

*"In 20 years,
I've never
discussed HIV
with my family.
I would
love to."*

Charity



Charity

was born in Zambia and has been living in the UK for close to 25 years. Nearly 20 years ago, she was diagnosed with HIV. Since then, she has not travelled back to Zambia and has not yet told her family about her diagnosis.

After finding out from a friend that a man that she had been dating was living with HIV, Charity decided to get tested. The test came back positive.

Immediately, she felt an overwhelming sense of hopelessness and was scared to tell her family. She wanted to tell them in person, but due to her immigration status, she was unable to travel back to Zambia. So she decided to face it alone.

The period after diagnosis was a massive learning curve for Charity. In 2003, she still used the terms HIV and AIDS interchangeably. After getting access to the information that she needed to understand what HIV is, she felt more confident to confide in those closest to her, but they would not believe that she had HIV.

This resulted in some vile comments over the years: 'you don't look like one

of them', 'you are not like them', 'people with HIV should all die'.

Despite this, Charity has maintained an incredibly positive outlook. She knows that a lot of these comments are not made with ill intent but are said from a place of little understanding of what HIV is today.

Over the last 15 years, Charity has spent a lot of time working with the community to drive better awareness of HIV, support people through their own experiences, and create safe spaces through creative workshops.

Charity is incredibly proud of the work that she has done and regularly shares her achievements on social media, which her family can see. But a direct conversation has still not been had. Although she believes there is now an unspoken understanding, after all this time she wants to wait to tell them about the diagnosis in person - and is confident to do so.

The more we talk about stigma associated with HIV among Black communities, the more people will understand and the more lives we can help change.



By Working Together We Can End The HIV Epidemic For *Everyone. Everywhere.*