

Us Helping Us,
People Into Living, Inc.

*Prevention for African American
MSM*

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Us Helping Us People Into Living, Inc.

- **Mission Statement:** Us Helping Us, People Into Living, Inc. is committed to improving the health and well-being of Black gay men through innovative programs and services and – through a vision of inclusiveness – to reducing the impact of HIV/AIDS in the entire Black community.
- **Values Statement:** Us Helping Us envisions a world in which health and wellness is within everyone's reach; a world free from stigma where the acquisition and transmission of HIV is eliminated.

The Story of Us Helping Us, People Into Living, Inc.

Us Helping Us, People Into Living, Inc. began as a support group for black gay men living with AIDS - population marginalized and stigmatized because of their race, sexuality, and the disease. Since its founding in 1985 by Rainy Cheeks and Prem Deben, UHU has grown from a small group of participants meeting in Cheeks' living room into the largest gay identified, black AIDS organization in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area with 14 full-time staff, over 10 programs and services, and an annual budget of \$1.7 million.

The Story of Us Helping Us PIL cont.

Today, UHU has turned its focus to youth leadership and combatting homophobia in the black community. In 2012 with funding from the CDC it opened a drop in center a few blocks from the New Carrollton metro station for young men, ages 18 to 29. The goal is to educate young men about HIV and risk reduction, and to empower them to become future leaders in HIV prevention. It is also developing an authentic black cultural concept of gay men based on the teaching of the Dagara people of West Africa, particularly their concept of life's purpose, spirit, community, sex and intimacy. "The only concept we have of gay and lesbian people is based on white European culture," Simmons says. "As the descendants of Africa, we have a right to explore the traditional cultural concepts of life and community before they were colonized by the Europeans. In my research, I find some of the traditional Dagara cultural concepts to be fascinating and I think they would have resonance with the African American community."

Programs & Services

- Group-level Programs
Many Men, Many Voices (3MV)
- Counseling and Testing

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Questions?