



## **My Hope is to End Stigma on HIV/AIDS.**

We in the African community can and must talk openly about HIV/AIDS. This is the only way we will get the help we need and is the only way we will bring an end to the infecting of one another.

My name is Lina Ali and I have been positive for 13 years. I was born in Tanzania and came to this country in 1991 at the age of 21. I tested positive for HIV 1995.

I decided to get tested because I was preparing to start school. I planned on going into the field of medicine. I was shocked to find out that I was HIV positive and very afraid of the unknown. Adding to this fear was the issue of being recent immigrant to a new country. I couldn't stop worrying about if I may be send back to Africa. Having to come all the way to America for a better life thinking to myself "It is not supposed to be this way"

I decided to tell my family right a way. I believe my strength comes from their love. I must say I have been very fortunate to have the love and support of my family and friends. I feel their love and support is the main thing that keeps me going. With that kind of love and support there is nothing out there I cannot over come.

Nobody wants to talk about HIV, but we need to. We need to open communication for the sake of the million of infected children and others. They should be able to get the help they need without feeling ashamed, isolated or being discriminated against because of their illness. After all we are in United States of America.

It is a tough road dealing with this illness. The side effects of some medications, depression and the hardest part of all, the unnecessary part: the isolation and discrimination from your own people and your own community.

I hope to finally one day be able to see the light at the end of the tunnel. A day when it will be considered okay for everyone to get tested as a routine check up, talk about HIV and AIDS openly and use all the prevention needed to stop the spread of it. A day when people who are infected can come out in the light be loved and embraced by their communities. Instead of staying in the silent, darkness and spreading the danger to others.

**Written by Lina Ali**