

COLUMBIA SPECTATOR

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To the Editor:

Joe Brady's article about Magic Johnson ("Magic facing the hardest test of all," Nov. 8) spoke touchingly for many. It seems to be human nature that as thousands perish beside us, only a larger than life personality focuses our attention on our collective tragedy.

I'd like to point out an unfortunate word choice by Mr. Brady and an egregious editorial oversight. Speaking of the stigma attached to HIV positive diagnosis and how Earvin Johnson's prestige will help remove it, Brady writes, "Too many people still associate AIDS with 'those people,' a euphemism

for homosexuals and intravenous drug users. Hopefully, Magic's affliction will help put an end to these degrading categorizations."

Are "homosexual" and "intravenous drug user" degrading categories? The latter, for a variety of reasons, may represent misfortune. But both, I would contend, are neutral descriptions. Only implicit stigma gives them the meaning Brady intends. He has employed the weapon he purports to decry.

Part of fighting stigma is insistence on semantic precision. Please work to do better.

Day Hills, BC '89
General Studies