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by Winnie McCroy
EDGE Editor
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Deondre Moore

From August 31-September 4 at Atlanta's 10th Annual Black Pride Celebration, activists Karamo Brown and Deondre Moore will take the stage to promote their new Positively Fearless movement, celebrating being Black, gay and HIV-positive.

"As a gay man, HIV has been always been around me," said Brown, who was the first openly gay African-American housemate on the MTV reality series "The Real World." "I'm negative, but I have friends from both the gay and heterosexual communities who are HIV-positive. One thing that has always upset me is the fact that people in our community tend to 'shade' men who are open about their positive status. In my

opinion, we can't stop HIV from disproportionately affecting black, gay, and bisexual men until we stop judging and start supporting those in our community living with the virus."

Black men who have sex with men face an especially heavy burden, accounting for 59 percent of all HIV diagnoses among African Americans in the South. In fact, of all Black MSM diagnosed with HIV nationally in 2014, more than 60 percent were living in the South.

"As a black, gay, positive man living in Texas, these statistics are especially worrisome to me, but even more concerning is the fact that many of the positive men in our community aren't being honest with themselves, their families and their doctors about their status -- and taking steps to get on treatment," said Moore, who was diagnosed with HIV at 19-years-old. "When I was first diagnosed, I thought my status was a death sentence, but after educating myself, I quickly learned that by engaging in treatment, I can live a healthy and full life with HIV. So educating and supporting those who may be scared to address their diagnoses has become very important to me, and this campaign has given me a very exciting opportunity to encourage to be brave and take a proactive role in their health."



Karamo Brown (Source:Jerris Madison)

Moore and Brown kicked off their Positively Fearless campaign over Memorial Day weekend at DC Black Pride, where Moore was the featured speaker on the main stage. This weekend, he will speak at 4:30 p.m. on Sunday, September 4 on the main stage at Piedmont Park at the 2016 Pure Heat Community Festival at the Atlanta Black Pride Celebration, alongside Brown, the Gentlemen's Foundation, and others. They'll also be at the Positively Fearless booth (located by the 10th St. entrance to Piedmont Park) to greet attendees before and after -- and encourage everyone to come by and say hello.

The two have teamed up with Janssen Therapeutics to ask that everyone join this important movement by living Positively Fearless and inspiring others to do the same.

If you can't attend the event, join the conversation by tweeting @HIVWisdom using #PositivelyFearless -- to share your own story of when you chose to be Positively Fearless, honest or

brave.

"By tweeting using the hashtag #PositivelyFearless, people can share their stories and tell others about a

time when they chose to be honest, to be brave, to get tested, to tackle their diagnosis head-on, and to be open with their doctor about treatment," said Brown. "I'd encourage people to share this with their friends -- positive or not -- and tell them to get involved! Everyone can be fearless, and we can all be part of the solution."

Positively Fearless is hoping to expand to more local Black Pride events in 2017 and continuing to spread this important message. Keep an eye on the Twitter handle @HIVWisdom for updates.

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Winnie McCroy is the Women on the EDGE Editor, HIV/Health Editor, and Assistant Entertainment Editor for EDGE Media Network, handling all women's news, HIV health stories and theater reviews throughout the U.S. She has contributed to other publications, including The Village Voice, Gay City News, Chelsea Now and The Advocate, and lives in Brooklyn, New York.

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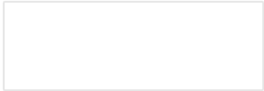
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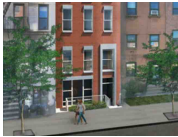
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