

these meetings, and you do this, and you do that?' and I say, 'I do that so you two faggots can live in this house, in this neighborhood, and nobody torches it.'"

Jabari is chairperson of People of Color United Against AIDS (POCUAA), a group that formed in May to organize and educate minority communities about AIDS.

According to the State Health Division, 15 of Oregon's 271 reported AIDS cases (as of November 25) occurred in members of minority communities. Nationwide, the numbers tell a different story. Thirty-nine percent of AIDS cases in the U.S. are from minority communities — 25 percent in blacks; 14 percent in Hispanics — numbers far disproportionate to the percentage of blacks and Hispanics in the population at large.

"POCUAA came about because of the lack of inclusion of people of color in AIDS information and education. I mean, you see ads; you don't see people of color [in them]. The message is still: it's not our problem. Which feeds right into the denial, because who wants AIDS to be their problem? . . . The organizing is slow. That's another area where people aren't waiting with open arms for you to come in and tell them that they need to change their behavior.

"When you start talking about trauma, [the Oregon statistics] don't sound very traumatic. But when you go to New Jersey, and see the levels of black and Hispanic women and children who are AIDS-diagnosed, it's just a different picture. One of the things I really want

to do with POCUAA is deal with AIDS here while it's not traumatic. You know, start thinking about prevention and how we teach people to be safer, and not wait until half the population is infected and dying.

"We've been saying for a long time . . . that brochures and information need to come from a cultural perspective and need to take into account the literacy level of the people you're trying to reach. The gay community — that is, the organized gay community — is a pretty well-educated community. And so, when you start using all of the AIDS language . . . and you take that same language and you translate it into Spanish and put it in a migrant workers' camp, you haven't accomplished anything.

"So I work with AIDS; I'm very involved with Metropolitan Community Church . . . I'm also a musician, and we have a singing group. We do contemporary Christian music. I think music is really my heart . . . I love it. Sojour is our name. I love music, and that's a big part of me that makes a lot of statements. In Sojour, we're about . . . love, and about trusting, and about being able to nurture people, and that's what our message is. And so those two things — my church and my group — have messages that fit in real closely together.

"And then I spend some of my other time trying to learn how to relax, because I don't do that very well at all. For me, going out is usually, 'Oh, let's stop at Hobo's on the way home from the meeting.' I mean, I schedule time of not letting myself get involved in things,

but then it's not a relaxed time for me, it's a tense time . . . that I'm not doing something.

"You know, everything you're in is because you feel it's important. I mean, you're not in any of it just for the enjoyment of it. I think at some point you get this perverse enjoyment out of all the stuff, because eventually it becomes all of your life.

"In the black community, I make people deal with the fact that this gay man is here, and it's not OK to pretend that I'm not gay. I love it when — and this happens a lot — when white gay men try to pull me in by saying stuff about women. Well, it's not OK. Most people who know me know you don't do that. Because if you tell jokes about women, you'll tell jokes about blacks when I'm not there, or you'll tell jokes about whoever is not there. You have to take the opportunity to educate every time you have it . . . sometimes it feels like you're in the showcase all the time. You are, indeed. But if somebody's not willing to do that, then we never move. What if, at Stonewall, people had just said, 'Oh, here are the cops again. I'm going home.' It has to start somewhere.

"One of my reasons to be as out as I have been in the black community is that I think kids need to see there are some options. . . . I'm on the advisory board of the Urban League Youth Service Center, and I've been raising the issue of how do you deal with lesbian and gay youth? It's time to stop pretending that they're not out there in the black community. They are indeed there. . . . And what's been funny with this

process is that there are other lesbians and gay men, and I can see their discomfort with my saying those words in meetings. But I'm not going to deny these kids an opportunity that I did not have because there are some adults who have not worked through their issues and their sexuality. If one or two or three or four or hundreds of black youth can say, 'Oh, I know this guy who's gay, and he seems to be OK,' that's fine.

"I feel like I can get caught up in things before it's popular to do them, and I'm willing to be the first in taking a stand before other people get on the bandwagon. . . . You see the need, and you're willing to be out there and be the crazy for a while, because you know the time is going to come when people are going to say, 'Oh, yeah, this needs to happen.' I just got used to being that sort of eccentric person to people, [the one] who will take on a cause when people don't see the real need for it.


"At the bottom line of everything is that life is exciting to me, and nobody can make it not exciting. I mean, I see too many things. I see diversity and constant change, and that's exciting. . . . Maybe it's the need for suspense in the Type-A personality that lets you get to a stable base and then just kind of reach out and see how far you can go before you fall off. There's always something that's new; there's always a challenge. And I like to do that and share it and pull people along, to help people stretch and grow, and to do it myself. That's excitement for me. I live life that way."

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