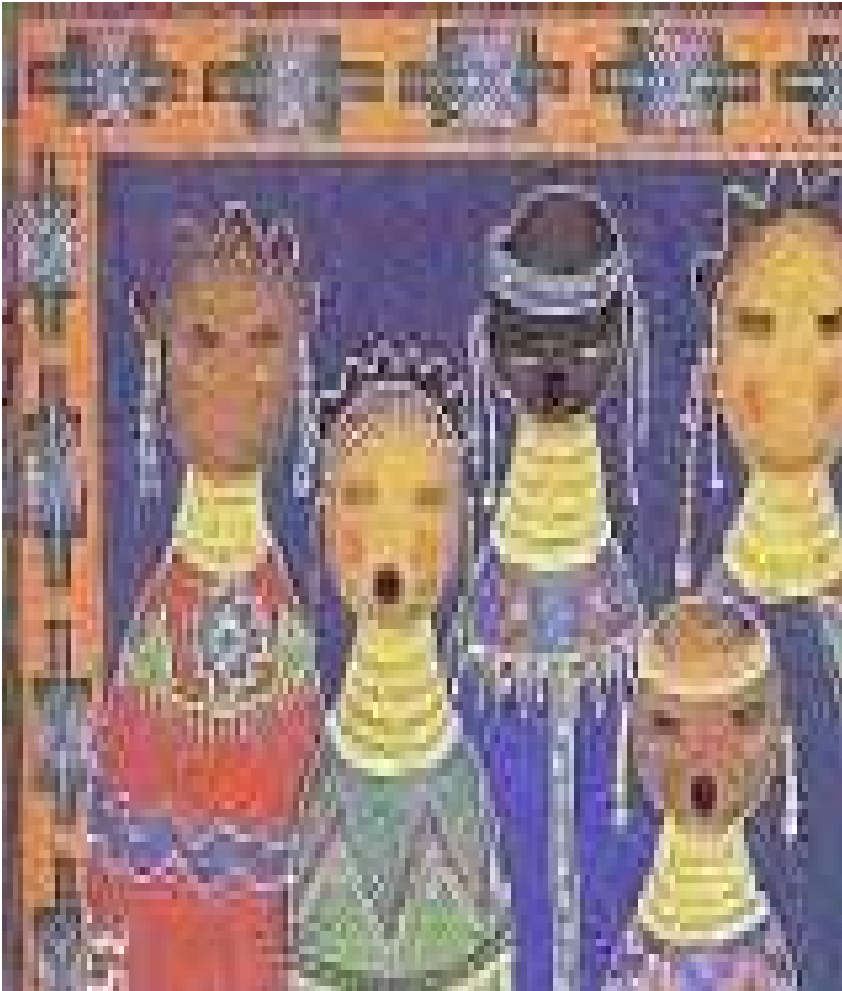


*Black Women and HIV/AIDS:
Confronting the Crisis and Planning for Action
New Orleans, Louisiana, March 23 - 25, 2009*



Women of African Descent HIV & Cofactors

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NAPWA

COMMON THREADS



Weaving the shared experiences of our lives together to create trust and celebrate who we are

Common Threads

Description of Prevention Intervention

Common Threads is a three day small group prevention intervention designed to reduce HIV/AIDS related stigma by building the capacity of Black women living with HIV/AIDS to effectively share their life experiences among Black women in select geographical areas where there is a high incidence areas for HIV/AIDS.



A Story of Two Girls

One Story is About Thriving



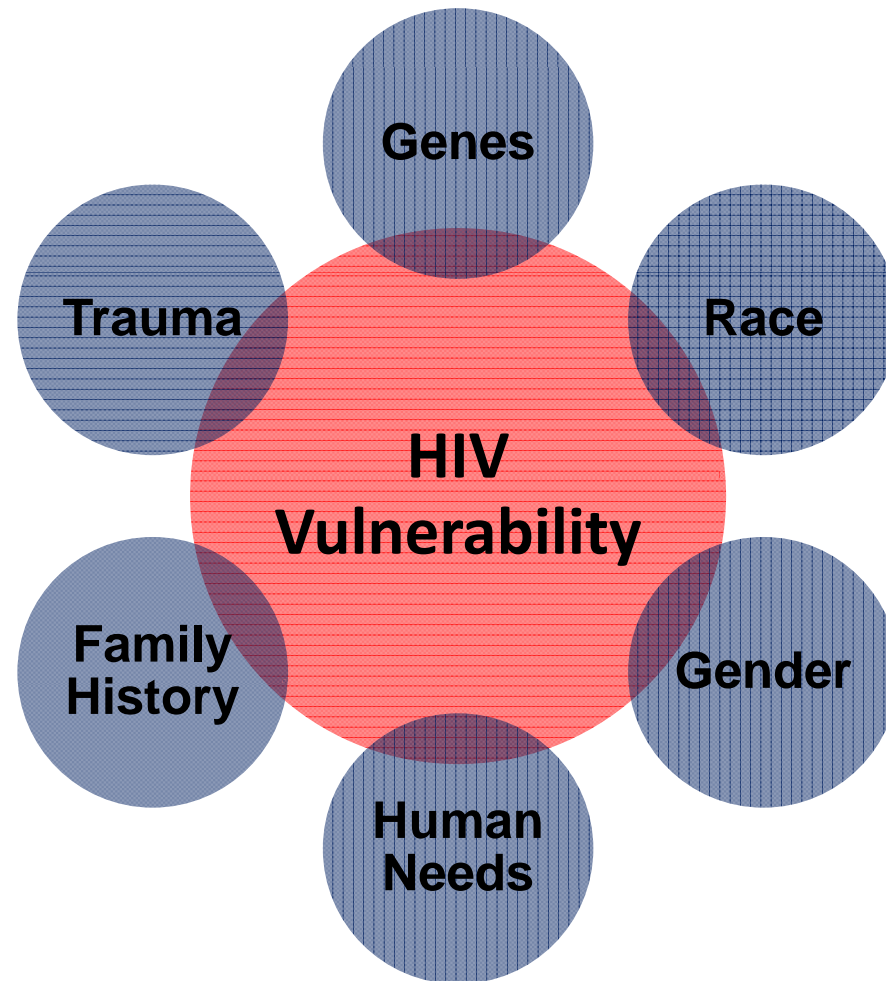
One Story is About Being Buried Alive



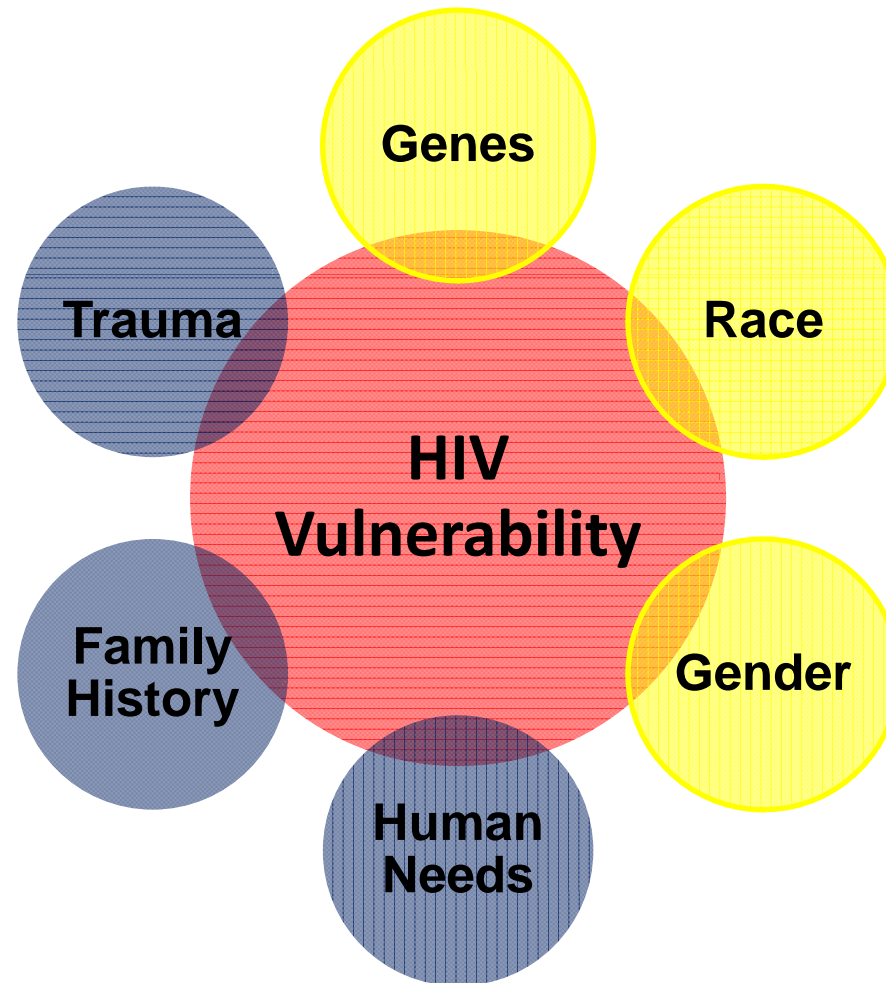
Theme: It's Like Being Buried Alive

- Framework for this talk
 - An explanation of HIV vulnerability
 - How our ability to meet our needs impacts HIV vulnerability
 - A look at some of the factors that lead to HIV vulnerability through a personal story
 - Why we must act now
 - Creating a sustainable advocacy agenda
 - Creating an agreement among women

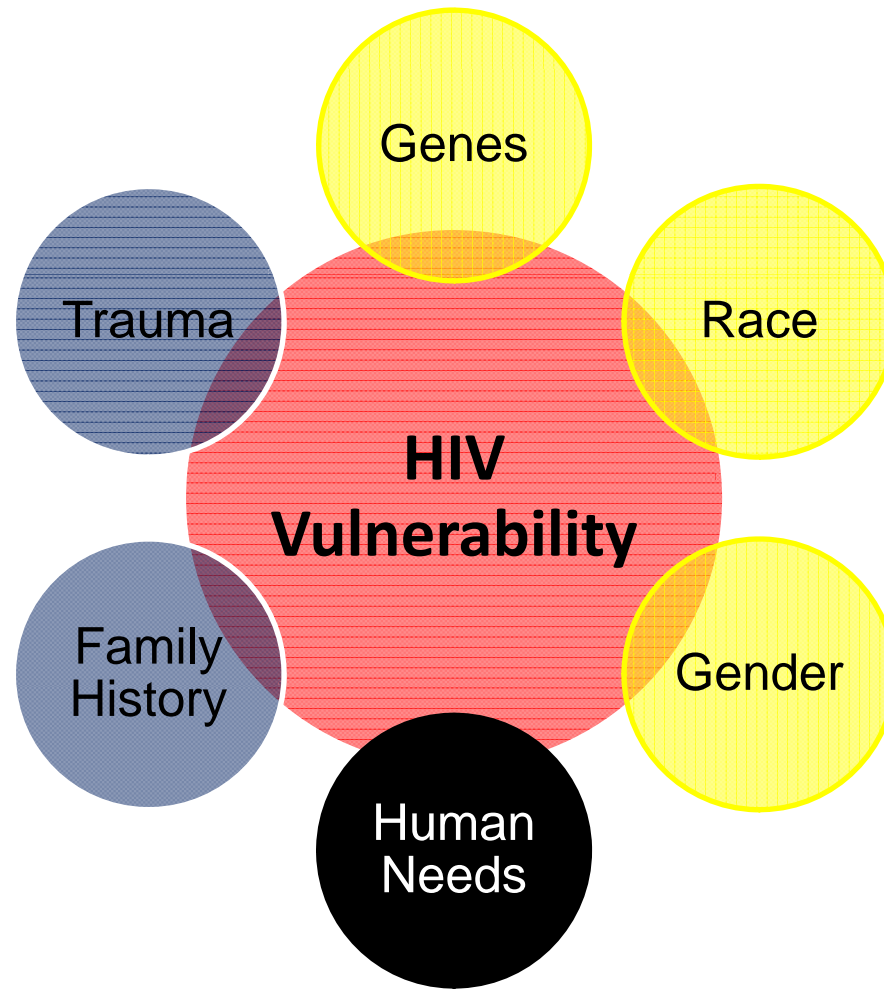
Primary Factors Leading to HIV Vulnerability



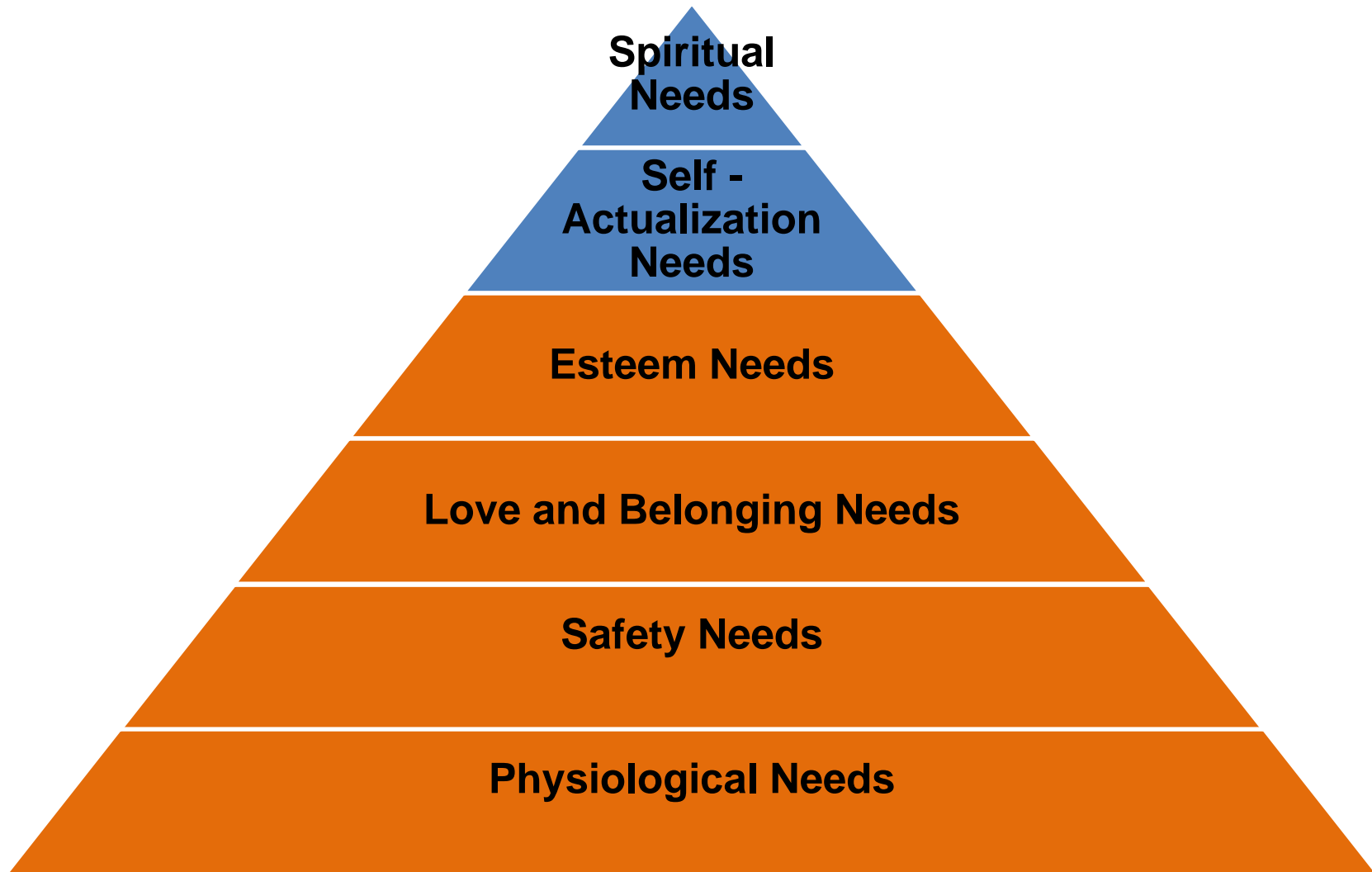
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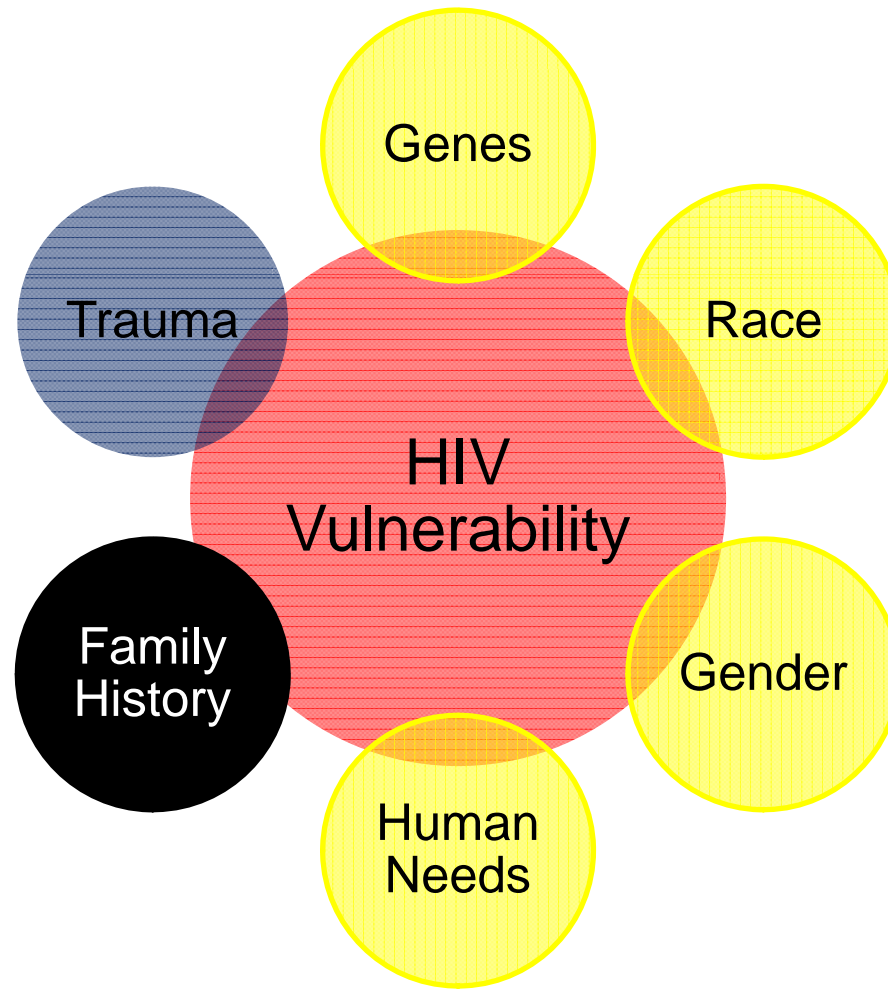
Primary Factors Leading to HIV Vulnerability



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Primary Factors Leading to HIV Vulnerability



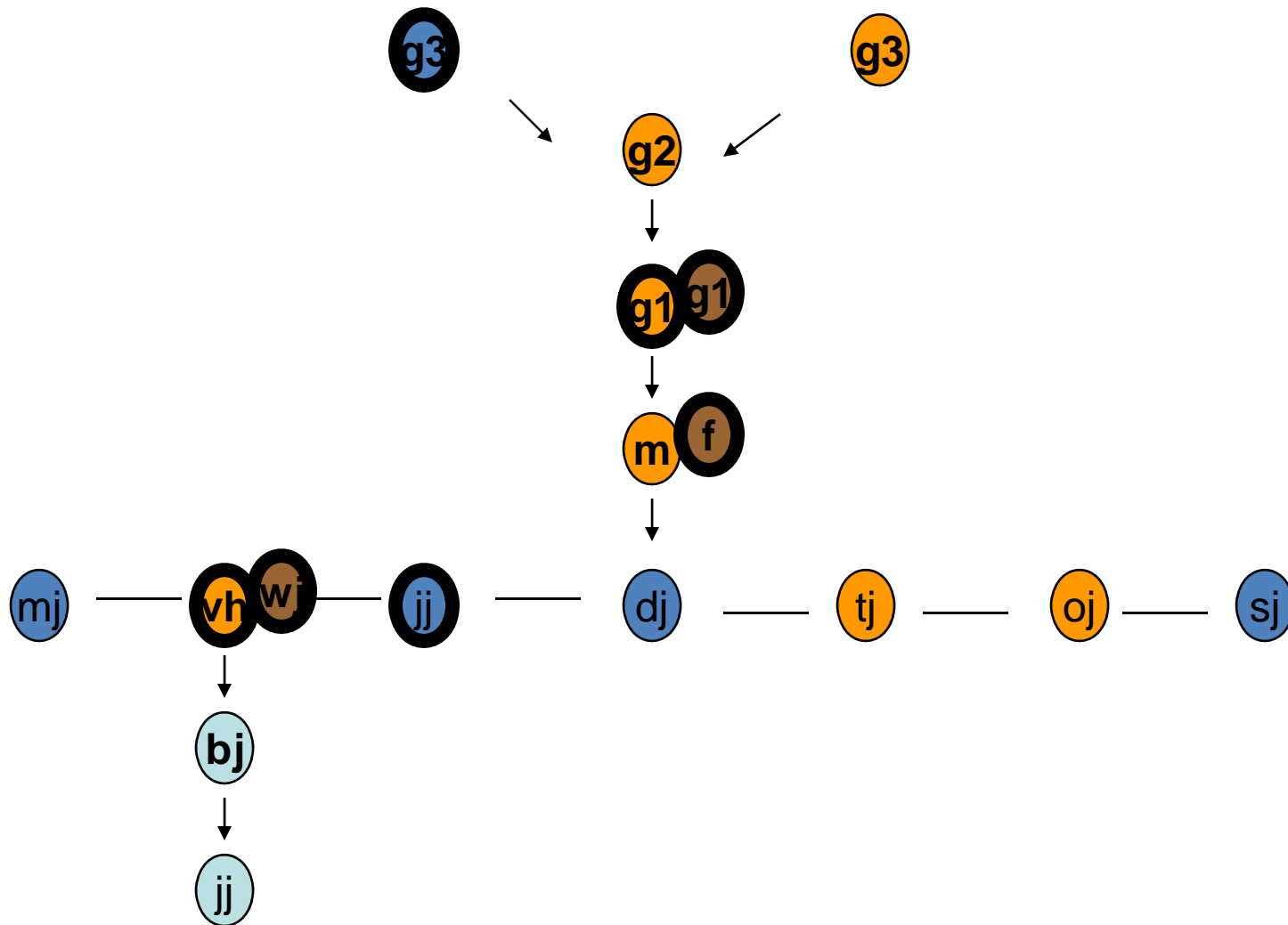
My Family History

My family history is one of love, spirituality, perseverance, and hard work. But it is also one with a history of substance use (alcohol, prescription drugs, and illegal drugs), violence (verbal, emotional, and physical), and sexual molestation/abuse. My family tree shows how this history flowed through the family, touching multiple generations.



My Family Tree

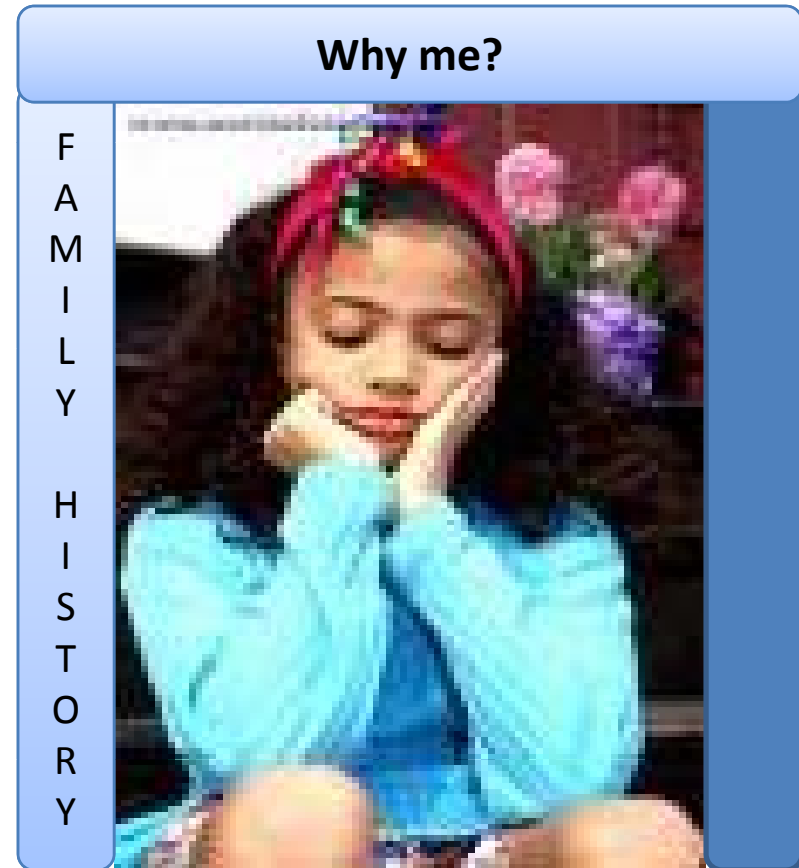
Family Members by Compulsive Substance Use



Impact of Family History

Unmet Needs

- Family met survival needs
- However, there were family challenges to meeting
 - Safety needs
 - Love and belonging
 - Esteem needs
- Impact: Although I felt loved and wanted by my mother I also felt a tremendous amount of fear & anxiety



Family History

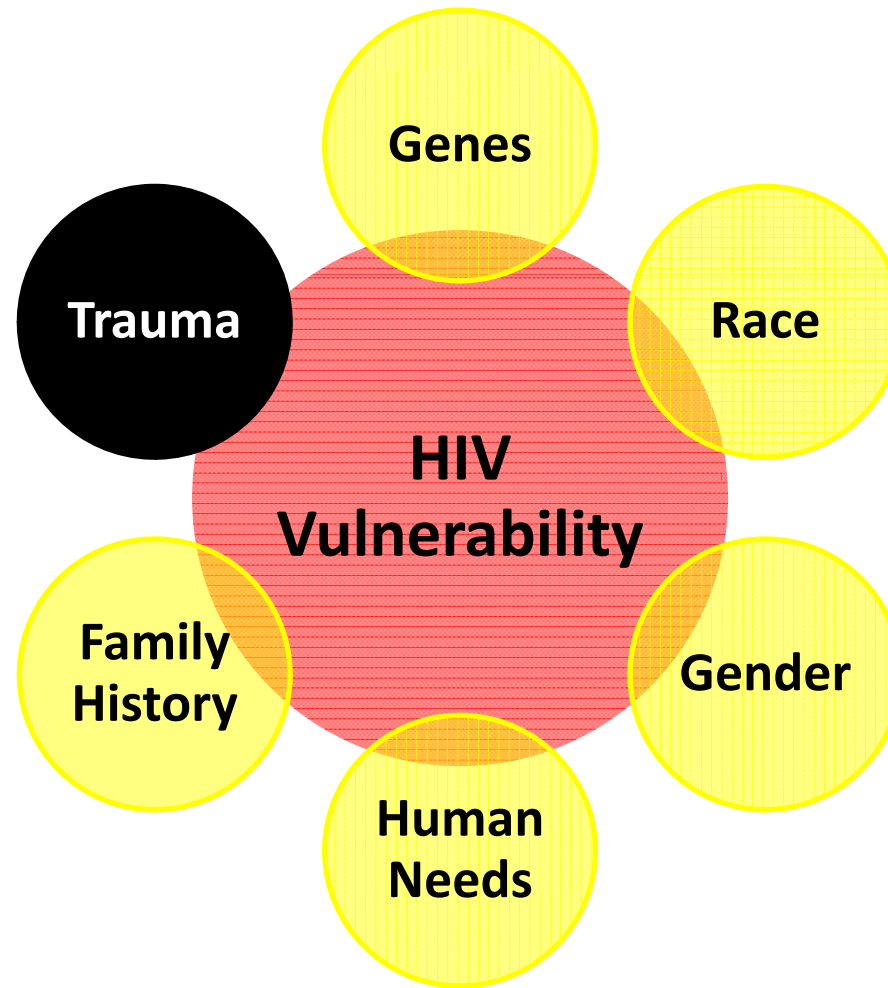
CHALLENGES

- Vulnerability to HIV Infection: Challenges
 - Coping mechanism:
 - Substance Use
 - House of Loners
 - Emotions: Difficulty in expressing feelings
 - Anger
 - Intimacy
 - Mental health disorders:
 - Depression

STRENGTHS

- Gateway to Recovery: Strengths
 - Mother's resiliency
 - Generous spirit
 - Closeness:
 - Family gatherings
 - Available & dependable in times of Need
 - Open minded: Celebrate diversity
 - Father valued education

Primary Factors Leading to HIV Vulnerability



Timeline

Importance

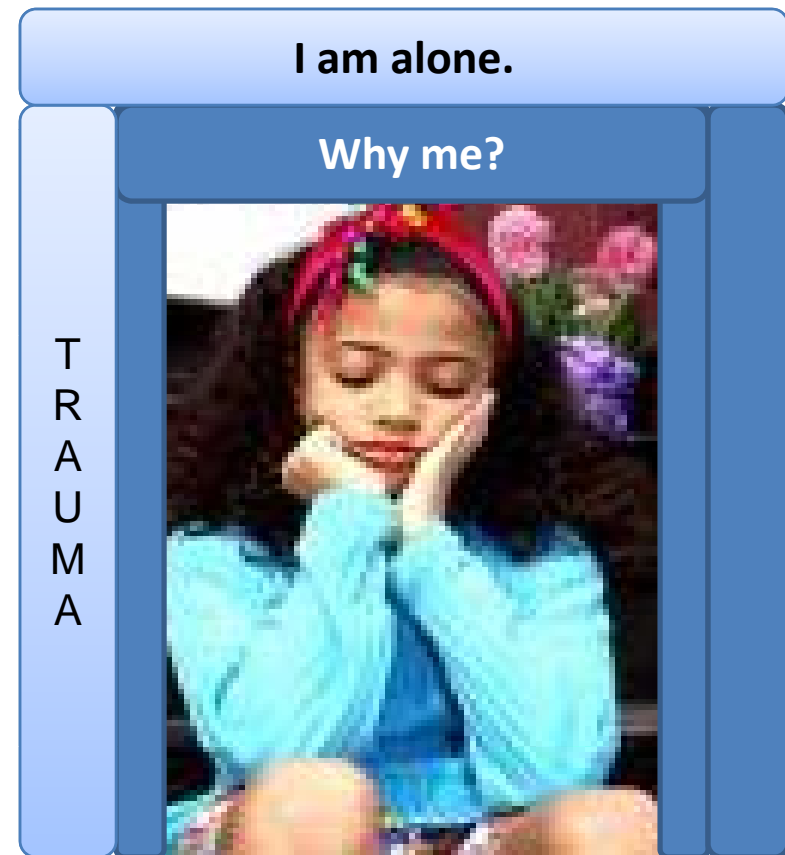
- A timeline shows events and when they occurred
- A timeline allows one to plot events in a graphic way, to see the possible relationships, to help memory, and to grasp how things may have happened in sequence.
- A timeline, especially going from earliest to latest, can suggest the possibility of cause and effect




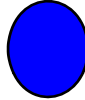
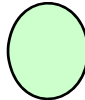

Impact of Trauma

Trauma and HIV

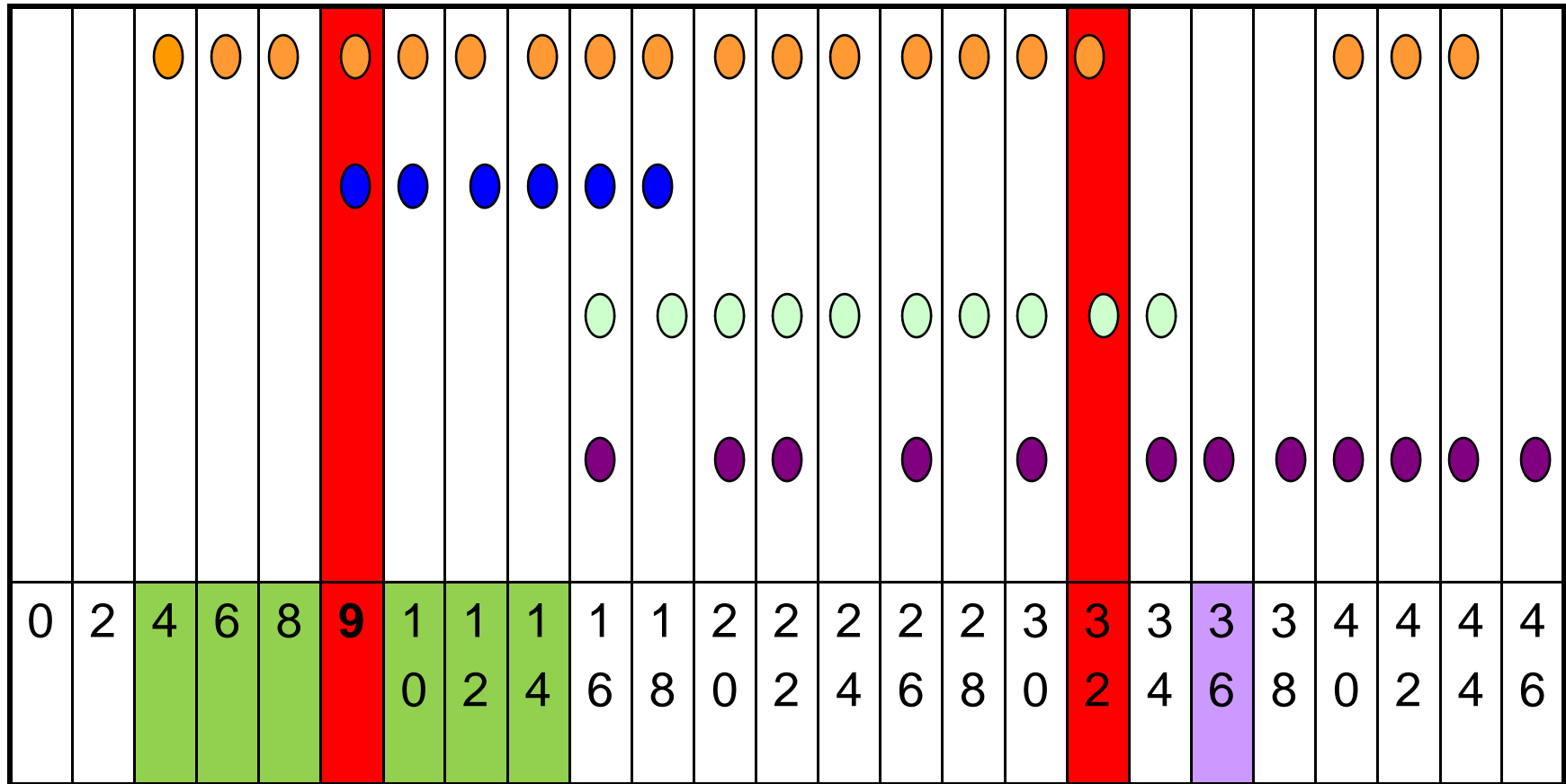
- Research findings indicate that sexual abuse before age 18 increases a woman's risk for becoming HIV-positive more than any other factor.



Timeline Map

-  Orange: Violence
 -  Blue: Sexual Abuse Episodes
 -  Green: Substance Use
 -  Purple: Positive Events
- 1st Red Line – first incidence of sexual molestation
 - 2nd Red Line – diagnosed with HIV
 - Green Shading – exposed to substance use
 - Light Purple Line – Entered an inpatient recovery program

My Timeline Diagram



exposure

chaos

recovery

Response to Trauma

Substance Use and Sex

Age 16

- Started going out to clubs

Age 18

- Started binge drinking
- Started smoking marijuana
- Promiscuity

Age 19

- Partner violence



Trauma History

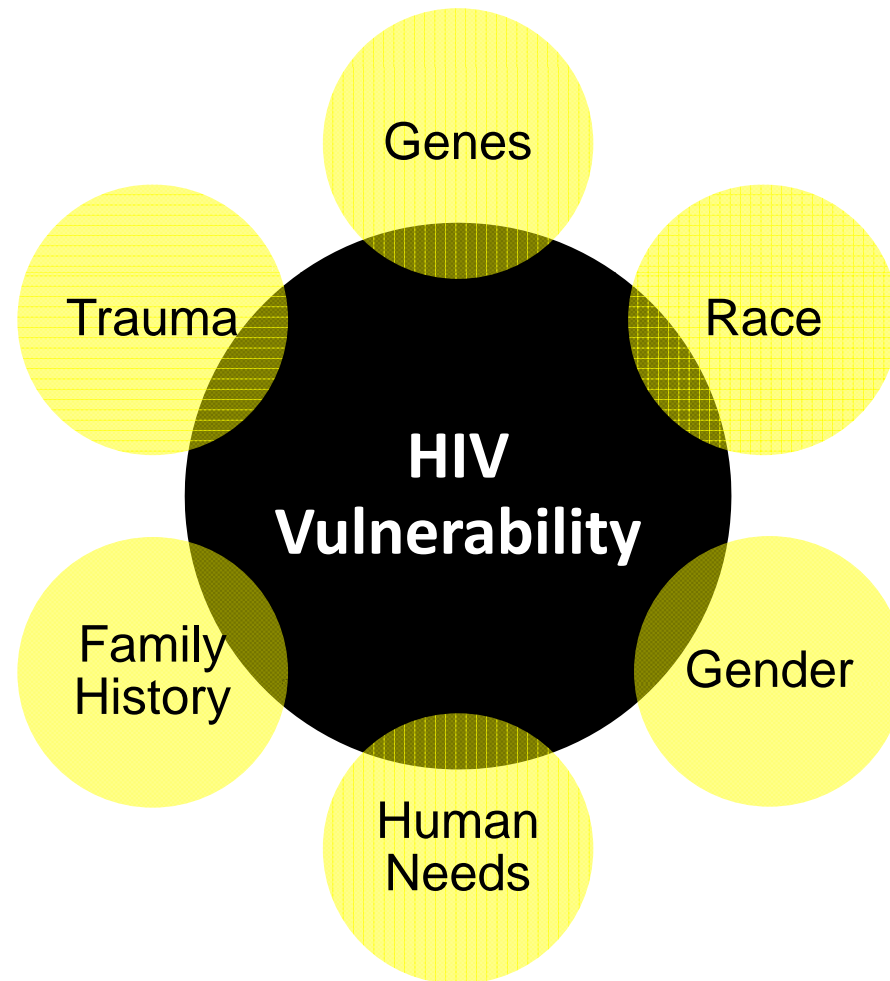
CHALLENGES

- Vulnerability to HIV Infection: Challenges
 - Witnessed abuse at an early age
 - Sexually molested at an early age
 - Experienced intimate partner violence
 - Relations with male partners with HIV vulnerabilities

STRENGTHS

- Gateway to Recovery: Strengths
 - Family supportive
 - Family counseling
 - Family acknowledgment of hurts
 - Family realizing that HIV is a disease and not who I am

Primary Factors Leading to HIV Vulnerability



My Vulnerability to HIV was High

Multifactor Impact

- What I did not realized was that my genetics, race, gender, unmet human needs, family history, and trauma would invariably lead me on a collision course with HIV.



Living with the Monster

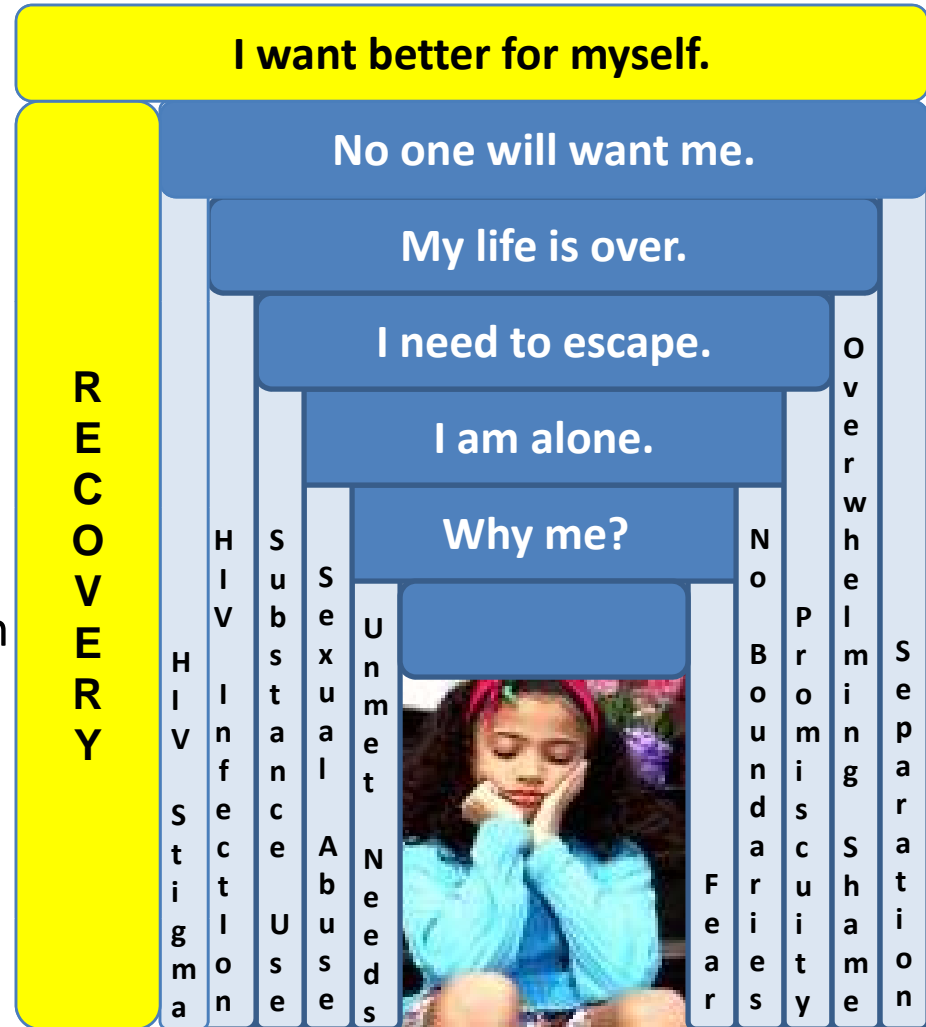
HIV Related Stigma

- The fear of discrimination and rejection (stigma) keeps people from being tested for HIV, from seeking care and treatment if they are diagnosed HIV-positive, and from disclosing their HIV status to partners



Choosing to Live

- Deciding not to have any more secrets
 - Telling my family
- Accepting and getting help
 - Peer support
 - Supportive counseling
- Fighting for my life
 - Substance treatment program
 - Family counseling
 - HIV treatment & care
 - Recovering my life
- Recovering my life



Celebration

Finding Me Again



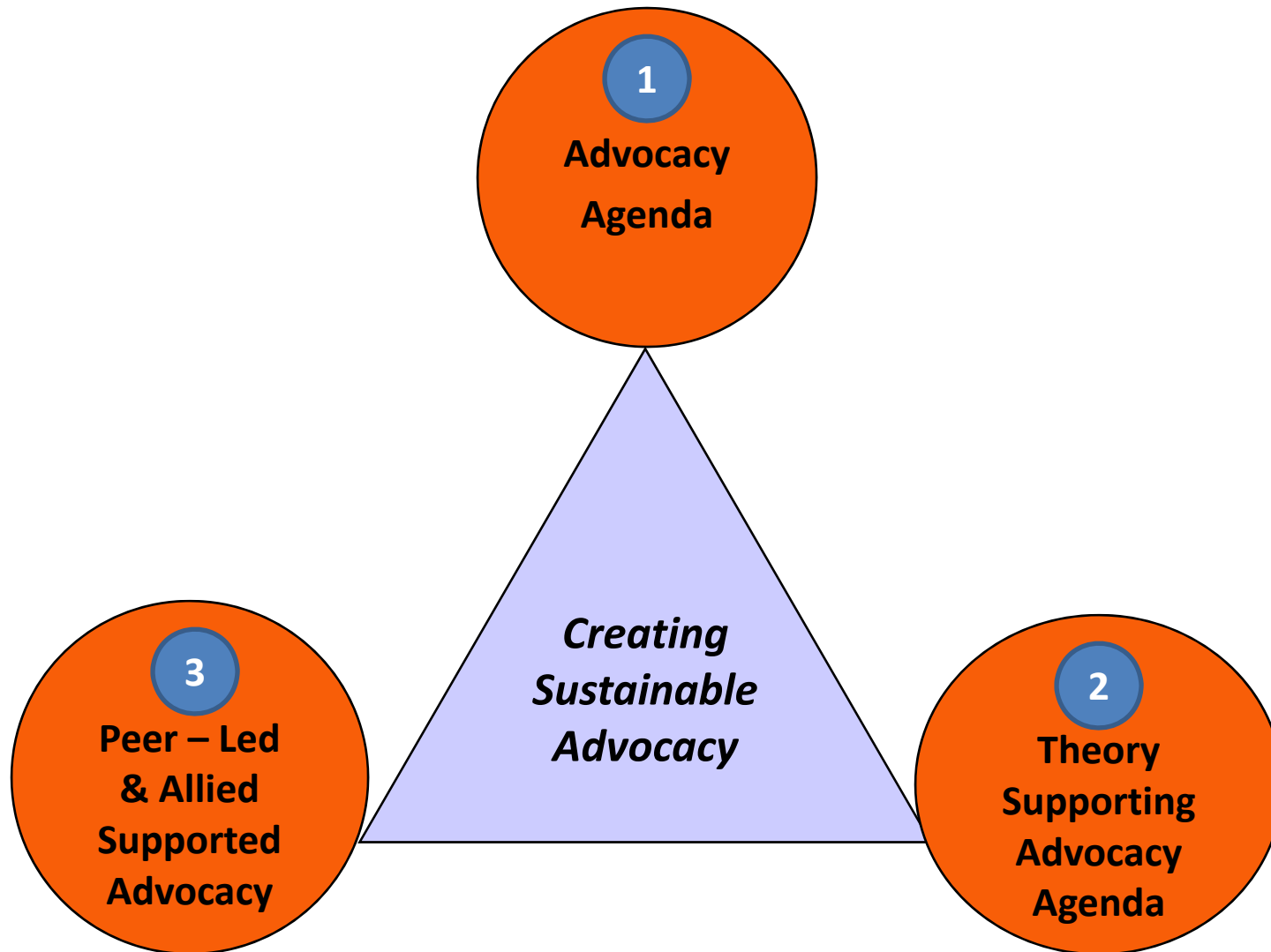
Why we must act now!

- For women of African descent the cofactors we experience in our lives is a kin to being buried alive
- What we must articulate to policy and decision makers is that this layering of factors conspire to leave us dreadfully exposed to HIV infection
- HIV infection a symptom of the neglect that as women of African descent have endured

Guiding Principles

- Prevention is still the best medicine
- Tackling HIV/AIDS requires a comprehensive approach
- We must interrupt policies that hurt and replace them with policies that help
- Recovery is not an event, it is a process
- The impact must be intergenerational

Framework for Sustainability



1

Advocacy Agenda

- Our policy advocacy must strong and sustainable.
 - **THE GOAL MUST BE NO MORE HIV INFECTION AMONG WOMEN OF AFRICAN DESCENT!**
- Our programming advocacy must be direct and clear.
 - **THE GOAL MUST BE FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGED, GENDER SPECIFIC, CULTURALLY COMPETENT HIV RELATED SERVICES!**

Advocacy Agenda

- Our advocacy must include allies who will help us in achieving our goals.
 - **THE GOAL MUST BE PARTNERSHIPS WITH THOSE ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS WHO DESIRE TO ASSIST US IN REBUILDING**
- Our advocacy must include women of African descent living with HIV/AIDS.
 - **THE GOAL MUST BE MEANINGFUL INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN OF AFRICAN DESCENT LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS**

Our Policy Advocacy

- Education
- Comprehensive sex education
- Housing
- Health coverage and care
- A livable wage
- Express our chosen identity
- Express our chosen faith
- Our choice of life partners

Our Policy Agenda (cont.)

- Exercise our sexuality and reproductive rights as women
- Free from unwarranted or unwanted touch
- Free from violence in our homes, communities
- A clean environment
- Accommodations and security if disabled and/or aged

Our Programming Agenda

- We need a national directory of community based organizations that primarily serve women of African descent
- We need to create a national inventory of effective gender specific, culturally competent HIV prevention programming

2

Theoretical Framework for Agenda Building

- United States' Constitution and Bill of Rights
- United Nations' International Bill of Human Rights
- Denver Principles
- Mission Statements

US Constitution & Bill of Rights

- Preamble: We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common Defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty.
- Ninth Amendment: Declares that the listing of individual rights in the Constitution and Bill of Rights is not meant to be comprehensive; and that the other rights not specifically mentioned are retained elsewhere by the people.

UN Declaration of Human Rights

- Preamble: Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.
 - A Right to a Standard of Living
 - A Right to Work
 - A Right to Education

The Denver Principles

The Rights of People with AIDS

1. To as full and satisfying sexual and emotional lives as anyone else.
2. To quality medical treatment and quality social service provision without discrimination of any form including sexual orientation, gender, diagnosis, economic status or race.
3. To full explanations of all medical procedures ... and to make informed decisions about their lives.
4. To privacy, to confidentiality of medical records, to human respect and to choose who their significant others are.
5. To die--and to LIVE--in dignity.

Peer-Led & Allied-Supported Advocacy

- The stories of women of African descent living with HIV/AIDS can get pass the barriers of the brain to the heart;
- The true life stories of Black women, whether HIV positive or HIV negative, can breathe life into policy and position statements; and,
- Both sets of stories can weave the shared experiences of our lives together to help us heal, create trust, and celebrate who we are.

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