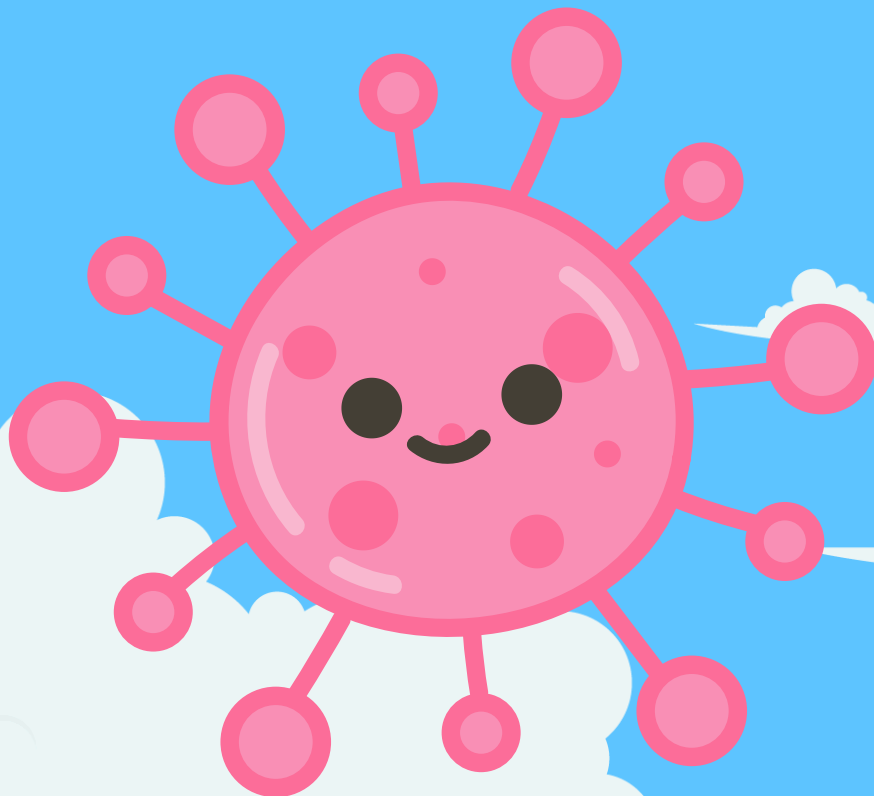


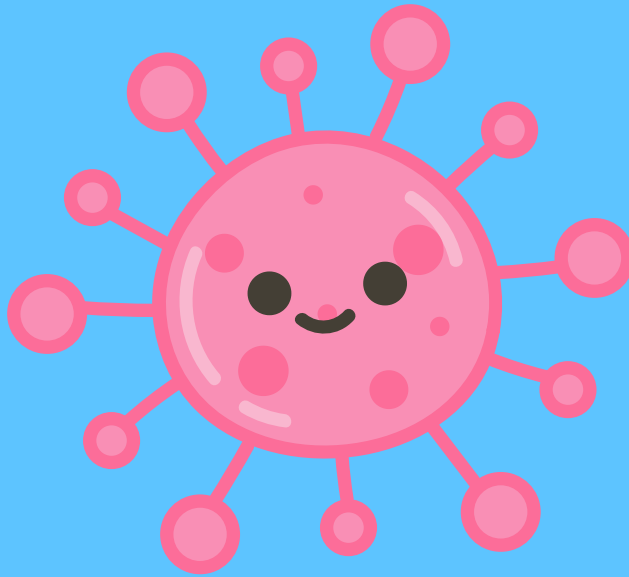
WRITING FOR THE SCIENCES

**HIV DOESN'T
DISCRIMINATE:
LITTLE VIOLETS
IMPORTANT MISSION!**



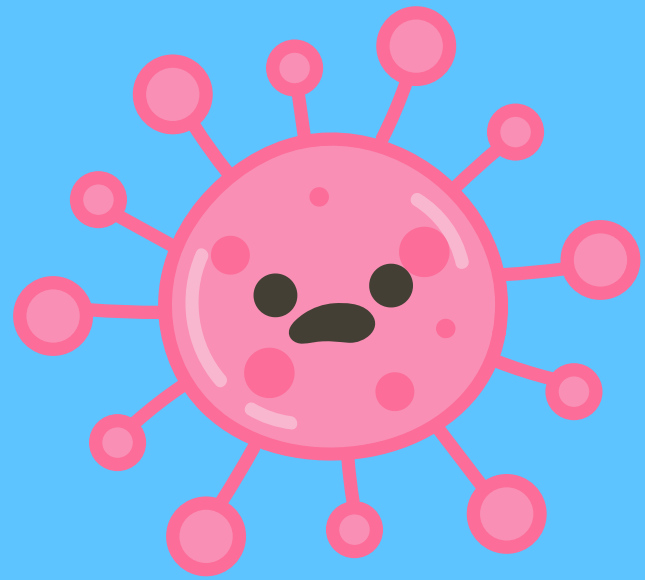
**WRITTEN BY:
Thierry Jean-Calixte
Angelina Macias
Alan Rodon**

MEET VIOLET!

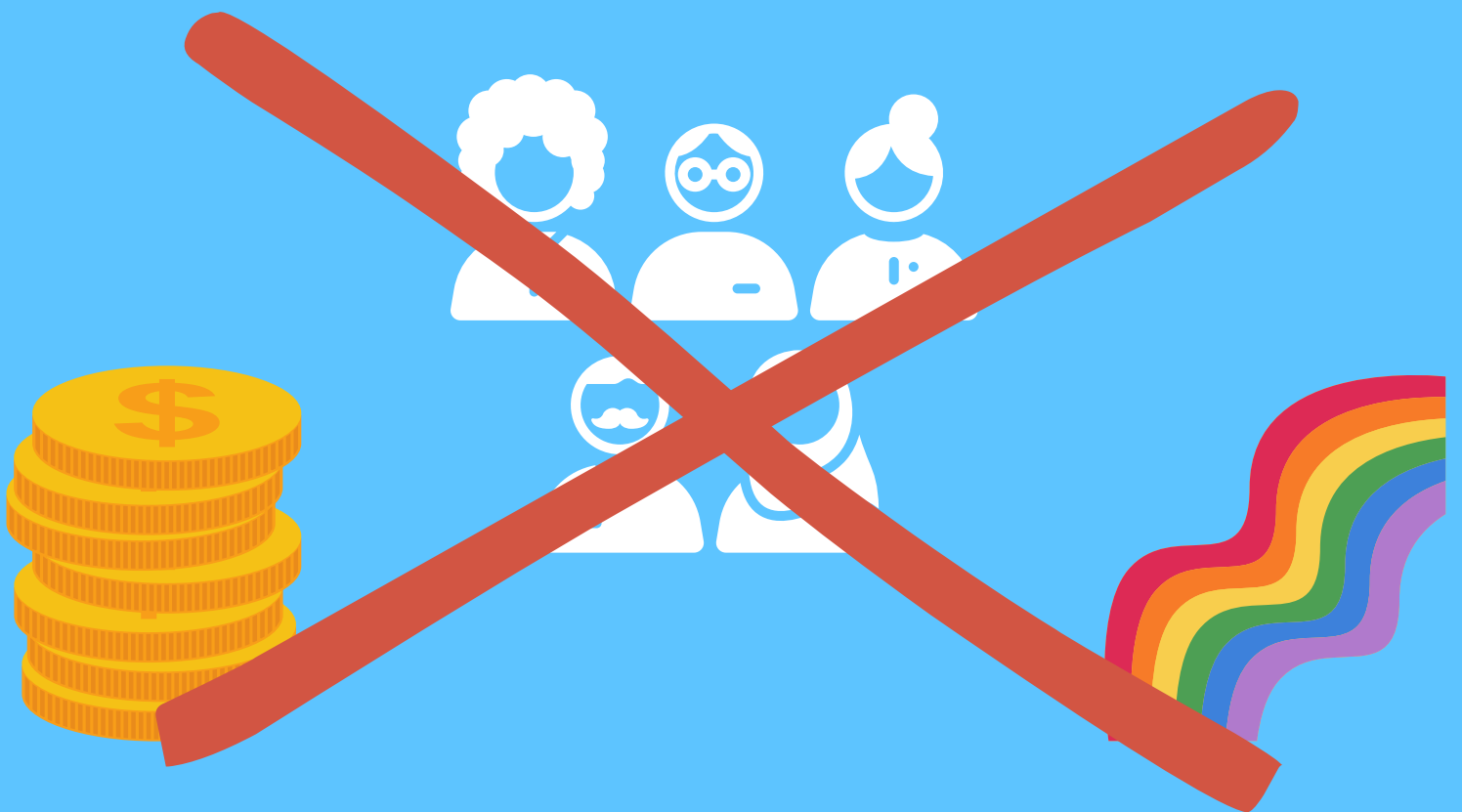


Violet was a tiny swirly, purple virus with a big job. She was HIV, the human immunodeficiency virus. Some people were afraid of her, but Violet didn't want to scare anyone—she just wanted people to understand her.

“HIV doesn’t pick favorites,” Violet explained.



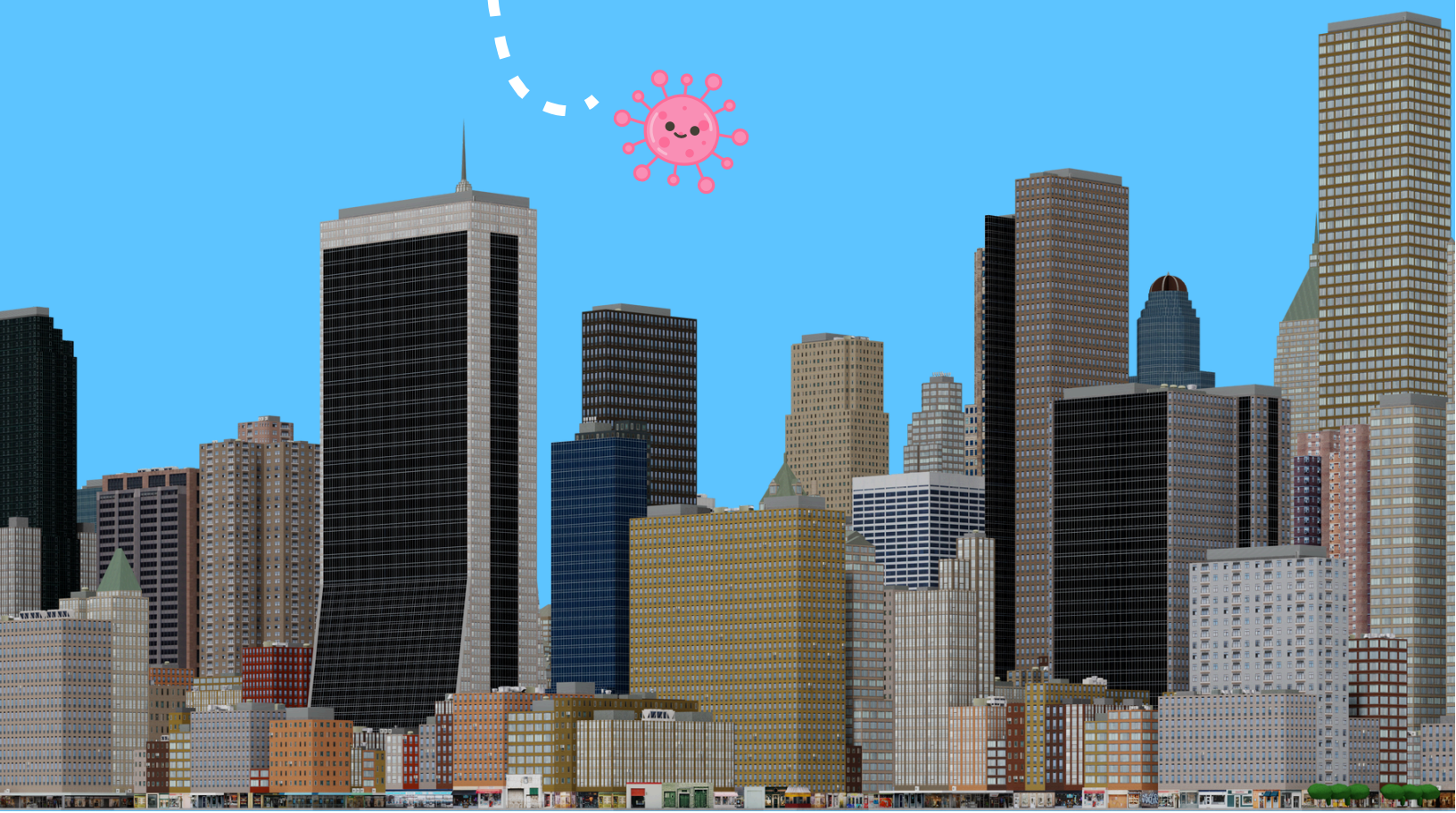
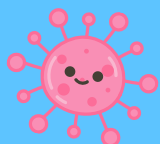
“I can infect anyone, no matter their economic status, race, or who they love. That’s why it’s important to get tested and know your status!”



DOESN'T MATTER

But even though HIV doesn't discriminate, some groups are at a higher risk than others.

Violet was going on a journey today to visit three teens who each faced different challenges and are at a disproportionately higher risk.





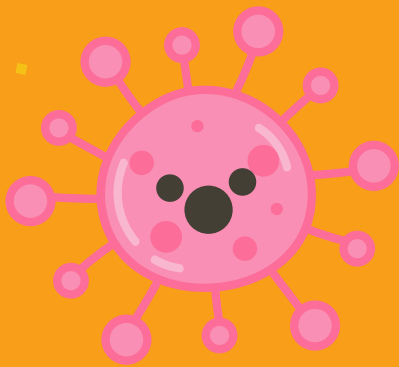
First Stop: Jared's House – LGBTQ+ and Race

Jared was a Black gay teenager who lived in a big city.

He loved music, fashion, and hanging out with his friends. But today, he was feeling uneasy.

“Why are you here, Violet?” Jared asked, crossing his arms.

“Well, Jared,” Violet says gently, “Black gay and bisexual men have a higher risk of getting HIV and receiving unequal treatment than many other groups. Do you know why?”

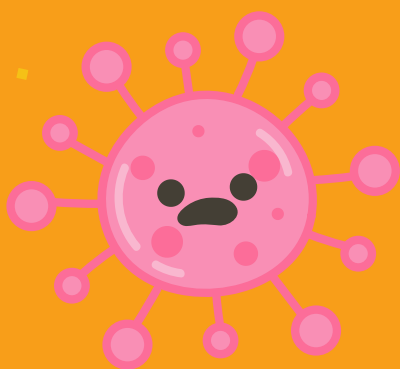


Jared frowned. “I mean, I always use protection. that should be enough, right?”

“Using protection helps a lot,” Violet agreed.

“But there are other reasons too.

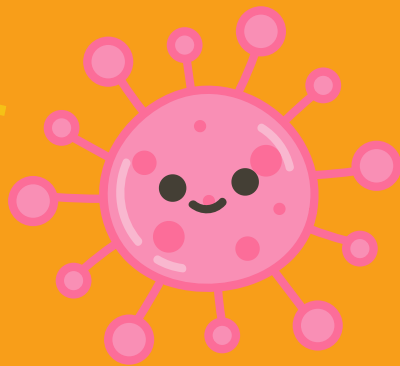
Black LGBTQ+ people don’t always have easy access to healthcare, and some doctors don’t treat them fairly. Plus, stigma can make people afraid to get tested.”



Jared sighed. “That’s true. My friend was scared to get tested because he thought people would judge him, and maybe even leave him uncared for.”

Violet sighed, “Well there are LGBTQ+ health clinics where you’ll be treated with respect. Some physicians unfortunately are undertrained and incorporate stereotypes, prejudice and sometimes even violence.”

**Jared nodded.
“Okay, I’ll get tested. Better safe than sorry.”**





Second Stop: Val's House – HIV and Poverty

Val was a Latina teenager who lived in a small apartment taking care of her brother.

She was born with HIV, and is below the poverty line.

Violet floated into a small apartment, where Val, a Latina teenager. Val was born with HIV, which meant she had it since birth. She took medicine everyday to stay healthy, but life wasn't always easy.

"Hi Violet," Val said, giving a tired smile.



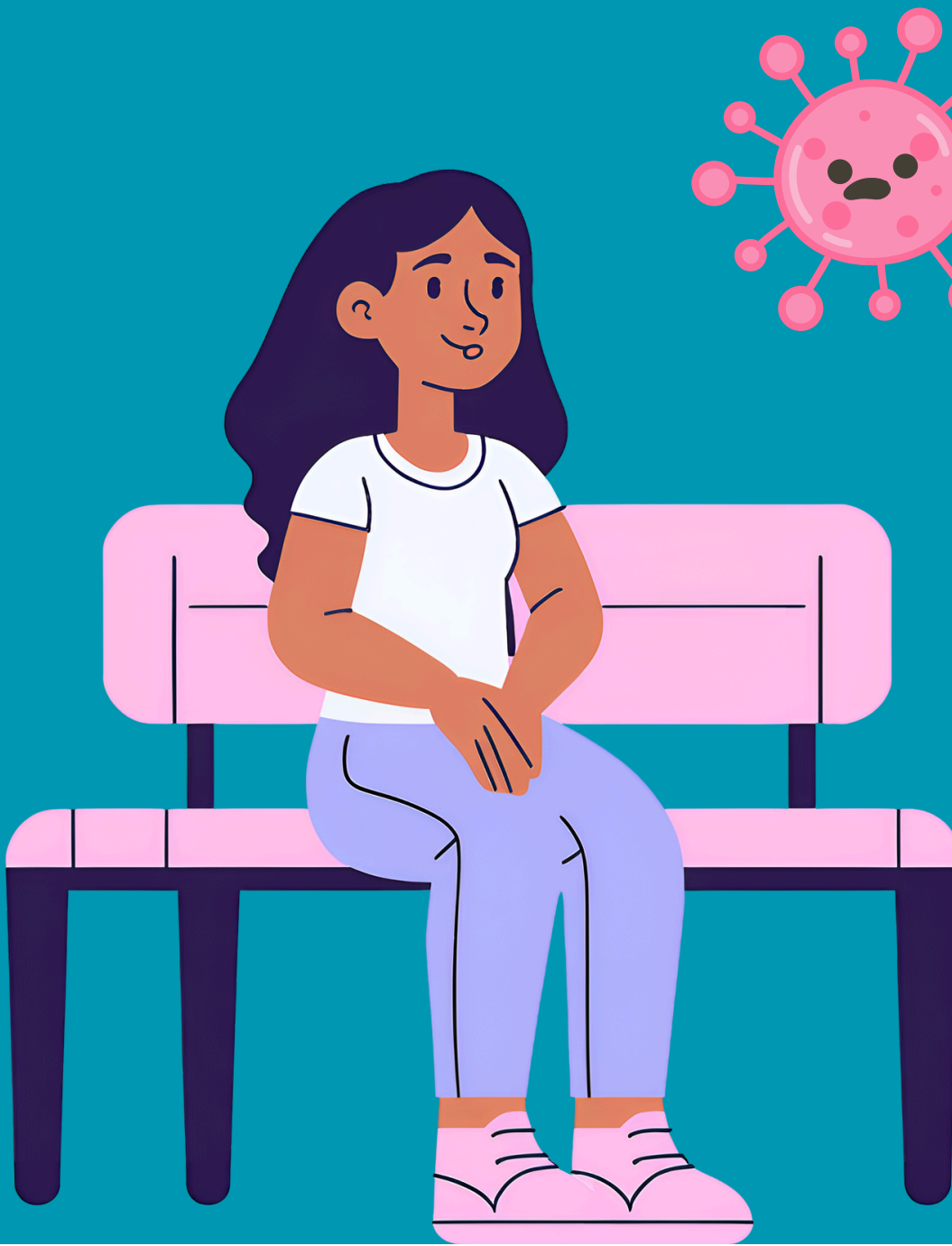
**"Hi, Val! You're doing great,
but I know things can be
tough," Violet said. "Do you
ever struggle to get your
medicine?"**

**Val nodded. "Sometimes. We
don't have a lot of money, and my
mom works two jobs. There were
times when we couldn't afford my
HIV meds, and I had to miss
doses."**



Violet frowned. “That’s not fair. People living in poverty often have a harder time getting healthcare. And missing doses of your medicine can make HIV stronger, which is dangerous.”

Val sighed. “I know. But we finally found a clinic that helps people like me. They make sure I get my medicine no matter what.”



“That’s great!” Violet cheered. “No one should go without treatment just because of money. If you ever need help, there are programs that offer free or low-cost HIV care.”

“I won’t give up. I’ll keep taking my medicine and spread the word about getting tested!”



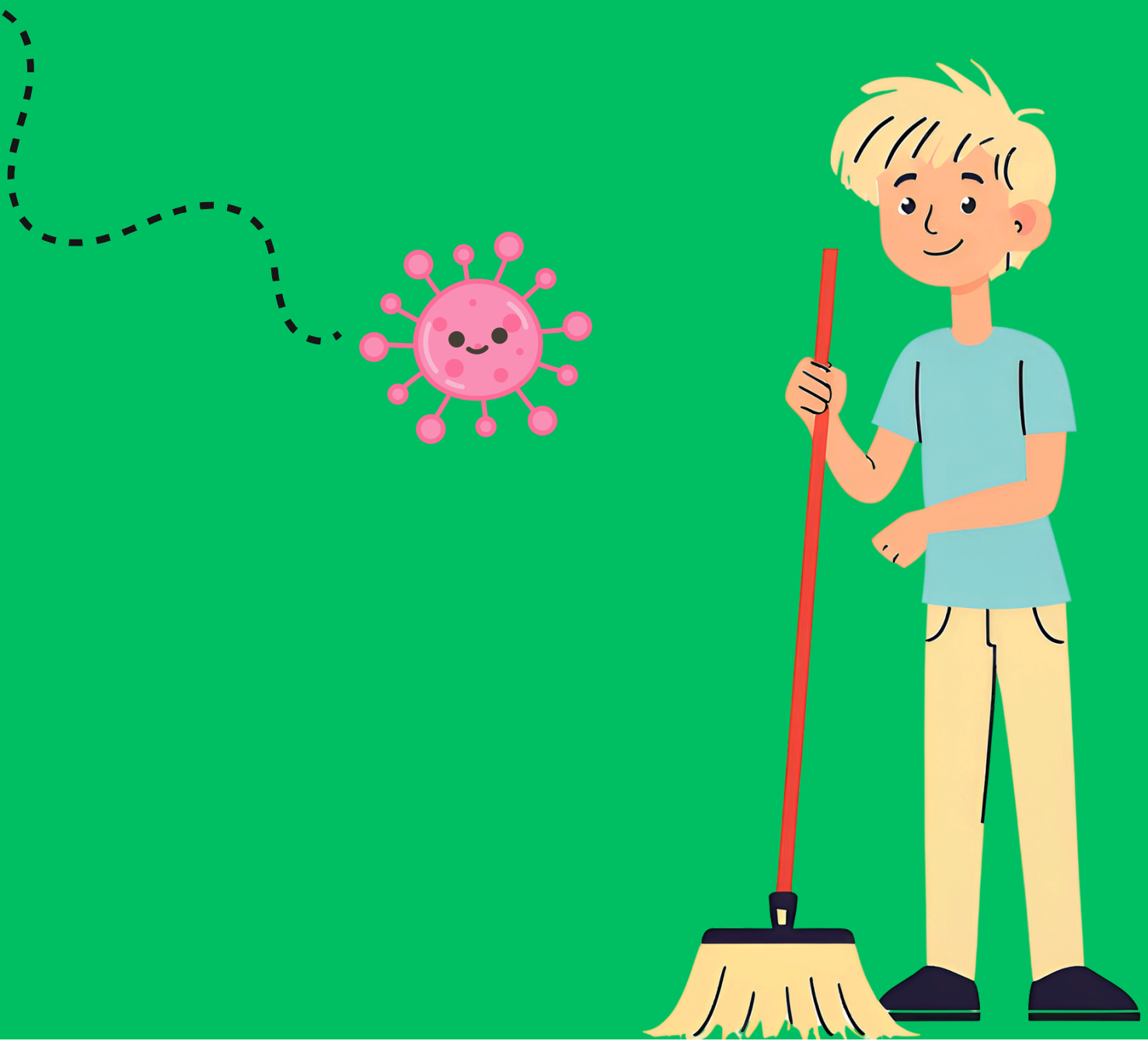


Third Stop: Martin's House – HIV and Drug Use

Martin was a Caucasian boy with drug user parents who both have HIV.

Martin does not have HIV himself. He enjoys sports but is often too tired to play anything.

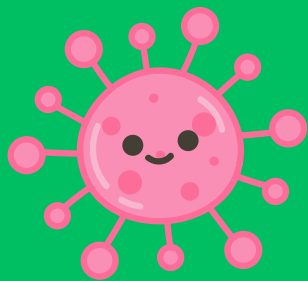
**Violet's last stop was
Martin's house, where he was
cleaning up after his parents.
His mom and dad were
struggling with drug
addiction, and both had HIV.**



“Why are you here, Violet?”

Martin asked, wiping his hands. “I don’t have HIV.”

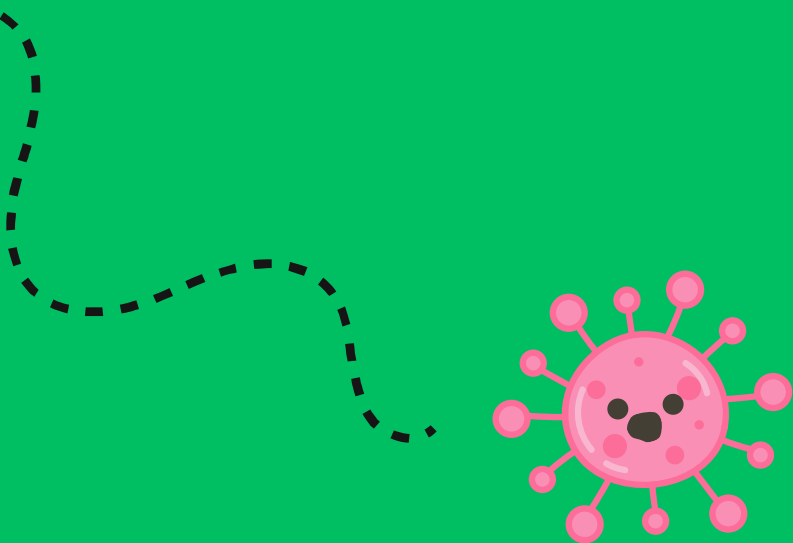
“You don’t,” Violet said, “but I want you to understand why drug use can put people at high risk for HIV.”



Martin sighed. “I already know. My parents use needles to take drugs, blah blah, and that’s how they got HIV.”



“That’s right,” Violet said. “When people share needles, the virus can spread from one person to another. Even just one time can be enough. Drugs in itself may lead to risky behaviors that also may cause the spread of HIV.”

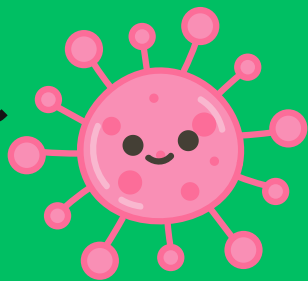


Martin looked down. “I hate that my parents are sick. And sometimes, I feel like it’s my job to take care of everything.”



Violet softened. “That’s really hard, Martin. But you don’t have to do it alone. There are programs that help families deal with addiction and HIV.”

**Martin looked up.
“Really?”**

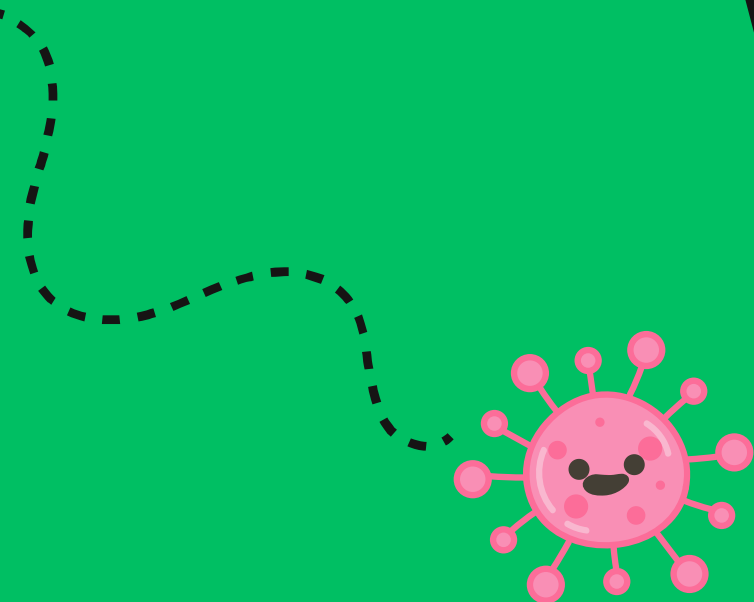


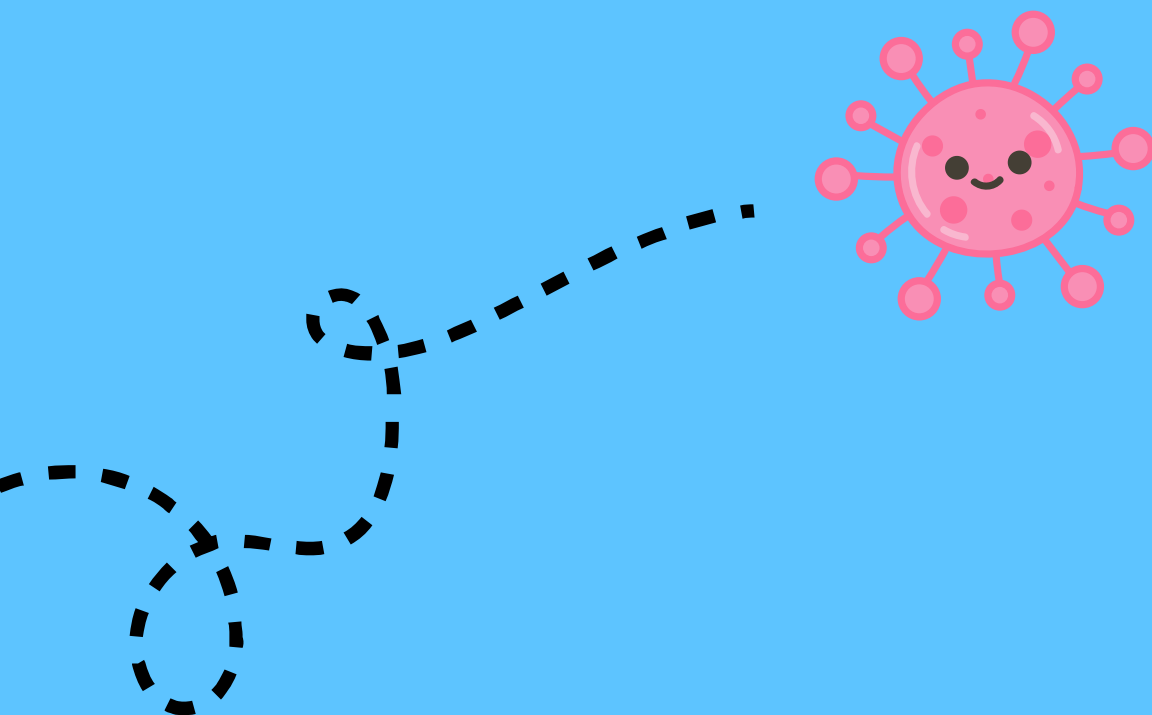
**“Absolutely,” Violet said.
“And if you ever feel lost,
getting tested and
learning about HIV will
help you protect yourself
and others.”**



Martin took a deep breath. “Maybe I’ll talk to someone about it. I don’t want to end up in the same situation.”

“That’s a smart choice,” Violet said. “Education is power!”





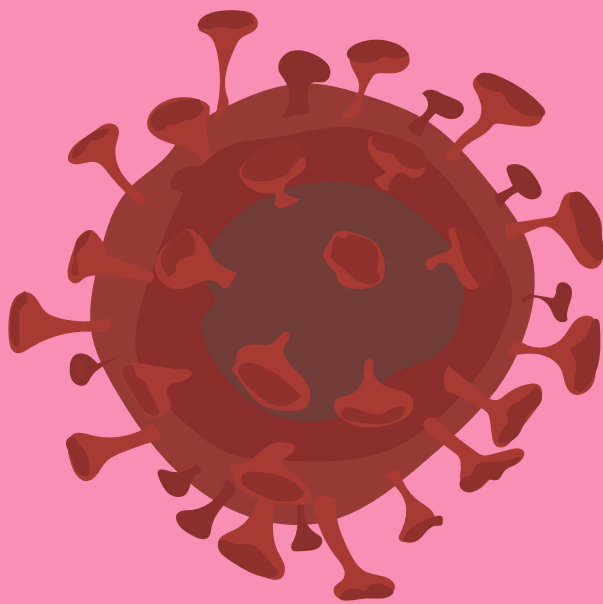
As Violet floated away, she thought about everything she had seen.

Jared, Val, and Martin all had different challenges, but they each learned something important:

HIV is still a major public health issue, and some people face more barriers to treatment than others.

KNOW YOUR FACTS

- 1. HIV and AIDS aren't the same – HIV is the virus; AIDS is the most advanced stage of HIV infection.**



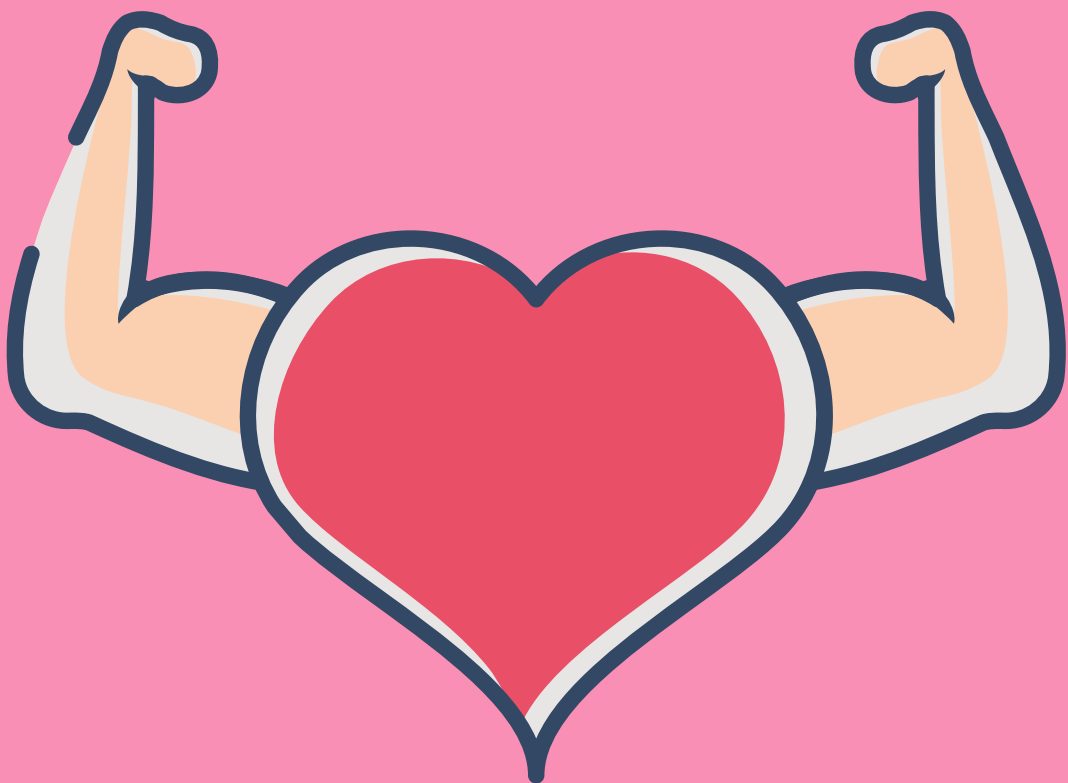
KNOW YOUR FACTS

2. You can't get HIV from hugging, kissing, or sharing food – It's not spread through causal contact.



KNOW YOUR FACTS

3. It can be passed even if someone looks healthy – Many people with HIV show no symptoms for years.



KNOW YOUR FACTS

4. There's no cure (yet), but treatment works – With medication (ART), people with HIV can live long, healthy lives.



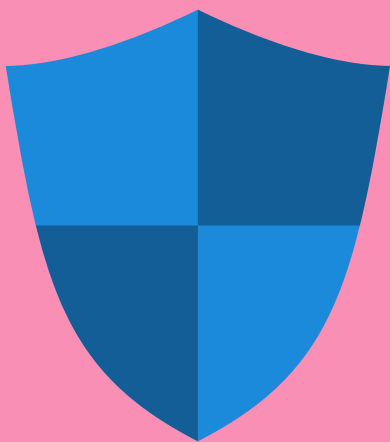
KNOW YOUR FACTS

**5. You can't get HIV from insects
— Mosquitoes and other bugs
don't spread HIV.**



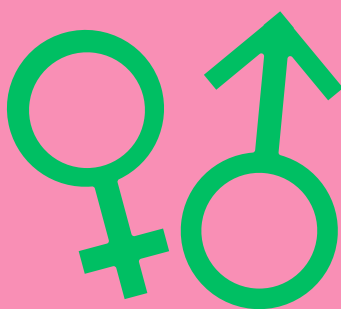
KNOW YOUR FACTS

6. Condoms and PrEP reduce risk a lot – Using protection and preventive medicine can nearly eliminate the chance of getting HIV.



KNOW YOUR FACTS

**7. Its not just a “gay disease” —
HIV can affect anyone,
regardless of gender, sexuality,
or background.**



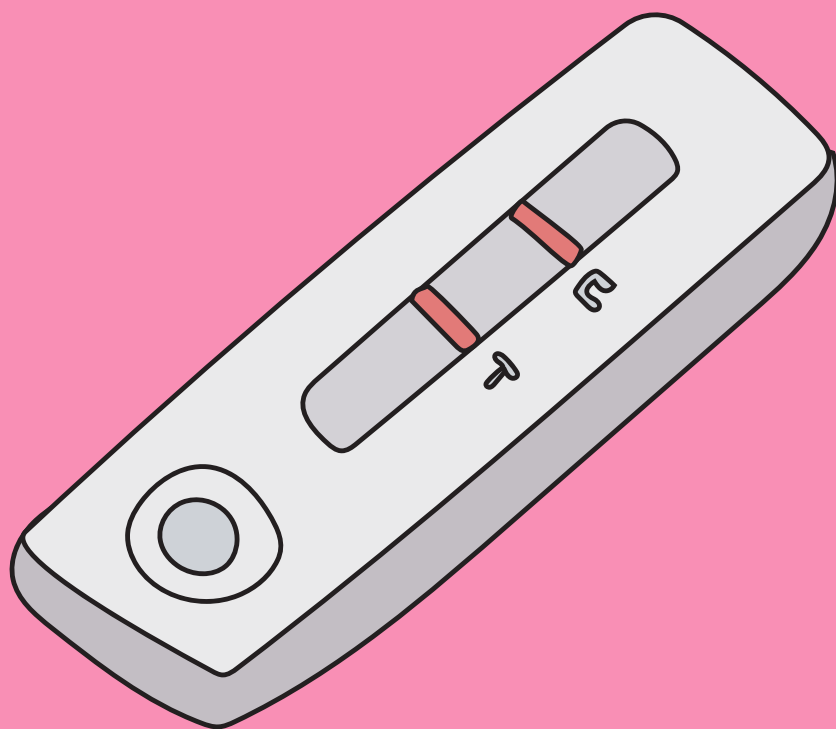
KNOW YOUR FACTS

8. Mother-to-child transmission is preventable — With treatment, babies born to HIV-positive moms can be HIV-free.



KNOW YOUR FACTS

**9. HIV testing is quick and easy —
You can get results in minutes,
and it's usually free or low cost.**



KNOW YOUR FACTS

**10. Stigma is a big problem –
Misinformation and judgment
can hurt people more than the
virus itself.**



RESOURCES

LOCAL LGBTQ+ FRIENDLY CLINIC: Mount Sinai–Harlem Health Center

Located at 158 West 124th Street, this center offers culturally competent and LGBTQ+–friendly care, including primary care, behavioral health services, and HIV/AIDS treatment through the Jack Martin Fund Center.

RESOURCES

HIV SUBSTANCE ABUSER PROGRAMS: Harlem United

Harlem United provides integrated services for individuals living with HIV/AIDS, including substance use treatment, harm reduction programs, and housing support. They offer both inpatient and outpatient care tailored to the needs of the community.

RESOURCES

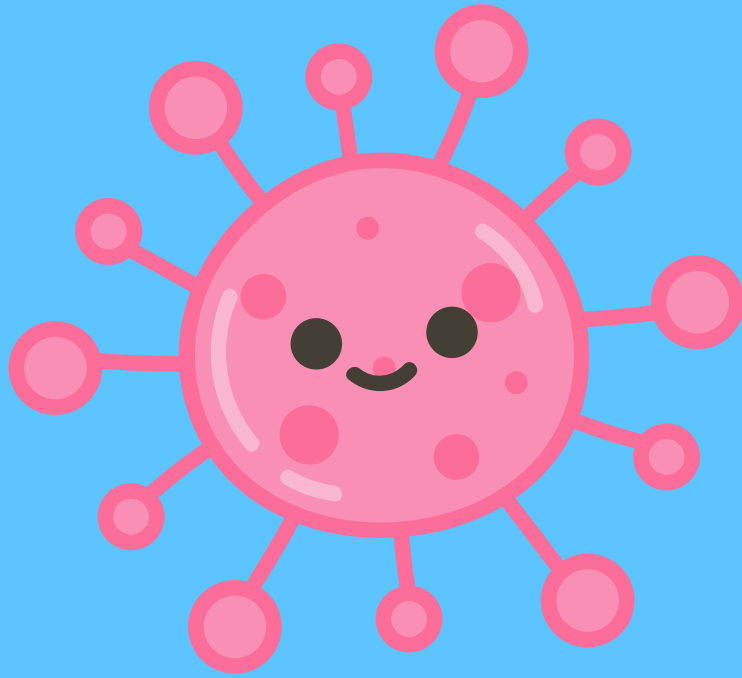
CLINICS WITH LOW COST HIV CARE:

NYC Health + Hospitals/Harlem – HIV Services

**This facility offers
comprehensive HIV care,
including the Retention and
Adherence Program (RAP) to
help patients achieve viral
suppression. Services are
available regardless of
insurance status or ability to
pay.**

People like Jared, who face discrimination based on race and sexuality, may not have access to the same healthcare as others. People like Val, who live in poverty, may struggle to get the treatment they need. And people like Martin, whose families battle substance abuse, are at higher risk but may not have support to protect themselves.

These social barriers leave too many people untreated, allowing HIV to persist and continue spreading. But there's hope! By getting tested, breaking down stigma, and making healthcare accessible for everyone, we can help reduce HIV rates and make sure no one is left behind.



**“Take care of yourself, and
take care of each other,”
Violet said. “Because
knowledge, support and
access to healthcare are the
best ways to stop HIV.”**

GLOSSARY

ART: Antiretroviral therapy, refers to the medications used to treat HIV infection.

DISPARITY: A difference in level or treatment, especially one that is seen as unfair.

PrEP: Pre-exposure prophylaxis, prescription drug that can offer protection against HIV infection.

PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE: Any problem that affects the health of a large population, often with the potential for serious consequences.

RISKY BEHAVIORS: Actions or decisions that have the potential to cause harm to oneself or others.

STIGMA: A negative attitude, prejudice, or false belief associated with specific traits, circumstances, or health symptoms.



THIS BOOK IS ABOUT...

THIS BOOK FOLLOWS AN HIV VIRUS NAMED VIOLET WHO TRAVELS TO MEET THREE TEENAGERS WHO COME FROM DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS. VIOLET'S JOB IS TO TEACH THAT ANYONE IS AT RISK OF DEVELOPING HIV, BUT THERE ARE CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS WHO FACE HIGHER RISK THAN OTHERS FOR HIV. VIOLET FIRST VISITS A BLACK, GAY, TEEN NAMED JARED. VIOLET THEN MEETS WITH A LATINA TEEN NAMED VAL, WHO LIVES IN POVERTY. LASTLY, VIOLET VISITS A WHITE TEEN NAMED MARTIN, WHO HAS PARENTS WHO HAVE A DRUG ADDICTION LIVING WITH HIV. VIOLET'S MESSAGE TO THE TEENAGERS WAS THAT THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO REDUCE THE RISK OF HIV SUCH AS GOING TO A PHYSICIAN WHO GIVES ADEQUATE CARE, TESTING THAT HELPS PEOPLE WITH A LOW INCOME, AND LEARNING ABOUT HIV.

