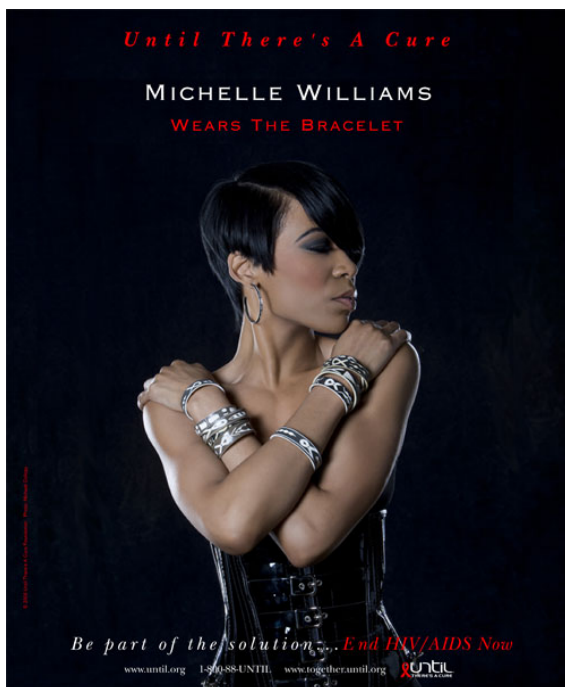


## Michelle Williams Gives Voice to HIV/AIDS

*by Maren Symonds*

If you've kept an ear tuned to chart-topping music over the past decade, you'll be well-acquainted with the voice and artistry of Michelle Williams. As members of Destiny's Child, she and band mates Beyoncé Knowles and Kelly Rowland garnered international acclaim and a host of Grammys en route to becoming one of the top selling female R&B groups of all time. As a solo artist, Michelle earned the #1 spot on Billboard's Top Gospel Albums

with her debut release, *Heart To Yours*, and delighted audiences in theatrical productions of *Aida*, *The Color Purple*, and *Chicago*. Off stage, Michelle lends her voice to a cause that affects millions of women worldwide. She helps raise awareness about HIV/AIDS.



*Every 35 minutes, a woman in this country tests positive for HIV. Eighty percent of infections result from unprotected sex with male partners. Nearly two-thirds are African American.<sup>1</sup> Despite these startling statistics, many women have never had an HIV test. Some do not think their life style renders them vulnerable to infection. Others fear violence, stigma, or abandonment should they receive the unfortunate diagnosis. With an estimated 20% of cases undiagnosed in this country, thousands of women forego early treatment and may be at risk of transmitting the disease to others.*

Through a public service advertisement with Until There's A Cure® Foundation (UTAC), Michelle hopes to put HIV/AIDS testing on every woman's radar. "Know your status. Don't be scared to ask your doctor for an HIV test," she advises "There's nothing wrong with wanting to be sure. It's *your* health and *your* body."

In 2006, writers for the UPN series *Half & Half* drew attention to the increased prevalence of AIDS among African American women by introducing an HIV positive character. When they looked to cast the successful record executive, their eyes fell on Michelle Williams. She brought her indomitable spirit to the role and infused the character with a sense of confidence and hope. "[My character] was still spunky. She took control of the disease and went on with her life," Michelle noted. "[HIV/AIDS] didn't define her or hold her back."

Michelle has also worked with children living with HIV/AIDS. She joined 'NSYNC singer Lance Bass to support Camp Heartland, an organization dedicated to helping kids with

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cdc.gov/features/womengirlshivaid/>

HIV/AIDS take their minds off their illness. "These kids were brought into this world with the disease. They didn't have a choice," she said. "It broke my heart when one girl told me that she'd been denied admission to a school because they found out she was HIV positive. I told her that she is still beautiful. She is still smart. She can still have a great life and a career."

HIV/AIDS remains a disease that affects *all* of us. Join Michelle in being part of the solution. Get the facts. Create a safe place to share them with others. Know your status. Show compassion for persons living with HIV/AIDS... 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.*