

CITY OF BALTIMORE

STEPHANIE RAWLINGS-BLAKE, Mayor



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Olivia D. Farrow, Esq., R.S.
Interim Commissioner
1001 E. Fayette Street
Baltimore, MD 21202

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA CONTACT: Brian Schleter

PHONE: 443-984-2623

Mediahealth@baltimorecity.gov

Baltimore City Public Health Students Win Inaugural Creative Arts Contest

BALTIMORE, MD (June 10, 2010) -- The Baltimore City Health Department is pleased to announce that Whitney Burton, a 25-year-old Baltimore native, has won the Department's inaugural *iHeART Baltimore* Creative Arts Competition with her poem, "Reflection Time."

Ms. Burton, who already has a Master's in Social Work, is currently enrolled in a graduate-level community health program at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, where she specializes in HIV/AIDS. Her poem was selected by a diverse panel as the entry that best embodied the contest's theme of "Stopping AIDS is Everyone's Business."

Second and third places in the contest went respectively to Emily Nykaza, 24, from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and Ben McGuiggan, 20, an undergraduate public health student at Johns Hopkins. All three winners will receive prizes from the Health Department for their efforts.

"The submissions we received for this contest exemplified the creative energy of Baltimore's health advocates, and their commitment to fighting the AIDS epidemic," said Interim Health Commissioner Olivia Farrow. "Congratulations to Whitney, Emily, and Ben for proving that Baltimore's public health future is in talented hands."

The "Stopping AIDS" contest was the first in the City Health Department's new *iHeART Baltimore* initiative, which uses social media to integrate health and the creative arts. The goal of *iHeART Baltimore* is to generate community-driven dialogue about health issues. By using the arts as a medium, the Health Department hopes that Baltimore residents will be able to infuse their own discussions with a vibrancy and relevance that is sometimes missing from traditional health communication.

"I think it's a very effective way of getting people to look at not only their own health, or even their neighborhood, but their larger community as well," said Burton. That sentiment was shared by contest runner-up Nykaza, who called art "a process that has a tremendously untapped potential in engaging people in their health."

Entries in the inaugural competition were judged by a panel of arts and health experts from around the city. Panel membership included:

- Alexia McCain – Coordinator, Office of Health And Science, Baltimore City Public Schools
- Ken Krafchek – Graduate Director, Master of Arts in Community Arts Program, MICA
- Ryan Petteway – Social Epidemiologist, Baltimore City Health Department
- Randi Vega – Cultural Affairs Director, Baltimore Office of Promotion and the Arts

The text of Ms. Burton’s poem is attached to this press release. It is also available, along with pieces by runners-up Ms. Nykaza and Mr. McGuiggan, on the BCHD Facebook page (www.facebook.com/baltimorehealth), and at www.baltimorehealth.org/iheartbaltimore. Information about upcoming *iHeART Baltimore* contests will also be posted in these locations in the future.

###

Reflection Time

By Whitney Burton

“Your preliminary HIV results will be complete in about twenty minutes”

Bubbly twit!

No, it’s not her; this is my fault

He said *‘just this once baby, please, just this once.’*

I broke down and we did it

Just that once though

Just that one time we didn’t use a condom

One time out of countless other sexual encounters

And it was good

The naughtiness of the situation intensified everything

It was my first time never using a condom

Time check 16 minutes to go

Just that one time and now I am here

Paying penitence as I wait

Twenty minutes has never felt so long

And I’m alone in this sterile clinic

Because *‘just this once’s’* UTI was actually chlamydia

Which informed me that “we” were neither exclusive nor using protection

11 minutes

I can hear my grandmother’s voice now “miha, your body is a temple. I raised you better than to become weak for some pretty words whispered in your ear.”

Worse yet, now Bubbe joins in, “you should be pure until your kiddushin (wedding)”

OMG what will I the rest of my family says?

Mael’s will call me another Black statistic fallen to the epidemic

7 minutes, what is taking so long?

Could I keep quiet and never say anything?

Cut my family out of one aspect of my life?

There are support groups

“Just this once baby, please, just this once”

How could I have been sooo stupid?

I know there are no guarantees

I get tested regularly

Typically I block out the fears of others but this time my trepidation is ignored

1 minute- I’m not ready

Time slow down

I’m not ready

“Just this once baby, please, just this once”

It was only one time though; it was only one time...