



## The National Black Women's HIV/AIDS Network Statement on the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS

February 1, 2010 - The National Black Women's HIV/AIDS Network (NBWHAN), congratulates all of the individuals appointed to the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS (PACHA).

As these appointments come at a crucial time in the history of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in this country, NBWHAN is astounded and disappointed that this Administration has chosen to follow the practices of past Administrations and continues to ignore African American women in this nation living with and affected by HIV and AIDS.

"While the most recent CDC data reflects that HIV infection is the leading cause of death for black women 25 to 34, the 3<sup>rd</sup> leading cause of death for black women 35 to 44, and the 4<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death for black women 45 to 54, African American women remain invisible in this epidemic", said Barbara Joseph, Co-Chair of NBWHAN. Our concern is not about who the 25 members of PACHA are, but who the members are not. Given the CDC's data I'm confused why only two African American women have been selected to serve on PACHA", continued Joseph. As a woman who has lived with HIV for 27 years and who has provided services on the ground for 20 years it seems to me that its politics as usual," she added.

The National Black Women's HIV/AIDS Network is calling on President Obama, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius and Christopher Bates, Executive Director of the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS to take another look at PACHA and expand the table to ensure that the voice of African American women is not silenced.

"Black women can no longer be invisible in this epidemic, said Jacqueline Coleman, Co-Chair of NBWHAN. The fact that we have a disease in our communities that resembles those in under developed nations is a testament that government has ignored a large segment of women in our nation to fend for themselves. This is simply unacceptable."

According to the CDC, women account for more than one quarter of all new HIV/AIDS diagnoses in the United States<sup>1</sup>. Historically, women have been underrepresented in HIV/AIDS research, and underserved in HIV/AIDS treatment, care, and prevention efforts. This neglect of women's complex health issues has led, in part, to a dramatic rise in the number of women living with HIV, and an alarming increase in AIDS-related deaths among women<sup>2</sup>. Black women account for the largest share of new HIV infections among women and the incidence rate among Black women is nearly 15 times the rate among white women. In addition, Black women account for the majority of new AIDS cases among women, 66% and represent more than one third (36%) of AIDS cases diagnosed among Blacks, (Black men and women combined)<sup>3</sup>.

"In order to recognize a National AIDS Strategy in this country we must recognize the profound affect that HIV/AIDS has on Black women stated Ivy Turnbull, Policy Chair of NBWHAN. Given this Administration's stance on civil rights, human rights and health care, it's hard to determine where African American women and girls living with and affected by HIV/AIDS fit into the equation absent of a proportionate number of African American women representative on PACHA," she added.

In August 2009, Secretary Sebelius made the following comments at the National HIV Prevention Conference in Atlanta: *"One in 30 African-American women will be diagnosed in her lifetime. Think about that. Imagine if it were half the straight white women in Atlanta. Wouldn't we be calling this a national emergency?"*

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Moreover, the mission of PACHA is to provide advice, information, and recommendations to the Secretary regarding programs and policies intended to promote effective prevention of HIV disease, and to advance research on HIV disease and AIDS.

As a Network comprised of Black women with HIV/AIDS, agency executives and leaders in research, program implementation, prevention and care and treatment, our call is to ensure that the needs of African American women, adolescents girls and their families living with and affected by HIV/AIDS become an integral part of this country's HIV/AIDS agenda regarding programs and policies which so significantly impact their lives. It is hard to imagine how the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS can realize its mission without the voice of African American women being present and accounted for.

### **About the National Black Women's HIV/AIDS Network (NBWHAN)**

The NBWHAN has been successful in working with many advocacy groups as well as local and national organizations to garner support for women's issues in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Founded in 2007 the NBWHAN has worked to influence the development of research initiatives and resources that will have a positive impact on program development and design for women and produce scientific based evidence of success. The NBWHAN is a community led initiative born out of the urgent need for Black women to set and implement a national HIV/AIDS agenda for Black women and adolescent girls in the areas of prevention, care, treatment, public policy and funding for all Black women and adolescent girls living with or at risk of HIV and AIDS and their families.

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#### References:

<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Fact Sheet HIV/AIDS Among Women.

[www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/women/resources/factsheets/women.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/women/resources/factsheets/women.htm).

<sup>1</sup> Cases of HIV Infection and AIDS in the United States and Dependent Areas, 2006. Table 2: Time to an AIDS diagnosis after a diagnosis of HIV infection, by selected characteristics, 2005—33 states and 5 U.S. dependent areas with confidential name-based HIV infection reporting.

<http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/surveillance/resources/reports/2006report/table2.htm>

<sup>1</sup> CDC, HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report, 2009