# THE PROSTATE GAP

The Prostate Gap by Ian Smith uses photography to explore and challenge the public's understanding of prostate cancer within gay, trans and African Caribbean people in our society.



#### Stephanie Holmes

I am very proud to be part of The Prostate Gap, and fully support Ian Smith's exhibition to raise awareness of prostate cancer in the gay, trans, and African Caribbean communities.

I identify as a trans woman and have set up a number of support groups such as Chrysalis for trans people in the North West.

I spend a great deal of my time trying to fill the gaps that this exhibition is exposing. To this end I get regular PSA tests. This action is twofold. One is for my own peace of mind and the other is to demonstrate to my members the importance of getting checked out for prostate cancer.

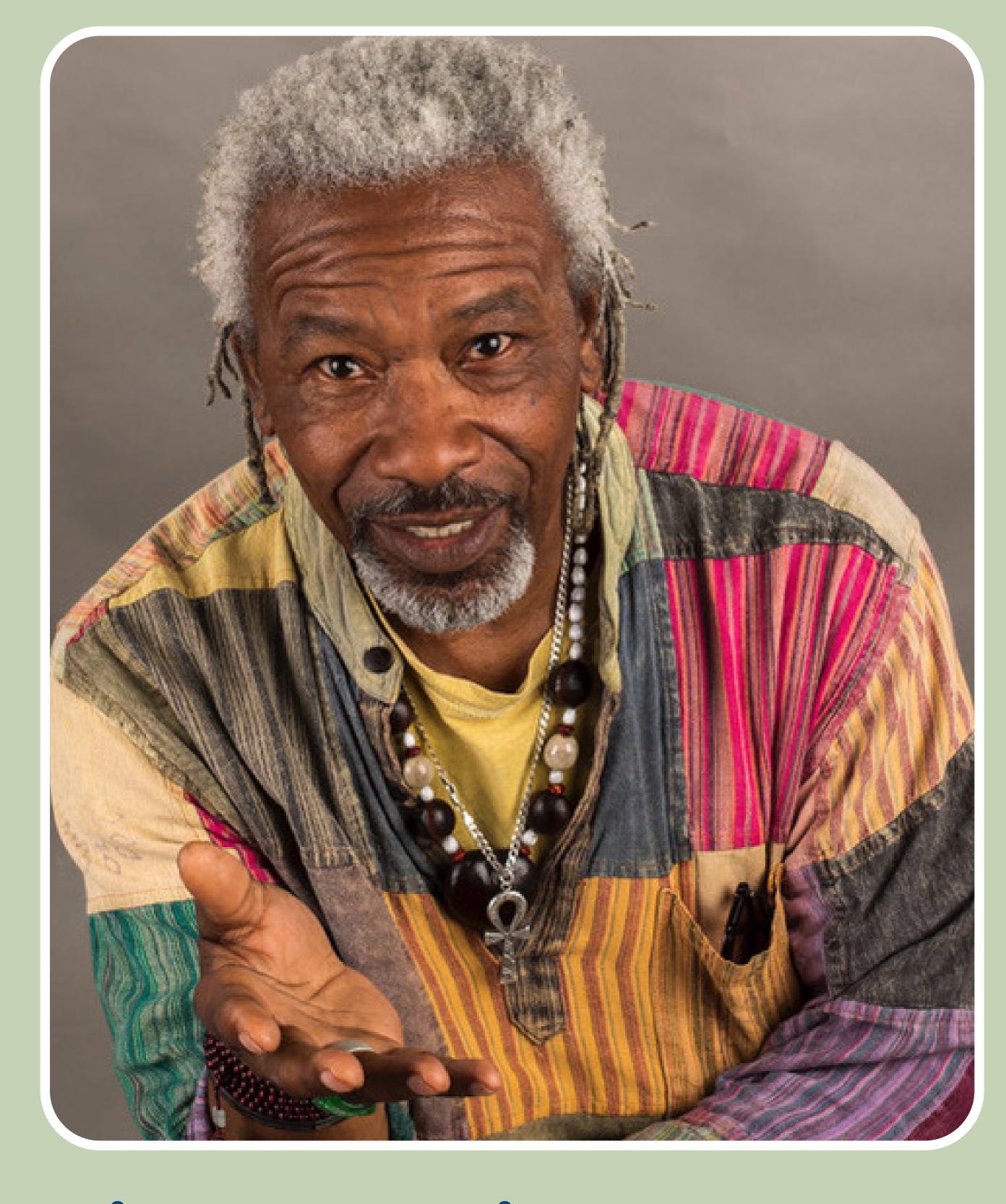


#### Mark Griffiths

In 2016 I was diagnosed with prostate cancer at the age of 45. My prostate was removed. Solid support from my family and husband (pictured behind me), ensured a recovery that enabled me to resume my old job.

Frankness and open communications are important, my husband and I are now living a 'new norm'. Subsequent to my illness local doctors are encouraging my two sons to be screened early.

For some reason that I am unsure about, I did not reveal to my consultant that I was gay, nor at any point was my gender identity ever requested.



## Winston Carrington

I'm happy to help with anything that assists men - especially African Caribbean men - get to grips with the worries of prostate cancer. I even appeared on ITV's 'Full Monty' programme to help raise awareness of prostate cancer. African Caribbean men are four times more likely to develop prostate cancer, but 85% are not aware of this fact.

One obstacle that gets flagged up is interference with sexual activity. Believe me, it's not totally true. I was treated in 2017 and now things are pretty well back to normal. Any marital embarrassments need to be replaced by openness and honesty. Just keep talking folks.



#### Lynn Oddy

There's a bit of mis-gendering by medical staff who may not be used to the idea of a woman having a prostate. I don't see it as malicious, so I just ignore it. It isn't worth risking your life over a bit of mis-speaking.

My frequent and repeated nighttime toilet visits lead me to my GP. Subsequent tests revealed an ageing prostate and a low risk of cancer.

The message I'd give to others is that getting checked isn't a big deal. This is the message I pass on to other trans women in the support group, Butterflies, I run in Manchester.



#### Anthea Makepeace

My prostate cancer journey as a trans woman could be described as a less than a happy one. I feel this is mainly due to health care professionals not fully understanding the needs of trans women with this illness. It was a real gap in my care.

I feel this lack of insight still persists. To reduce repeats of earlier treatments, my habit is to thoroughly research newly allocated health care professionals to ensure a well-founded relationship. I spend much time being a trans-activist and supporting friends within our community.



## Gilbert Morgan

I was 49 years old when I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. My father also had the same illness. Culturally we approached it in different ways. I took a positive direct approach and dealt with it in a radical fashion in 2014. Whereas my father was in denial of the problem.

My early presentation helped to reduce my stress and anxiety. I support any activity that brings awareness of this illness to the people where African heritage increases the risk.



### Martin Wells

Identifying as gay a man may bring social pressures. Having a partner from a different culture and ethnicity can multiply these tensions and stresses when contrasted to a heterosexual relationship.

All this has to be managed whilst dealing with a life-changing illness of prostate cancer. Ian Smith's creation of the 'empty space' reflects, for me, some of the loneliness that I've experienced.

I finished my chemotherapy treatment for advanced prostate cancer in March 2019 but now continue with lifelong chemical castration treatment.

I started 'Out With Cancer' a network of support groups primarily but not exclusively for the gay community in the North West and other parts of the UK.

Prostate cancer is the commonest form of cancer in men in the U.K. It is important to be checked early and be diagnosed as early as possible to achieve better therapeutic outcomes. However, some groups are hard to reach. Trans women and non-binary people who were assigned male at birth are susceptible to prostate cancer, even if they have had gender reassignment treatment, though they may not realise it or they may be reluctant to come forward for diagnostic testing. African Caribbean men are more likely to suffer from this condition and Asian men are less likely to discuss post-operative effects on their married life.

The catalogue prepared by photographer Ian Smith highlights these important issues and, in my opinion, is a very significant piece of much needed research in this area. This should help to improve the understanding of this common disease by patients, their relatives and the healthcare practitioners.

#### **Professor Romesh Gupta OBE**

Chairman of the National Forum for Health and Wellbeing December 2019

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