

Laila Ali Champions Women's Health

by Maren Symonds

Undefeated super middleweight boxing champion. Entrepreneur. Finalist on *Dancing With The Stars*. Author of *Reach! Finding Strength, Spirit, and Personal Power*. Budding recording artist. Wife and mother. Laila Ali's life mirrors the sport in which she made her mark - it packs a punch. Time permitting, she lends her considerable talents and energy toward public service initiatives that address health and fitness. One serious concern is HIV/AIDS.

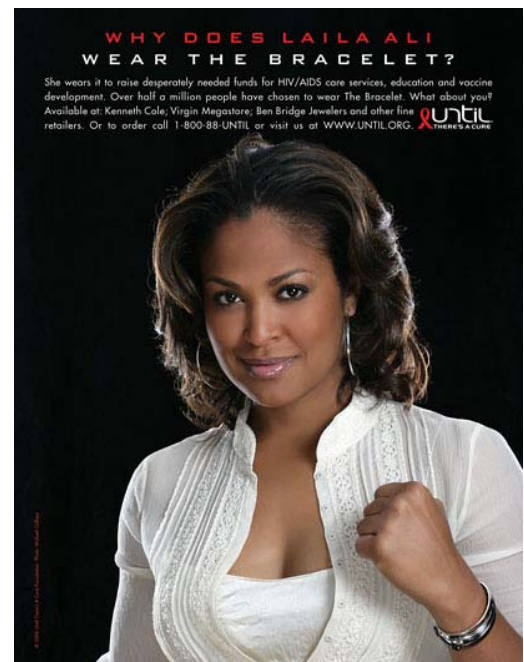
"AIDS is a big problem in the African American community. We're a relatively small percentage of the US population, but we account for 50% of all cases. It's alarming," she said. "This disease is preventable. People need to be educated about it."

To that end, Laila joins Until There's A Cure® Foundation (UTAC) in a public service advertising campaign that keeps HIV/AIDS in the public discourse. This month, the national focus for HIV/AIDS awareness is on young girls and women. More than a quarter of a million women and adolescent girls live with HIV/AIDS in this country. Nearly 10,000 women add to their ranks annually. The overwhelming majority are exposed to the disease through heterosexual contact.

HIV prevention is a matter of education *and self-esteem*, especially for women. "People need to value themselves enough to take action to protect themselves," noted Laila. "They need to have the confidence to ask their partners to take an AIDS test and to engage in practices that keep them safe."

Through her work with the Women's Sports Foundation and the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Laila helps women realize the psychological, physiological and sociological benefits of sports participation. With an inner strength born of healthy lifestyles and athletic achievement, women and young girls gain the wherewithal to make intelligent choices to minimize risk of infectious disease, obesity, diabetes, substance abuse and other threats to well-being.

Now the mother of a precocious 18-month-old boy, Laila reflects on the importance of parenting in addressing this key social issue. "My parents set a positive example through their work ethic, their confidence in their abilities and standing up for what they believed in," she said. "We need to teach our children that same sense of self-respect, self-love and concern for others. AIDS awareness and prevention starts in the home."



This year, nearly 2 million people worldwide will die from complications of HIV/AIDS. Another 2.5-3.0 million people will be diagnosed HIV+. Millions of children have lost one or both parents to the disease.

Join Laila Ali in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Get educated. Know your status. Spread the word... Until There's A Cure.

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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.