Toward an Ethics of Interaction: Living with HIV/AIDS Amid Stigma in South Africa

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This presentation, based on ethnographic fieldwork in Durban, South Africa with a Zulu gospel choir in which all group members are living with HIV/AIDS, explores the elisions, allusions and illusions of living with HIV amid stigma in relation to the moralstances taken towards disclosure of one’s HIV positive status. The presentation compares interactional (Goffman) and phenomenological (Levinas) concepts of ‘face’ to model how HIV/AIDS support and activism occur alongside the exigencies of living amid stigma. This analysis suggests ways to incorporate the anthropological study of ethics and morality into linguistic anthropology and vice versa.