This week, the United States is hosting the 19th International AIDS Conference. As we welcome 22,000 leaders, advocates and experts from around the world with the goal of ending HIV/AIDS, I thought it was important not to forget those living with HIV/AIDS here in our home town. Among the 1.1 million people living with HIV/AIDS in the United States, African Americans make up almost half of all cases, despite representing only 14% of the U.S. population. Women comprise 23% of new HIV infections in this country, and African American women make up nearly two-thirds of these cases. Here in D.C., we have one of the highest HIV rates in the country, with 2.7% of all D.C. residents living with HIV/AIDS, and women comprise 28% of the cases. Of the 4,000 women living with HIV in D.C., 92% are African American. Compared with men in D.C., women living with HIV are still more likely to be tested later in the course of their disease, and are less likely to be linked to care.  On Saturday, R&B legend Alicia Keys and I joined the Kaiser Family Foundation and the National Black Women's HIV/AIDS Network for an inspirational meeting with a community gathering of courageous black women living with HIV/AIDS. Our goal was to lift their stories up to provide insight and guidance for our efforts to end HIV/AIDS here at home.

For so many of us, our commitment to fighting AIDS comes from the heart. Every day, I carry with me the pain of watching the excruciating death of my sister-in-law, Julie, eighteen years ago. Julie went for months without being properly diagnosed because it simply never occurred to her doctor to check for HIV. By the time she was diagnosed, it was too late. Julie left behind a devastated husband and a five-year-old daughter, Tracy. Tracy, who is now all grown up, accompanied me on Saturday.

Story continued at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/valerie-jarrett/valerie-jarrett-hivaids-conference_b_1698780.html