

Golden Shines Her Light on HIV/AIDS

by Maren Symonds

By all accounts, Golden Brooks' future is glistening bright. After 8 seasons on the hit sitcom *Girlfriends*, several movies, and numerous appearances on prime time TV, her star continues to rise with two independent films in post-production and a stack of scripts ready for review. She's exercising her considerable literary gifts writing poetry for her first published collection. And she and actor D.B. Woodside are building a life together as they await the arrival of their first child – a baby girl due in September. It's a full life, yet Golden manages to find time for one more role. She is looking out for the next generation by taking a stand on HIV/AIDS.

"I grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area. I saw first hand how insidious this disease can be," she said. "When I started working with the Elizabeth Glaser [Pediatric AIDS] Foundation, my eyes were opened about the worldwide epidemic and its effect on children. I knew that I'd have to put myself out there to raise consciousness of AIDS as a human threat."

True to her word, Golden signed on as a spokesperson for Until There's A Cure® Foundation and posed for a public service advertisement while six-months pregnant. Her curvaceous figure draws attention to those most vulnerable to the effects of the disease – children. The ad raises awareness for the pandemic by encouraging people to buy and wear *The Bracelet*, a symbol of unity in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

"When we first heard about [HIV/AIDS], we talked about it and got people to do something about it. But now it's on the back shelf," she mused. "AIDS is still a big problem. It's bigger than just one country. It is wiping out communities. It is wiping out an entire continent."

Twelve million children in Sub-Saharan Africa have lost one or both parents to the disease. Countless more have had to sacrifice their childhoods to become breadwinners and caregivers as they watch life drained from their loved ones. "We can't sit on the sidelines while this is going on," she notes. "They need our help."

Golden is encouraged by President Obama's efforts "to make the underdog epidemic come to the surface." He has spoken out in favor of AIDS testing at home and abroad "because if you know your status, then you can prevent illness. You can prevent passing it to your children and to your families."¹ He supports prevention strategies, such as making condoms more widely available.² And he backs the multi-billion dollar President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) to combat global HIV/AIDS.



While governmental intervention is crucial to arrest the spread of the disease, Golden sees a part for each individual to play. "We've got to keep talking about AIDS. We need to build awareness. We need to know how to protect ourselves and our children. And we've got to believe that one person can make a difference. Little by little, we can end this thing."

One thing's for sure. Golden will keep spreading the word until all the children of the world have a brighter future.

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Headquartered in Redwood City, CA, Until There's A Cure® Foundation is a national organization dedicated to AIDS awareness and prevention education, care and services for those living with AIDS, and vaccine development.

Notes:

¹ Senator Barack Obama, National HIV Testing Day (August 26, 2006), Kisian, Kenya.

² Senator Barack Obama, "Race Against Time," 2006 Global Summit on AIDS and the Church, Saddleback Church Campus, December 1, 2006.