

National Call to Action and Declaration of Commitment to End the AIDS Epidemic in Black America

Over twenty-five years ago, a strange new disease with no name was identified at UCLA Medical Center. In the intervening years that illness, AIDS, has become the defining health issue of our time, killing 30 million people worldwide, most of them Black.

Today, AIDS in America has become a Black disease. No matter how you look at it, Black people bear the brunt of the AIDS epidemic in our country. Of the estimated 1.2 million Americans living with HIV/AIDS, nearly half of them are Black. African Americans represent over half of the newly-diagnosed AIDS cases in the United States, 47 percent of the new cases among men, 67 percent among women.

We have dithered too long. Our national policy-makers have lost focus. Each year, the epidemic worsens in Black neighborhoods, and each year the national commitment to interrupting its spread and keeping those already infected healthy further lags. AIDS in Black America is a difficult and multifaceted problem—but it is also a winnable war.

Black organizations—from churches to civil rights organization, from media organizations to academic institutions, cultural organizations to policy making bodies—must make fighting AIDS a top priority by setting concrete measurable goals with real deadlines that will help end the AIDS epidemic in our communities.

The Call

~ We call on leaders to lead. The AIDS story in America is mostly one of a failure to lead. Whether opinion shapers or industry titans, Black leaders must use their positions to build a mass community movement with a new sense of urgency to end the AIDS epidemic in our communities. No one should accept the idea that the presence of AIDS is inevitable.

~ We call for the expansion of comprehensive AIDS prevention efforts.

~ We call for a massive effort to address the disproportionate impact this epidemic is having on Black youth, women, and men who have sex with men.

~ We call for a strengthening of programs that make HIV treatment accessible.

~ Perhaps more than anything else, we call on Black America to finally put an end to the stigma surrounding this disease. Each person in Black America, whether positive or negative, must stand up and declare that the era of shame, blame and silence about AIDS is over.

The Commitment

We have an extraordinary opportunity to change the trajectory of the AIDS epidemic in America. AIDS in America will not end, unless and until the AIDS epidemic is stopped in Black America.

With that admonition, we the undersigned, commit to do the one and only thing that can end the AIDS epidemic in Black America and America as a whole: build a mass Black Mobilization.

The Goal

End the AIDS epidemic in Black America in five years.

The Objectives

1. Reduce HIV rates in Black America by 50 percent.
2. Increase the percentage of African Americans living with HIV who know their HIV status by 50 percent.
3. Increase the percentage of African Americans living with HIV who are in appropriate care and treatment by 50 percent.
4. Reduce AIDS stigma in Black communities by 50 percent.

AIDS is not just a health issue. It is a human rights issue. It is an urban renewal issue. It is an economic justice issue. If we are to have any chance of winning the battle for racial justice in America, Black America must confront the AIDS epidemic. An army ravaged by disease cannot fight. A dead people cannot reap the benefits of a battle won.

*In witness whereof,
we have hereunto set our hand.*



Name _____

Organization _____

Signature _____