

Repeating AIDS mistakes: Framing monkeypox as a 'LGBTQ-only virus' could lead to a wider spread of the disease

As HIV/AIDS surged in previous decades, the government scrambled to address the strange illness that seemed to afflict mostly men who had sex with men. In fact, it was first referred to as “gay-related infectious disease,” or GRID, and other names that resulted in people viewing it as a “gay disease” for decades.

I fear we are making the same messaging errors with monkeypox. Yes, the vast [majority of cases](#) so far are among men who have sex with men. But history has taught me that no singular community is exclusively at risk for a disease.

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The near-exclusive emphasis on gay men regarding HIV/AIDS set up the public health response for failure in two respects. First, it heaped stigma, shame and blame on gay men like a truckload of garbage dumping at a waste site. Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) even proposed isolating people living with the disease like a leper colony.

Second, it left other groups — especially Black and Brown women — with a false sense of security. Many women, myself included, believed that we couldn’t contract HIV. “I’m not gay, and I certainly do not have sex with gay men,” we would think. “Therefore, I am not at risk.”

By the time we learned that many men who had sex with men also had sex with women, thousands of women had contracted the virus. [Black women](#) made up the majority of AIDS cases among women in the United States. I was one of them.

[This is an excerpt. Read the original post here](#)