

## St. Louis American

### Well-known blacks must show the way

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Columnist Jesse Jackson

The Rev. Jesse Jackson, speaking at the 2007 National Conference on African-Americans and AIDS in Philadelphia this week, called for increased research funding to find a cure for HIV/AIDS, as well as more awareness about HIV testing.

Jackson encouraged well-known blacks to receive HIV tests publicly to help address the stigma surrounding the disease.

For instance, he said that if players participating in the National Basketball Association All-Star Game Weekend last week took the test live on television, it could inspire others to do the same.

"We must use every platform we can for mass education," Jackson said.

"Magic [Johnson] was embarrassed; he did not take the HIV test; he was too busy, macho and afraid," said Jackson, who said that Johnson had told him such.

"But he had to take the [National Basketball Association-mandated] insurance test, and the doctors were so stunned, they tested him twice. Other players were afraid of him.

"He was wounded by his own behavior and the transgressions of others. But others were healed by his stripes. The good news is Magic had early detection and became a teacher to the nation.

"The first step is to overcome fear," Jackson said. "Second is to take the 30-second antibody test, and the next is the antigen test, which gives you a true status at the moment of infection.

"There is a rise in HIV in Africa, Russia and Europe; this disease is a world issue," Jackson said. "Morally, we must reach out to the whole world.

He also urged the hundreds of medical professionals and HIV/AIDS advocates attending the conference to buy stock in drug companies and then attend shareholder meetings to push for a cure, according to a report in the Philadelphia Inquirer.

"This is one of the great moral and medical challenges of our time," Jackson said.

"So many people are dying from it. None of us will be safe until we are all safe."

Drug companies, including GlaxoSmithKline, Bristol-Myers Squibb and Pfizer, "may have an interest in more medicine and less cure. Ultimately we don't want the medicine. We want the cure," Jackson said.

The conference was sponsored by Minority Healthcare Communications Inc. (MHCC), a non-profit health education organization focused on creation and promotion of specialized healthcare education on HIV/AIDS and Cancer in the African-American and Latino Communities.

