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## **NMAC Calls on Nation to Educate Elected Officials, Families and Friends about the Impact of HIV/AIDS on Women of Color this National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day**

**March 10, 2010 ~ Washington, DC** ~ Join the [National Minority AIDS Council](#) (NMAC) in raising awareness about the disproportionate impact of HIV/AIDS on women of color this [National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day](#) (NWGHAAD). Coordinated by the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\), Office of Women's Health \(OWH\)](#) and held annually on March 10, NWGHAAD has never been more important. The World Health Organization announced in November 2009 that HIV/AIDS is now the number one killer of women and girls aged 15-44 worldwide, and in the United States, a woman is infected with HIV every 35 minutes.

Dr. Kim Johnson, NMAC's Director of Technical Assistance, Training and Treatment Division says: "Often lost in the discussion about the disproportionate rates of HIV/AIDS in minority communities and the increase in HIV infections among women overall is the potential impact on future generations. Women and girls – and particularly women and girls of color – tend to be the primary caretakers at home, putting the health and welfare of their partners, children and elders ahead of their own. Compounding this barrier to HIV prevention and care are cultural stigmas around HIV and condom use, as well as socioeconomic disparities – such as high rates of poverty and homelessness – and an overall lack of access to culturally and linguistically appropriate health care and information."

Women now account for 25% of all HIV and AIDS cases in the U.S., a sharp increase from 11% in 1990. And though women of color represent only a quarter of the total female population in the U.S., they account for nearly 80% of all AIDS cases among women nationwide. Black women in particular have been impacted. AIDS is a leading cause of death among African American women in all age groups, and it is the number one killer of Black women aged 25-34.

Evelyn Ullah, Director of HIV/AIDS at the Miami-Dade County Health Department and a member of NMAC's Board, says: "We call on everyone to take a stand and engage in open discussions about sexuality and sexual risk – and the importance of HIV prevention and testing. Otherwise, we will continue to see women and girls of color being infected with HIV and, worse, testing late. All too often, women of color are simultaneously diagnosed with HIV and AIDS – or progress to AIDS within a year of testing positive for HIV."

NMAC hopes you will join us in supporting the recommendations for action outlined in the [National Black Women's HIV/AIDS Network's](#) report: "[Recommendations for HIV/AIDS Policy for Black Women and Girls and Their Families Living with and Affected by HIV/AIDS](#)." Though these refer to African American women, they are relevant to all women of color:

Support HIV-positive and non-positive Black women and girls and their organizations and networks;

Ensure equal access to care, treatment and health insurance coverage;

Ensure that Black women and girls and their families have the knowledge and means to prevent

HIV infection; and

Ensure that Black women and girls have access to research.

Concerned that the vast majority of HIV infections among women and girls of color stem from heterosexual contact and lack of access to health education, NMAC established the Women of Color Leadership Institute (WOCLI) to build the advocacy skills of current and future minority women leaders working on their own, at faith- and community-based organizations and/or attending historically-black colleges and universities.

A former WOCLI participant living with HIV/AIDS, Rev. Vanessa D. Sharp, says: “WOCLI helps women of color develop their skills – their political voices – so they can successfully weigh in on decisions related to HIV/AIDS taking place in every arena, whether in their homes or in Washington, D.C. More than just another training, NMAC’s WOCLI program empowers women to overcome their fears of stigma – from their family, churches and community – and speak truth to power about this epidemic.”

In addition to several WOCLI trainings, NMAC will holding a number of town hall forums in 2010 focusing on women’s rights and HIV, as well as building its [video library](#) of interviews with community leaders discussing AIDS in communities of color. The agency also has an ongoing public service announcement (PSA) campaign called "African American Women GET REAL about HIV/AIDS," which may be seen [here](#). A similar campaign, [SOY](#), launched by the Kaiser Foundation and Univision, includes several videos featuring women discussing their lives with HIV/AIDS.

Other helpful resources include:

The [official NWGHAAD site](#), which offers a listing of all events taking place nationwide, as well as e-cards and other resources;

Womenhealth.gov’s [women and HIV/AIDS section](#);

NMAC’s African American Women GET REAL about HIV/AIDS PSA collateral material, which is available in limited quantities, free-of-charge, by sending an e-mail to [communications@nmac.org](mailto:communications@nmac.org); and

NMAC’s training manual, “Using Social Marketing to Take Action Against HIV/AIDS for African American Women,” also available for free by sending an e-mail to [communications@nmac.org](mailto:communications@nmac.org).

### **About NMAC**

The National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC) builds leadership within communities of color to address challenges of HIV/AIDS. Since 1987, NMAC has advanced this mission through a variety of programs and services, including: a public policy education program, national and regional training conferences, a treatment and research program, numerous publications and a website: <http://www.nmac.org/>. Today, NMAC is an association of AIDS service organizations providing valuable information to community-based organizations, hospitals, clinics and other groups assisting individuals and families affected by the AIDS epidemic. NMAC’s advocacy efforts are funded through private funders and donors only.

For more information, call NMAC directly at (202) 483-NMAC (6622) ext. 309 or [communications@nmac.org](mailto:communications@nmac.org). Visit the agency online at <http://www.nmac.org/>, as well as on <http://www.facebook.com/> and on <http://www.wikipedia.com/>. Pictures and video clips from past NMAC

events are available from [MyPhotoAlbum.com](http://MyPhotoAlbum.com) ([nmacpics.myphotoalbum.com/](http://nmacpics.myphotoalbum.com/)), and <http://www.youtube.com/>, respectively.

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