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# THE OBSERVER

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## HIV Rises in Young Gay Males

*Experts Fear 'Another Wave of Death' Among Hispanic and Black Men*

By CASEY FELDMAN  
Staff Writer

FCLC—"Get high. Get stupid. Get AIDS."

So went the commercial that inspired 40-year-old Tom\*, an black HIV-positive male from the Bronx, to get an AIDS test in 1996. "I knew I was in the risk group. I was getting high, getting drunk, and I was getting stupid and [having unprotected sex]," he said at the Momentum Soup Kitchen for individuals with HIV/AIDS.

"Where I lived [in the Bronx], everyone was doing it during [the late 1980s]. We didn't have the education. You walk down the street at 2 a.m., a girl is waving at you, and you can hit it and quit it right there for \$10 and a bag of crack. We weren't using protection for that," he said. "You just weren't going to stop the moment and look for a condom."

The risky behaviors that Tom described, in both gay and straight individuals, were contributing factors to the NYC AIDS epidemic of the 1980s. Statistics indicate that despite the heightened profile of HIV/AIDS, NYC's young gay men are still engaging in the same risky behaviors and contracting HIV at increasingly alarm-

ing rates.

Since 2001, the rate of new HIV infections among Manhattan men under 30 who have sex with men has increased by 57 percent, according to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH).

In addition, the Web site reported that the rate of infection in Hispanic and black men who have sex with men (MSM) has increased 34 percent since 2001—an especially "striking number," considering that Hispanic and black MSM already accounted for the great majority of new HIV diagnoses. The

Web site states that in 2006, almost 90 percent of MSM diagnosed with HIV in New York City were Hispanic or black. Experts blame lack of education, cultural attitudes toward homosexuality and drug use as the causes of this increase.

"Young people are thinking 'it won't happen to me,'" said Monica Rivera Mindt, a clinical neuropsychologist and assistant professor of psychology at Fordham College at Lincoln Center (FCLC). "They haven't seen friends dying of AIDS... people walking around with lesions...like the [previous generation did]." During her research with HIV-positive individuals

at Mount Sinai Medical Center, she remembered one patient displaying what a recent New York Times article termed "treatment optimism."

"[The patient] said, 'now the treatments are so much better, so even if I get it, it doesn't matter,'" Rivera Mindt recalled. "The treatments are significantly better, but it can still kill you! That was so sad to hear," she said.

\*Name has been changed to protect identity.

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CRAIG CALEFATE  
PHOTO ILLUSTRATION/  
THE OBSERVER

One in four men who have sex with men in Chelsea are HIV-positive.

## Job Market Doomed?

*FCLC Seniors Might Not Have To Worry*

By MEAGHAN DILLON  
News Co-Editor

FCLC—With economists saying we are facing a recession, seniors who are graduating in May have plenty to worry about when it comes to the job market. However, several experts say that although it is difficult at this point to predict when this recession may happen, those who are about to begin job hunting may not have such a difficult time after all, unless they are seeking employment in the financial industry.

"In New York, it is going to be very tough finding a job in the financial market," Shapoor Vali, associate professor of economics at Fordham College at Lincoln Center (FCLC) said. Vali is referring to the tremendous financial losses, resulting in layoffs at various financial groups such as Citigroup, Bank of America Corp. and Merrill Lynch. However, Vali doesn't foresee this being a problem for many students at FCLC, but more of a concern for students who attend



CRAIG CALEFATE/THE OBSERVER  
Graduating FCLC seniors may not be doomed in the job market.

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## New York Giants Headed to Super Bowl

By BRENT NYCZ  
Asst. Sports Editor

The New York Giants are headed to the Super Bowl, after defeating the Green Bay Packers 23-20 in overtime on Jan. 20. After missing a 36-yard field goal at the end of regulation, Giants kicker Lawrence Tynes connected on a 47-yard field goal in overtime to send the Giants to Super Bowl XLII. The Giants are appearing in the Super Bowl for the fourth time in team history.

With the win against the Packers,

the Giants have won 10 straight road games, a National Football League record. By earning the fifth seed in the National Football Conference playoffs, the 13-6 Giants had to play on the road for all three of their playoff games. With the retirement of star halfback Tiki Barber during the off-season and the losses of tight end Jeremy Shockey and linebacker Mathias Kiwanuka to season-ending injuries, the Giants entered the playoffs in a terribly weakened state.

The Giants, however, embraced their underdog role. In the Wild

Card round, the Giants took on the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. After gaining -2 yards and not scoring in the first quarter, the Giants took charge in the second, scoring 14 points and eventually winning the contest 24-14.

In the Divisional Round, the Giants faced their NFC rivals and the number one seeded Dallas Cowboys. Giants quarterback Eli Manning continued his strong playoff performance by going 12 for 18 for

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Obama appeals to young voters, but the GOP candidate is anyone's call.

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Students reflect on Heath Ledger's career after he was found dead in his Manhattan apartment on Jan. 22.

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# NYC HIV Cases Soar Among Young Gay Men

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Rivera Mindt said she attributes the specific rise of HIV infection in young, Hispanic and black MSM to the "patriarchy and machismo" inherent in these cultures that sometimes prevents young gay men from admitting that they are homosexual.

"Some African-American men won't say they're gay—I have sex with men, but I'm not gay.' There is a shame associated with [homosexuality], a lack of acceptance," Rivera Mindt said. "If they aren't willing to admit that they are gay, they are talking about it less...they are probably less aware, and they aren't taking the appropriate precautions."

Being "on the down low," or on the DL, is a term used in the African-American community. "On the down low" refers to a man who looks and acts straight, has sex with women or is in a relationship with a woman but secretly also has sex with men, according to a 2003 New York Times article.

A Craigslist search reveals copious personal ads placed in the New York City area by "straight-acting DL guys," or "homo thugs," looking for men to have sex with.

"In the African-American community, men are placed with a lot of pressure to be dominant and strong," said Cerise Adams, FCLC '09, who conducted research on HIV patients at the SUNY Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn alongside Jayashree Ravishankar, a doctor who specializes in infectious diseases. A large number of black men, according to Adams, "feel that they have to keep [their homosexuality] confidential in order to remain respected by their peers and family members."

Black MSM "rarely use condoms, and can act as an infectious bridge, spreading HIV to unsuspecting wives and girlfriends," according to The New York Times Magazine, as cited by New York City HIV/AIDS



ELISSA EUBANKS/MCT

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene reported that between 2001 and 2006, the rate of new HIV infections among Manhattan men under 30 who have sex with men has increased by 57 percent. This increase has been especially pronounced in Hispanics and African-Americans.

organization The Body.

"[A lot of] black men don't use protection. Some black women go along with it because they don't want [their men] to leave them... Some women suspect men are on the down low but they don't have any solid proof," added Shannell Beckles, FCLC '09, who is African-American.

Almost two-thirds of women diagnosed with HIV in 2001 were black, according to The New York Times. Many believe that this is partially the result of black men being "on the down low," the article reported.

"There are a lot of thug gay guys... some Hispanic guys are also definitely 'on the down low' too," said Michael Lazo, FCLC '09, an executive

board member of FCLC's Student Organization of Latinos (SOL) and editor-in-chief of SOL's news publication, Dimelo.

Lazo, who considers himself bisexual, also said that homosexuality is a "big taboo" in the Hispanic culture because "it is a culture based on Catholicism."

Regardless of race or religion, it appears as though young men are still getting high, getting stupid and getting AIDS. According to research conducted by Perry Halkitis, professor of applied psychology at NYU, there has been an "alarming growth in club drug use among gay and bisexual men in New York City." Halkitis also stated that "club

drug use is fueling risky sexual behavior and damaging the health of a population already vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases." The most popular drugs, according to the research, are ecstasy, cocaine, crystal meth and GHB.

How to stop the increasing rate of HIV infection? According to Rivera Mindt, culturally-centered education is the key. "It would be difficult to change [African-American and Hispanic] culture and beliefs regarding homosexuality—health educators may not make as much of an impact in this regard. [It would be more effective] to get information to these communities in ways that are culturally tailored, using materials

BY THE NUMBERS

► Approximately 1 in 70 New Yorkers is infected with HIV, but the proportion of people in different groups who are infected varies widely:

**1 in 40**

Black New Yorkers are infected.

**1 in 25**

Men living in Manhattan have HIV.

**1 in 12**

Black men age 40-49 have HIV.

**1 in 10**

Men who have sex with men have HIV.

**1 in 8**

Injection drug users have HIV.

**1 in 5**

Black men age 40-49 in Manhattan have HIV.

**1 in 4**

Men who have sex with men in Chelsea have HIV.

Statistics courtesy of: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/ah/ah.shtml>

and language that are culturally acceptable."

Our generation may not have experienced the first AIDS epidemic during the 1980s, but according to the DOHMH, if behavior patterns don't change, we may experience the second AIDS epidemic—now.

New York City Health Commissioner Thomas R. Frieden said, "Unless young men reduce the number of partners they have and protect themselves and their partners by using condoms more consistently, we will face another wave of suffering and death from HIV and AIDS."

## Job Market Doomed?

JOB MARKET FROM PAGE 1

the College of Business Administration (CBA) at the Rose Hill campus.

The location of FCLC is also a positive factor that students should rely on. "New York is unique in that we are the financial capital," said Janis Barry, associate professor of economics at FCLC. "What hits Kansas, hits New York a little differently." The economy tends to bottom out more slowly than the rest of country that doesn't have a diverse group of industries, Barry said. With a diverse array of industries ranging from entertainment to service, Fordham students who are searching for a job in New York are "blessed" despite the economic downturn.

For one of FCLC's popular majors, communication and media studies, students may be adversely affected, though it is not a result of the economy, but rather of the downsizing in the print and non-print media, or the writer's strike, Vali said.

Marion Viray, associate director of career services agreed that those who are studying communication and media studies are not as affected by the financial losses of various financial institutions and shouldn't worry about the job market in relation to the economy. Very few students go into corporate communication in which there are going to be layoffs, he said. "A lot of students don't go into financial institutions, they go into more creative worlds," Viray said.

Even economics majors have other options besides a financial career. Many students become research analysts, which in times of economic downturn are actually needed, or they might go to Washington D.C. or the United Nations, Viray added. "Most of our students aren't going to Citigroup," he added, referring to the lack of interest in employment with

financial corporations at FCLC.

For students who want to be proactive about the job hunt, Barry suggests broadening their qualifications and getting another degree, as well as having a willingness to relocate for an entry-level job if need be. "Go back to school, get another degree, and accept the increase in debt load," Barry said. "It will pay for itself once the economy picks up." Increasing education is another way to stand out and avoid being side-swept by the job market.

Viray noted that students should not only be relying on their academics when beginning the job hunt, but also their networking skills, as well as programs like Study Abroad, which is becoming increasingly important in a global economy.

"The big news is that the labor market is now global," agreed Barry. "You are now in competition with students from around the world, and Fordham students should take a look at who is sitting next to them in their classes. The very people that are from previously Eastern Bloc countries, Latin America, Asia or India are competing with you... This isn't to suggest that students should be looking to fellow students with anger or mistrust, it's that if young Americans haven't gotten the message, it's going to be harder not easier to get a good job." Going abroad, Barry added, is "a must because now employers are looking for students who get the big picture."

Barry also said that graduating seniors at Fordham are already ahead of the game when it comes to other American students who haven't made it this far. "In the U.S., those who graduate from four years of college are privileged," she said. "You're going to win in the sense that you're already going to be part of the small portion of the population who is well-educated."

They could solve nature's biggest mystery if they only had a clue.

**STRANGE WILDERNESS**

StrangeWildernessMovie.com

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