

Theatre Direct presents

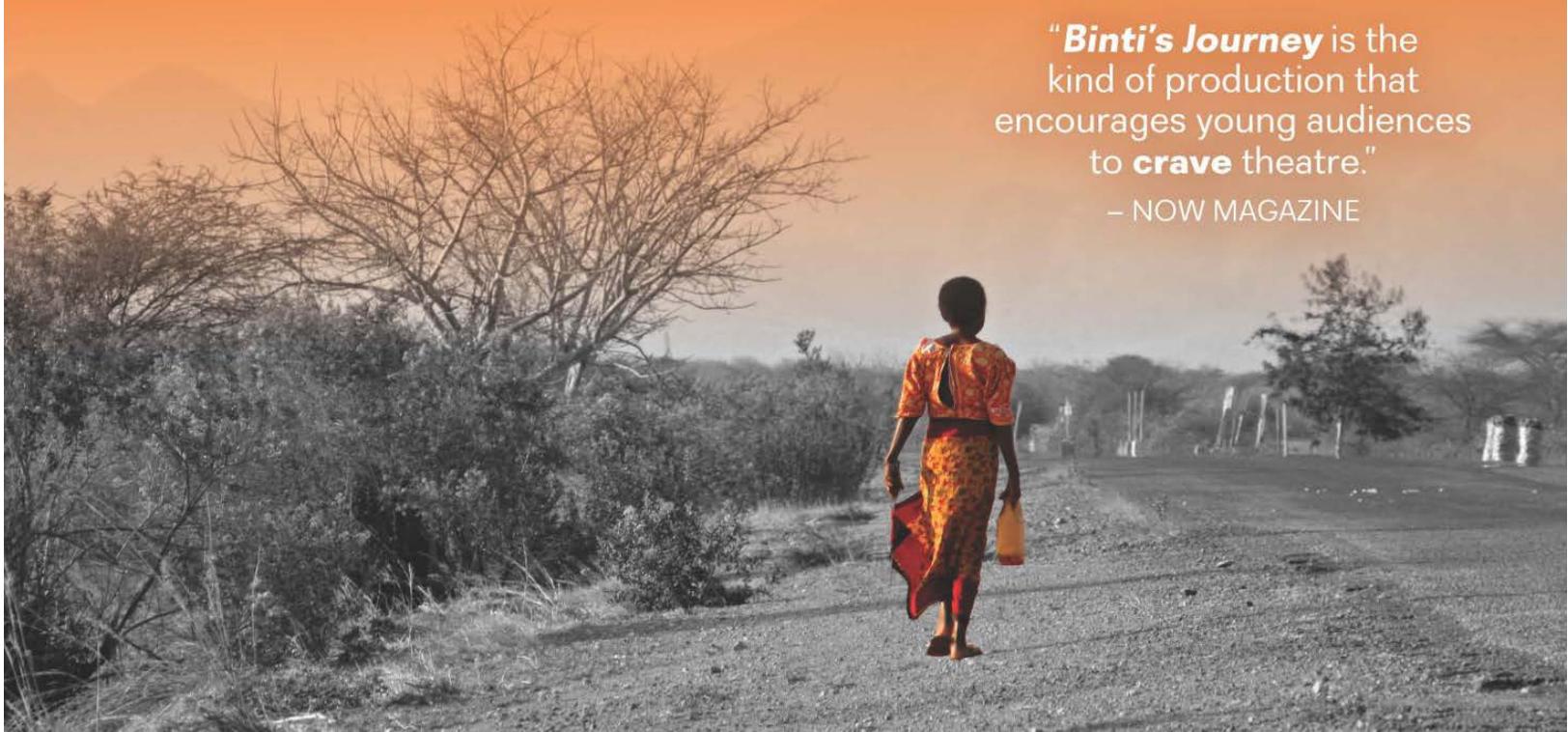
An anthem to hope, courage and the
resilience of youth

Binti's Journey

Adapted by **Marcia Johnson**
from the novel *The Heaven Shop* by **Deborah Ellis**

"Binti's Journey is the
kind of production that
encourages young audiences
to **crave** theatre."

– NOW MAGAZINE



Guide for Educators

HIV/AIDS in 2017 Information and Statistics

SUMMARY OF UPDATED INFORMATION AND STATISTICS

TOPICS

- Sources
- Base Statistics
- Myths
- Organizational Action
- Initiatives in Canada

SOURCES

- CANFAR (Canadian Foundation for AIDS Research)
- The Stephen Lewis Foundation
- Canadian AIDS Society
- Government of Canada, HIV and AIDS in Canada: Surveillance Report to December 31, 2014
- UNAIDS, Fact Sheet November 2016
- UNAIDS, Malawi HIV and AIDS Estimates (2015)

BASE STATISTICS

Current status of HIV/AIDS by Comparison

	Worldwide*	Malawi**	Canada***
Number of people living with HIV	36.7 million	980 000	75 500
Prevalence Rates of HIV	-	9.1% (adults)	0.002%
New infections annually	2.1 million	34 000 (2014)	2 570
Annual deaths due to HIV	1.1 million	27 000	303†
People Accessing ARTs	50%	67%	-
People who are HIV-positive and unaware	17 million (47%)	-	16 020 (21%)

Some statistics are not measured annually, so values here are based on yearly estimates generated between the years of 2014-2016

*CANFAR and/or UNAIDS

**UNAIDS

*** Government of Canada

†As of 2011

Other Statistics

- Globally, new HIV infections among children have declined by about 50% in the past 6 years (UNAIDS)
- Globally, tuberculosis is the cause of death in about 1 of every 3 AIDS-related deaths (UNAIDS)
- 530 000 children (0-17 years) in Malawi are orphaned due to AIDS (UNAIDS)
- In Canada, 1 in 10 individuals living with HIV are Aboriginal (Government of Canada)
- UNAIDS 90/90/90 Goal – By 2020, 90% of all individuals living with HIV will know their status, 90% of people with positive diagnosis will receive sustained ART (anti-retroviral therapy), and 90% of those receiving ART will have viral suppression. Where are we at?

- Only an estimated 18.2 million of 36.7 million people who are HIV positive were accessing ART as of June 2016 – that’s only about 50% (UNAIDS)
- Estimations suggest that 17.1 million (of 36.7 million) people worldwide do not know they are positive (i.e., about 47% of those who are positive do not know their status) (CANFAR)
- In Canada, an estimated 21% of people living with HIV do not know their status (Government of Canada)

MYTHS

- *HIV/AIDS isn't really a problem in Canada anymore.* While infection rates have been in a slight decline, there is still an estimated new infection every three hours. Part of this myth is believed to have come from the number of medical innovations that have improved quality and length of life for individuals with HIV. However, public complacency means that the disease is now receiving less attention, yet still needs significant funding and advocacy efforts in order to find a cure and reach the 90/90/90 goal. (CANFAR)
- *I am heterosexual, so I have nothing to worry about.* Although men who have sex with men as a group experience the highest rate of new infections in Canada, heterosexual sex and injection drug use are the next leading methods of transmission. Some of the groups at a statistically higher risk in Canada are individuals who have moved here from countries where AIDS is endemic, and Aboriginal peoples. (Government of Canada)
- *I always use a condom, so my sexual health is taken care of.* Although condoms are an important part of safe sex, they aren't 100% effective, so there are additional steps you can, and should, take. Regardless of your sexual preferences or activity level, encourage open and honest discussion about sexual health and regular testing for sexually transmitted diseases. When we reduce stigma, we keep everyone safer. If you are sexually active, being open and honest with any partner is critical. Regular screenings, and if necessary, treatment for STDs is also important. If your partner is HIV-positive and you are not, there are a few extra steps to take before engaging in sexual activity. If they aren't already, encourage your partner to access ARTs and stay on their medication schedule. You might also consult a doctor about PrEP, a medication for HIV-negative individuals who are likely to be exposed to the virus that prevents transmission.
- *Young people are being well educated about HIV. People are only infected if they are careless.*
 - *Other Methods of Transmission:* Like Beauty, some children get HIV from their mothers. It can be passed on to a fetus during pregnancy, or to an infant during birth. It can also be spread through an infected mother's breast milk. This issue is more common in countries like Africa. In fact, CANFAR has contributed to research that has helped to almost eliminate the risk of mother to infant transmission. However, protecting a child requires a mother to know her status, receive proper medical support during pregnancy, and have access to HIV medications, something that is often unavailable in developing countries. UNAIDS estimates that as of 2015, about 23% of pregnant women living with HIV did not have access to ARTs to prevent transmission to their babies. Sharing drug needles or improperly sterilized piercing/ tattoo equipment with someone with HIV can also contribute to the spread of the disease, although this is less common.
 - *Sexual Transmission:* Research shows that contraception and family planning methods are heavily underutilized in many African countries, even amongst girls who have

already had one child. As a result of poverty, many young women are pressured to engage in relationships with older men and because of the power imbalance, are not in a position to advocate for condom use even if they want to. Sometimes these relationships take the form of a marriage, but there are also girls who have experiences like Memory and Junie in the play. The Stephen Lewis Foundation, which funds grassroots projects combating HIV/AIDS in many African countries, supports a number of groups who work to educate young people about their sexual health and provide economic security for women and children. Sexual assault is still a problem across the globe, and is an additional contributing factor to the spread of HIV. Organizations like Ripples International in Kenya, which offers a shelter and follow up counselling for young women, and the African Institute for Integrated Responses to Violence Against Women & Girls & HIV/AIDS (AIR) work to actively combat this issue.

- *Young people can't make a difference.* In fact, a large number of the projects supported by the Stephen Lewis Foundation in Africa incorporate youth volunteers as peer educators. Their work can range from leading sessions with younger children about medication adherence to providing home care to individuals who are living with HIV. Here in Canada, young people can advocate for the needs of those affected by HIV/AIDS in Africa as well as at home. They can get involved in events like World AIDS Day and the Stephen Lewis Dare Campaign, where participants pick a personal challenge to help raise funds and challenge the stigma.
- *There is no way out of the cycle of poverty for young people affected by AIDS in Africa.* Without support, this is often true. However, there are a number of organizations that work to help women develop a stable income. Often, this starts with ensuring children and their caregivers have the necessities of life; the longer they can stay in school, the better their chances are of being able to avoid HIV transmission and develop a secure lifestyle in adulthood. When children are orphaned by HIV/AIDS, it often falls to grandmothers to take them in. Supported by Stephen Lewis Foundation partners, many of these women are coming together to form peer communities. One strategy that has shown growing promise is 'table banking'; many grandmothers were finding that their age and gender were making it hard to find sources of secure income. Working together, these groups pool their savings and make loans to one another to support their small businesses. They also think creatively! Recently, some women in Ethiopia have begun farming mushrooms, a food growing in popularity and manageable to grow even for women in their older age. In Tanzania, organic honey production is offering many Gogos a sustainable income. This is helping keep children healthy, fed, and in school.
- *When times are tough, its best to focus all resources on ensuring basic needs are met.* This is definitely important, but many organizations are finding that a holistic approach is necessary for success. This includes follow up counselling and community building. Many programs supporting children also incorporate the arts. They have found that being able to share their experiences through the arts helps children understand they are not alone; fosters healing; promotes the development of leadership skills; empowers young people to make change; and aids in building self-esteem, resilience, and hope. Providing funding is important, but many of these organizations would not survive without the dedication of large volunteer teams. By giving the gift of their time, they help to improve the lives of many children affected by HIV/AIDS. (The Stephen Lewis Foundation)

ORGANIZATIONAL ACTION

- CANFAR
 - Distributes grants to research projects, including some specifically earmarked for programs that prevent transmission amongst men who have sex with men
 - Programs range from awareness and support to drug research
 - Notable findings have included:
 - strengthening the effectiveness of drug treatments, prolonging life-expectancy for some individuals living with HIV
 - innovations that have significantly reduced the risk of HIV transmission between mothers and infants (near the point of elimination)
 - discovery of an “HIV vaccine candidate” capable of reducing and even preventing progression of the disease
 - contributions to other related areas of medical discovery such as cardiovascular disease and cancer
- Stephen Lewis Foundation
 - Provides resources to grassroots organizations combatting AIDS in 15 of the most deeply impacted countries, with an emphasis on social justice, equality and partnership.
 - Grassroots organizations are targeted for funding because they often have the deepest understanding of the nature of the problem and how to work as a community to combat it. Most are primarily powered by volunteers, and empower community members in key decision-making roles.
 - Organizations must recognize the extra barriers created by gender equality, and work to improve circumstances for girls, women, and/or grandmothers
 - General Areas of Work:
 - “Children Affected by AIDS” (e.g., medical support and counselling, school supplies, secure living arrangements);
 - “Grandmothers” (recognizing the primary caretakers of AIDS orphans and advocates for improved protections, helping them learn to support the children in their care and find sources of secure income);
 - “Home Based Health Care” (usually supported by volunteer efforts of young women living with HIV, very much a peer initiative, which can focus on medical tasks but often also encompasses additional counselling and support with day to day chores and personal care);
 - “Positive Living” (growing community networks in order to combat the stigma of HIV. These groups work to show PLWHIV that they are not alone, educate their communities and push for legal change)
 - “Sexual Violence and HIV & AIDS” (supports for healing the wounds of gender-based violence, set girls and women up for economic independence, provide key education around sexuality, and advocate for legal protections)
 - Partners must take a holistic approach
 - “Coping with Crisis” – ensuring affected individuals have shelter, food, etc. as well as counselling and opportunities to return to school (for children)

- “Regrouping and Rebuilding” – providing ongoing counselling and medical care, helping to create long-term economic solutions for families and installing other supports for “positive living”
- Security – expanding ongoing services and supports within communities and seeing affected individuals growing into leadership roles. Children stay in school and HIV positive individuals adhere to their treatment regimens. A broader sense of hope and positive outlook for the future is evident and engagement with the government takes root.

Their “wheel of support” provides a more detailed breakdown of services and supports available, as well as the % of projects that promote any given element.

- Impact Assessment Framework – the SLF and its partner organizations have identified that statistics related to delinquency, access to ARTs, and food security help us understand the impact of projects but do not provide the entire picture. They are releasing a new framework that recognizes shifts in resilience, adherence, and attitude.
 - Short Term – beyond meeting physical needs, measures the personal healing process and overcoming fear of stigma.
 - Medium Term – strategies to help children return to school and grandparents return to caregiver roles, establishment of support groups, and other sustainable practices for productive lifestyles. Also considers elements such as “the ability of children to play and create” and “the capacity to experience happiness and the pleasures of daily life”
 - Long term – maintaining ART adherence into adulthood, reaching key educational milestones, and continued healthy living. Also incorporates growing leadership in the community and engaging with the government to create an environment of legal security and support.
- Expanding Community – the SLF facilitates roundtables and online resource banks so that different partnership groups can share best practices and benefit from one another’s learning.
- Foundation of the African Institute for Integrated Responses to Violence Against Women and Girls & HIV/AIDS (aka AIR) – a female-centered and –staffed response team that provides crisis medical and emotional support, as well as a forum for sharing best practices and advocacy.
- See 2015 Year in Review for specific examples of projects. Core strategies have included:
 - Utilizing youth living with HIV as peer educators
 - Running music and drama programs, especially for younger children
 - Programs that promote youth adherence; younger children especially may not understand why it is important that they stick to their medication regimen
 - Support groups for grandmothers; in addition to letting them know they are not alone, there are specific programs for dealing with common challenges. For example, sessions that allow grandmothers to role play how to teach young children the importance of adherence and eventually how to disclose their status when the time is right.

- Canadian AIDS Society (CAS)
 - Working within Canada, this organization is dedicated to education and awareness, promoting community action, and engaging with the federal government to promote national policy change.
 - Recently came under new leadership after a period of frustration and contention; one of their first goals is increasing membership and rebuilding bridges with former members.
 - They have released a number of new publications since 2010, with a focus on the needs and experiences of youth, women, and the trans* community in Canada in relation to HIV. They also offer a faith-based education guide.

INITIATIVES IN CANADA

- CANFAR
 - Post-secondary campus groups
 - Legacy Group events in Toronto and Ottawa, such as the AIDSbeat Battle of the Bands which will take place at the end of April in Toronto
 - Young professional council
 - “Kisses 4 CANFAR”; social media campaign which reached 4800 Canadian schools working to raise awareness and promote safe-sex practices. Over 1000 Canadians also participated in their #smooch selfie campaign.
 - Youth Ambassador, Muluba Habanyama – this young woman lost her parents to AIDS while in high school, and herself faces the challenges of living with HIV. Shortly after her parents’ passing, Muluba began to experience depression, opted to forego her medication and offers of help from family and friends and ultimately ended up in hospital care. Today, however, is pursuing a Master’s degree in journalism and speaks passionately about breaking the stigma of HIV.
- The Stephen Lewis Foundation
 - Dare Campaign – individuals select personal challenges to raise funds and advocate for education about HIV/AIDS.
 - Dare to Wear – an annual fashion show where Canada’s top designers create a fashion piece using 6 yards of an African-created weave.
 - Grandmothers to Grandmothers – groups of grandmothers run fundraising events such as concerts, bake sales, sewing bees, and motorcycle rides. They are connected with grandmother groups in Africa, to listening to their perspectives and “amplify” their voices. Over the years, there have been educational trips to allow Canadian Grandmothers to meet some of the African Gogos face to face. A few years ago, the Foundation began supporting the Grandmothers Gathering where grandmother communities from Uganda, Kenya, South Africa and Canada come together for roundtables, workshops, and government engagement sessions.
- Canadian AIDS Society
 - See publications listed above
 - Annual Meeting (May)
 - People Living with HIV Forum, and as of 2015, a Youth Forum for People Living with HIV
 - The Scotiabank AIDS Walk
 - World AIDS Day (December 1st)