

What are the lessons you have learned from your experience of the National AIDS Memorial Grove & HIV/AIDS?

Many people have been infected. Many are dying. Many are suffering. Many of them are young people. What is the cause? HIV/AIDS. Protection is indeed the most important thing young people should be taught. The case of HIV/AIDS should, and can, be avoided at all costs. I have seen the efforts of scientists around the globe to find the cure to AIDS. They have not yet found a cure or even a vaccination. This means that we, as young people, need to continue to be careful. We should think twice, and we should be smart and know that this virus can kill. Adults should set an example for us but some have AIDS as well, and some act irresponsible and do not use protection. The National Memorial AIDS Grove is setting an excellent example and giving very good advice and by showing the memories, the risks, and how to protect yourself.

I have seen that the Media is not doing much to prevent or warn the community about AIDS. My opinion is that they should do more. As we know, there are people that have never been educated or do not know about this virus. Television, radio, social media, the internet, and the government should act to let people know about this virus that affects people all around the world.

In regards to Education, I see that the same thing is happening as in the Media. We do not have the full education we need to know about AIDS. An example of this issue is in my education at Mission High School. Last summer, I took health class to have all of my credits in order to graduate. In this class we learned about STD's and HIV/AIDS. I was stunned when they told me that AIDS could be prevented by just using a condom. I did not know how simply it could be prevented, since no one had ever taught me about it. All schools should have a required class in regards to STD's and especially HIV/AIDS. One thing I was confused about is that in San Francisco, or at least at my high school, they do not have a health class as a regular required

class. We take health as either a small part of advisory, or as a summer course. I think this is not safe and the school district should be aware that many people do not know what to do to prevent HIV/AIDS. I am grateful for having taken the summer course because I learned a lot about AIDS and how to prevent it. I would really like to see change, and see that schools are spreading the word about HIV/AIDS. It will make a big difference inside the youth community as well as our country.

The first time I visited the National AIDS Memorial Grove, I was about 11 years old. The Grove is a beautiful park where I have seen all the names of the people who have been affected by AIDS. I still remember the rock engraved with "National AIDS Memorial Grove". At first I did not have any idea what that meant. Later on, my aunt explained to me that it was a park dedicated to all the people who have been affected by AIDS. I saw all the names on the floor. I was scared of how many people were affected. I now know the number of affected people is much greater than that amount. This makes me think that there should be a change to prevent these cases of AIDS from happening. The National AIDS Memorial Grove is something that serves as a memory to demonstrate all the people who have suffered from this virus, and those who are trying to make a difference.

I see the Grove as showing the world that having sex without protection is not a joke. This Grove means a lot to all those people who had been affected. This helps people who have this virus know that they are not alone, and that there is hope so they can finally be cured and enjoy life. In other words, this organization is the voice of all the people around the world that are sharing the same problem, the same pain. It is a meaningful act to do this, since many people who have AIDS are alone and feel depressed as well as frustrated because they think there is no way out. This grove gives them hope and support.