A zine about PrEP for women

Swallow it Whole

PILL THAT CAN PILL THAT CAN PREVENT HIV WHEN TAKEN Prep IS A BEFORE AND AFTER SEX.

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COULD PREP BE FOR YOU, OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW?

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BLACK FLY

collaboration between & Prepster

Normalise

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We are a group of volunteer peer mobilisers, sexual health workers, writers and artists who came together to create and collate this content. Between us, our ages span from early 20s to late 30s. The majority of contributors are of African descent, and we are all women of colour.

The aim was to create a black women-centred zine, which integrates pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) messages with our existing sexual health concerns and represents us in our own image. Lots of women don't know about PrEP, & have lots of different sexual health-related concerns which they need opportunities to talk about collectively.

We're proud to have made one of few sexual health resources written by and tailored for black women, and to have been able to include contributions from PrEP users, sex worker advocates, trans rights activists, and a range of straight, bi & queer women.

Through three workshops, we filmed, collaged, wrote, discussed, laughed, drew & painted our reflections around being women, navigating sexual health issues. We discussed poetry; and used Lucille Clifton's "Homage to my Hips", and Belinda Zhawi's "Black Woman as God" to inform our own writing. We talked about our relationship to Caribbean carnival traditions, consent, and respectability.

Swallow It Whole explores topics including birth, first relationships, body dysmorphia, consent, self-harm, hair removal, stigma, desire, pleasure, menstruation & family & community, body positivity & acceptance & much more.

What is PrEP?

PrEP stands for pre-exposure prophylaxis. It is a medication people can take to prevent HIV. PrEP has been shown to be effective in preventing HIV in women.

Most women would need to take it every day for it to be effective.

It is one of a few HIV prevention methods, which can be used on their own or alongside each other for greater peace of mind. These include condoms, regular testing, 'fluid bonding", bareback or condomless sex with only one partner, and working to ensure partners living with HIV are on effective treatment (as an undetectable viral load = an untransmittable virus).

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PrEP is effective, when taken correctly, on its own to prevent HIV, but can be used with other HIV prevention methods. PrEP does not

prevent other sexually transmitted infections, (such as chlamydia or syphilis) or pregnancy, but it can be used alongside STI prevention

methods and with all methods of contraception.

PrEP can be used alongside trans folks' hormone treatment without changing its effectiveness. This means trans women (one of the groups most affected by high rates of HIV) can use PrEP alongside feminising hormone treatment without fear the drugs will interact.

PrEP users of all genders and sexualities have told us they have greater satisfaction, better communication with their sexual partners and reduced worries about their wellbeing since

Examples of situations where PrEP can be useful:

- For people with multiple partners
- For people whose worry about getting HIV affects their enjoyment of sex
- For people whose worry about getting HIV stops them from having the sex they want.
- For people who change partners frequently
- For people who have a sexual partner diagnosed with HIV who and not yet have an undetectable viral load
- For people having types of sex where there's greater risk of HIV transmission (for example, condomless anal sex)
- For people with partners who are known or suspected to have other partners
- For people who are injecting drug users or who have partners who inject drugs
- For people who don't use condoms all the time, or have difficulty negotiating condom use with ther partners
- For people who are from countries with high HIV prevalence (e.g. sub-saharan Africa, south-east Asia)
- For people who travel to countries with high HIV prevalence & have sex with people they meet there.

For more info visit <u>https://prepster.info/prep4women/</u>

Anyone who wants to use PrEP must have already tested negative for HIV



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"PrEP for me is self care and harm reduction in a blue pill. Every morning, just after breakfast, I swallow something that gives me a reminder that my body is worthy of protection. It is incumbent upon us to gift it to women involved in sex work and those who are marginalised in a myriad of ways. How to look after ourselves and increase our autonomy should be a broad conversation that helps us to see our shared concerns on the frontlines of life in bodies others have tried to subdue. Whether women see themselves as run of the mill or radical, queer or straight, cisgender or transgender; the assurance that we are moving into a time where HIV won't rip dreams away from you, really is something to celebrate.

Kuchenga

"When situations arise that are beyond my control having access to PrEP & PEP empowers me to take ownership of my body and allows me to make critical decisions impacting my health, safety, education and economic stability. Readily accessible PrEP & PEP has the potential to create equity for girls and women globally."

Lindsey

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"I did hear about there being medication for people to take who have HIV. I didn't know there was medication to prevent HIV. I just thought there was condoms, or like, other contraceptions"

VW







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Dark and shadow. I think shame is a monster, a slippery one that hides and then takes up all the space in a room, a search light. So even if no one knows it feels like you have a target target target shame shame shame what is the opposite of shame or maybe a product release? How much shame do people experience in their lives...

If I counted to the seconds and minutes and hours how much shame I had felt on my deathbed i would have experienced a week of shame. I think shame might be that blush under your cheeks you hope the fact you're brown will cover up. It actually doesn't with me and i go red anyways. Shame shame shame it's a kid feeling. When shame is used as a very honest weapon to make you do something. It works pretty well. What did neanderthals feel embarrassed about?

ANON

Shame is a societal issue created by judgement and identity. Shame is like a form of internal bleeding that is killing me inside Shame, blame - it's a stain on me and the people around me - I would like to ban shame Shame on you - shame on

Shame on you - shame on me

Shame on people that exploit others - shame on your inner voice - shame on what I watched last night It's a shame - do what you wanna do. I hate to be shamed. I love to shame

Shame is holding one back shame is holding us back.

Unblock the shame. Shame shame shame. Why do we still live with shame? Shame is like the plague - shame has no place in my higher being.

Shame shame shame shame shame shame shame. How many people carry shame? Shame shame shame shame shame - I don't like shame. Why are you shaming me? How can you shame? What is the purpose of shame?

VΗ



HIDDEN SECRETS THAT I'VE NEVER REVEALED, HIDDEN FEELINGS THAT HURT AND CAUSE A LUMP IN OUR THROATS – EVERY GULP IS A REMINDER OF HOW SHAME HURTS US.

LET THE VOICE TELL THE TRUTH, DON'T LET OTHERS SHAME YOU ABOUT THE THINGS THAT HAPPENED, THE THINGS THAT ARE HAPPENING AND THE THINGS THAT ARE GOING TO HAPPEN.

WHY WOULD WE RATHER SHAME PEOPLE IN OUR COMMUNITIES, RATHER THAN TEACH THEM.

TEACH THEM TO HOLD THEMSELVES ACCOUNTABLE, TO NOT POINT FINGERS, TO NOT REPEAT HARMFUL PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOUR, TO NOT ENABLE SAID BEHAVIOUR. A LECTURER ONCE TOLD ME THAT IF YOU ARE SHAME-BASED THEN IT WILL CONSUME YOU, IF YOU LET IT.

THIS IS THE TRUTH, HOWEVER, THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THAT CONSUMPTION CAN ALSO LEAD TO YOUR FREEDOM.

SET YOURSELF FREE, EMBARK ON A JOURNEY OF BECOMING UNSHAMEABLE, UNCLOAKABLE, UNSILENCED, UNFUCKWITHABLE!

YOU DESERVE, WE ALL DESERVE BETTER THAN THE CARDS WE WERE DEALT, THE LIES WE WERE TOLD ABOUT OUR EXISTENCE.

FIND JOY IN RELEASING YOUR SHAME.

CharliE

Shame on sex + sex where there's shame, embarrassment, mixed, complicated feels + how much that takes from the enjoyment of sex which we all deserve + are entitled to have. The feeling that we're inadequate ruins a lot of the sex we have, or makes us do it badly/wrong/unsafely/unprotected.

Enthusiastic consent is key + valid. + making sure that we make our sex lives filled with joy + zero shame. Zero problems + zero issues. No stigma nor self-loathing. If thats what we can get from our newly harnessed capacities – it's well worth it, no?

But if we're made to feel ashamed – it's taught – not innate – what we lose is so immense.

I lament the feeling that I've lost some of my "innocence". Not my nature of thinking about sex – but wasted some time building shame + then lost time trying to knock that shit down.

If only I'd had about 20 years shame free – before sex kicked in. Not sex or sexuality- free but freedom from shame + freedom to explore + share joy with no shame, no sexual health problems (as it always is in my fantasies).

JC





Our bodies are:



wanting pleasure

TEMPLE orgasm RESTED

hyper pigmentation

tense

CARESS endurance

Photos by Angela Dennis



a la sare la lar

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DESIRE IS RICH, IT'S RICH COMING FROM YOU. IT'S BUTTERY + SOFT + SLIDY. DESIRE COMES. + RESTS AT MY FEET SOMETIMES. I DIDN'T MEAN TO MAKE DESIRE SOUND SO TAME. CAN I BE BOTHERED TO DESIRE RN. I THINK DESIRE IS ENERGY. **IT'S OBSESSIVE AND IF YOU ARE UNANCHORED** IT CAN TAKE YOU FAR FAR AWAY TO DISTANT LANDS. I'M SORRY DESIRE I MADE YOU TAME + CHEESY. **DESIRE DESIRE DESIRE** I CANT BELIEVE HOW MUCH I DESIRED TO BE A HOLLYWOOD WHITE WIFE OR DESIRED A JOB THAT MADE ME FEEL **IMPORTANT OR A SIMPLE STRIPED POLO NECK.**

I LOVE TO BE DESIRED BUT ATM DESIRE IS TOO TIRING.

ANON



Church, blackness & sex

I was taught that sex is a gift from God and it only should happen between a married couple. And I get it, completely, also I know that a lot of my people believe this, because of how drilled religion is in our upbringing.

> I'm nervous about getting to know someone sexually, it's scary. Dating someone who's not a virgin or even "waiting" came with its own pressures, because even though I wasn't forced in any way shape or form, I felt that oh damn, the time will come when it's going to put a strain on the relationship etc. and he didn't want to get married as much as I did, so it's just all the differences. Made me want to push him away further.

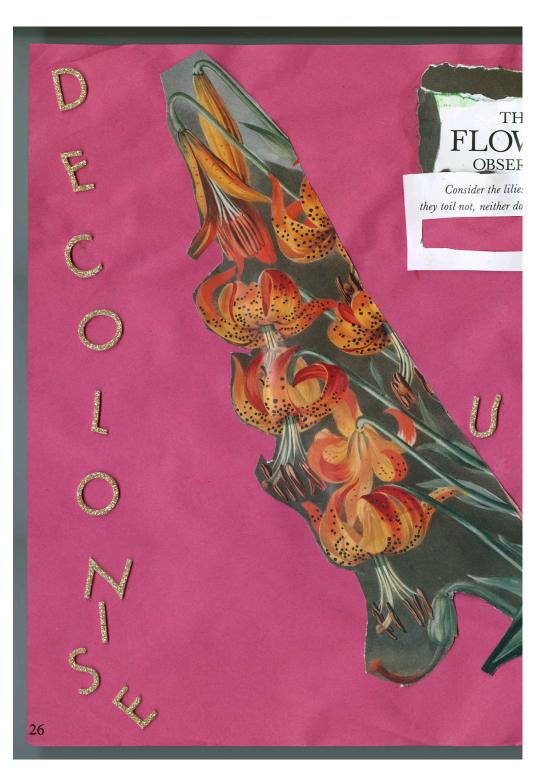
Being a black woman, who is also Jamaican, we have a culture where we keep those things secretive. And if we have sex and fall pregnant, we will get looked down upon, and deemed as ruined goods etc. It's very easy for a black woman to get disrespected and pushed away even in our own communities. I didn't want to be seen like that. I didn't even want to get close to being disrespected. There's a huge stigma of being a black woman who is sexually free!

Sadly I feel like we're oversexualised to outsiders. In our own community; there's a lot of sexual repression and fear and religion. There's a lot of pressure when it comes to black women in relationships lols, especially when it comes to marriage.

I wish that we could honestly just embrace individuality in terms of people and what they want for their lives more in the black community.

Sexual relationships are viewed in specific ways in black communities & come with standards and expectations.

But the younger generation find these standards and expectations especially difficult to identify with. On a positive note, I believe that the younger generation are changing narratives around relationships and expectations on women.





Homage to my body

ld've liked to have never known embarrassment or inadequacy over the body I was given & grew into I would've loved to not have felt nausea Usually because of nerves It was overwhelming, but made me slim though I felt all my pain in my tummy & denied myself an appetite Iwould've liked to not temper my enthusiasm Indulged and enjoyed my desires Sought pleasurable experiences In myself and others (by that, I probably mean, more orgasms) I would've liked to never felt tenseness in my shoulders Fear in my chest Or sadness (in a tummy I loathed) I would like to never worry About the muscularity of my limbs How toned my torso can get. Or the act of birth

Will it happen? Will it hurt? Could I die? I will banish angst and seek connections To myself, my desires, my heartbreaks and inadequacies I will bleed out the thoughts Which do not serve me & breathe in the thoughts which settle me in the body I have been "gifted"

> My grounding in that gift Will mean no disrespect from external forces can intrude & there's a joyful place For all the magnified parts To coexist in Being well, being home

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HosSolisman



Blood

Blood + bones do not necessarily mean that I have to love you. It's how I feel about you that matters - how you make me feel reveals who you are in my life. I don't want to like you just because we are blood, I don't want to smile and belly laugh with you because of blood. Blood can be poisoned, blood can be exchanged, blood can be healthy, blood can be deficient blood is blood. You are you and I am me - we are blood, separately. (Blood is blood, blood is blood, blood is blood, blood

is BLUD!)

CharliE

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Swallow It Whole is a collaboration between PrEPster and Black Fly Zine, as part of MobPrESH (Mobilising for PrEP and Sexual Health), a pilot project which recruits, trains and supports volunteer PrEP peer community mobilisers.

PrEPster aims to educate and agitate for PrEP access in England and beyond.

Prepster is a project of The Love Tank CIC - a non-profit community interest company promoting the health + well-being of under served communities.

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