet? Yeah I get it I see it on the news the Africa Epidemic

STUDENT C:

The India Epidemic

STUDENT D:

The China Epidemic

FACILITATOR:

The world-.Pandemic. It doesn't affect you? It doesn't concern you? Between 40,000 and 50,000 Americans become infected with HIV every year...40 to 50 thousand...Americans...every year. Half of them are between the ages of 13 and 24. That means at least two teenagers and young adults in this country are infected with HIV every hour of every day-half-20 to 25 thousand. That IS you!!!! Take a minute-let that sink in that's nine times your student population every year.

All Students turn back to the
teacher.

TEACHER:

Once contracted the HIV virus can take anywhere from 5 to 10 years before a full flown AIDS diagnosis may happen. The only way to know for sure about possible infection is to get tested.

STUDENT E:

What about possible symptoms?

STUDENT G:

How can I protect myself?

STUDENT H:

Where

TEACHER:

Alright class, the bell is about to ring, go ahead and starting packing up your stuff

STUDENT E, G, H

But

FACILITATOR:

But what...I'm still here...ask me?

STUDENT E:

What if...what if I want to get tested?

FACILITATOR:

Testing is confidential...there is no way anyone would know.

STUDENT E:

Is there anywhere to go besides my doctor?

FACILITATOR:

There are a variety of places; it varies from city to city. There are also some free clinics if you can't afford it. Anything else?

STUDENT E:

No that's it...for now.

Audience Participation activity to show how easily the virus can spread.

Scene 6: Waiting Room

Ten chairs lined up on the first electric line

STUDENT:

Ten chairs lined up on the first electric line, simple, black, non-descript. Ten empty chairs for ten perspective people...a waiting room. My appointment is at...

- 5:30 1:
- 7:00 2:
- 6:15 3:
- 5:20 4:
- 6:30 5:
- 5:00 6:
- 6:10 7:

	8:
5:15	
	9:
6:45	
	10:
5:45	
	1:
I've already been here 30	
	10:
45	
	2:
120	
	9:
105	
	3:
75	
	8:
15	
	4:
20	
	7:
70	
	5:
90	
	6:
0 minutes...I just got here	
	8:
Nobody talks in the waiting room	
	3:
Nobody looks at anyone	
	1:
Blank faces	
	10:
Soft whispers	

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Shuffling feet 4:

Averting eyes 6:

Nervous movements 2:

Door opening 9:

Door closing 5:

Names called 7:

1.

I never thought I'd be here. Not that here is a bad place it[U+0092]s just not in your plans, you know. I look around and everybody has this down cast appearance as if they have some dark secret or some burden that they have had to bear. And that might not even be the case but it's just a feeling I have.

2.

I wonder what these people's stories are. Each one probably so unique, probably so interesting. I'll never know, I won't ask, I won't intrude but I can't help but think if that we are all connected by this somehow. I mean we may not be here for the same purpose but I wonder how many times we find ourselves in this similar situation.

3.

I feel dirty....and it infuriates me so much that I do. It's like I have this stigma or preconceived notion that I'm some how tainted. When I told my friends I was getting tested they looked at me with disgust as if I was degrading myself. Is it not the responsible thing to do? If we are going to take risks should we not accept the consequences of our actions? I don't know...it's not cowardice these people are not cowards...I admire them...all of them

4.

I'm not even here to get tested, I came along for support. When I was asked to go with I was honored as if I was just asked the most important question in the world. It's funny to think of it that way but it's true. It was so personal, such a huge deal, and I'm a part of that now. For better or for worse I'm here and what ever comes along we'll face it together; isn't that the way it should be?

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5.

So I'm filling out this paperwork and there are all these personal questions; which makes sense, because it's important to think about these things: How many people? How many times? How...how...how, and I'm working on this stuff during class which I know I shouldn't be doing but come on, it's language arts class, and I don't understand Shakespeare anyhow; who does? Anyways, I digress...so I'm filling this stuff out and the teacher breezes by my desk right when I get to the questions about sex and he looks down and sees the paperwork. At this point I scramble and try to cover it up but it's too late; before I know it he asks to see me out in the hallway.

6.

So I'm pulled out into the hallway and I immediately go into defensive mode and I start listing off all of these ridiculous excuses that really have nothing to do with anything. And she sits there listening to me not saying a word and I think to myself this is it, my parents will be called and I[U+0092]m done for. Then there is silence between us for what feels like an eternity. And then out of nowhere she shifts her weight, leans her back up against the wall and sits down on the floor. She says 'that's got to be tough' and I say 'yeah' and for some reason I start to cry and it's strange to admit because I'm really not a crier. And she just sat there with me for the rest of the hour. That was the first time I felt like someone cared about me; I'll never forget that.

7.

I was filling out the paperwork after school; it wasn't necessarily a hard thing to fill out. I wasn't all that worried at the time. I just felt that this was something I should do eventually, so why not get it over with now? I sign my name; I fill out little questionnaires about sex and such. Still, I feel no different, no pressure, no nervousness. I figured that my hand would be shaking while I wrote down what could very well be one of the most pivotal packets of my life. My hand sits still though, it doesn't move, it's still.

8.

I'm in the car now with my friend. We're listening to some music and he asks me if I'm okay, like I should be freaking out or something. I tell him no, I'm perfectly fine.

9.

Go ahead ten minutes, the present; I'm in the waiting room now, I'm here, I'm ready. Or at least, I thought I was. When the lady asked me to turn in my packet I noticed the back page, I had never looked at it. It was instructions for how to get counseling, how to get in contact with people, if you

(MORE)

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9. (cont'd)

were...positive. That's when it hit me. All I could think was no-no-no. I kept myself contained up until this point I can't lose it now. I can't hide from it anymore though...the thoughts...the fears...the truth.

10.

My name is called-my heart races-the nurse leads me back to a tiny room and explains the procedure: A simple finger prick; results in ten minutes.

Ten minutes

Left hand shaking, index finger, quick pinch, three drops of blood, blood brothers.