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### News Feature: J. Prince, Authors, Activists, Urge Youth to Strap Up for Black AIDS Day

By Chris Richburg and Nolan Strong  
Date: 2/7/2007 4:00 pm

Days after being honored for giving back to the community by the city of Houston, James "J. Prince" Prince is leading the charge to educate youth about the importance of HIV education, prevention and testing.

The Rap-A-Lot Records and Prince Complex CEO has partnered with the Pink Rose Organization, Special Treasures, The African-American State of Emergency Task Force and the Houston Department of Health and Human Services for the effort, which sprung from the annual observance of National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, which is today (Feb. 7) and included a day of free HIV testing throughout the city.

The alliance is the latest venture for J. Prince, who furthered his mission with the establishment of Strapped, a new organization which promotes condom use among youth.

"It's two things that I love to do that I have a passion for and that's giving back and the other is making money," the mogul told AllHipHop.com. "This is the beginning of an ongoing program that exists to attack the number one killer in our community. So I'm going to offer them some straps. It's the new weapon, the reverse psychology of a gun. It's a new product that's coming."

The creation of Strapped is among a string of initiatives and events set up to address the issue of AIDS in the black community.

National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day is a nationwide observance designed to promote awareness of the risks of contracting HIV/AIDS.

This year marks the seventh year the day has been acknowledged.

For author Gil Robertson IV, the occasion represents a chance for "our community to focus inward on what we need to do to rid this disease out of our space."

"As a people we have forgotten just how powerful we are. We are the same people who survived Middle Passage, slavery, Jim Crow and the Civil Right's Movement," said Robertson, who serves as editor of *Not in*

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*My Family: AIDS in the African American Community.* "My hope is that the Black community uses this day to demand from our politicians, clergy and other leaders the support needed to save precious Black lives."

One way youth can stop the spread of AIDS while protecting themselves is through information and education, according to the "Hip-Hop Doc," Dr. Rani Whitfield, who noted that there may be those who see the option as a double-edged sword.

"Some people, especially adults, fear that educating young people about sexuality and providing them with pertinent information will lead to irresponsible behaviors, promiscuity and experimentation with drugs of abuse (a major risk factor for the spread of HIV and other STDs). Because of this, many youth are reluctant to seek help from adults within their family or in the professional setting," Whitfield said.

Although Blacks make up close to 13.5 percent of the U.S. population, Admiral John O. Agwunobi, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services assistant secretary, told AllHipHop.com in a statement that 49 percent of new HIV diagnoses in 2005 came from the Black community.

In addition, African-Americans account for nearly half of the 1 million Americans estimated to be living with HIV.

"AIDS is the leading cause of death for black women ages 25 and 34, and the third leading cause of death of black Americans between 25 and 34," Agwunobi said. "This is not acceptable."

Despite the gloomy statistics, Agwunobi feels there are ways to combat HIV, such as routine volunteer testing for people age 13 to 64 and leadership from African-American communities.

"While there is no cure for HIV/AIDS, there are treatments that improve the quality of life and extend the lives of people living with HIV/AIDS," he said. "Recently, President Bush signed the reauthorization of the Ryan White CARE Act, which provides over \$2 billion to address the unmet health needs of people living with HIV/AIDS by funding primary health care and support services."

J. Prince agrees, as he sets out to turn his words into action.

"Talking about something is one thing, but having something to offer is another," J. Prince said. "We promote abstinence first for those that are strong enough not to have sex. I wasn't one of those. And we can't realistically just tell them not to have sex, so we are telling them to 'strap up.'"

To find an HIV/AIDS testing site near you, visit <http://www.hivtest.org/>.

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