

Summit on Black Lives

Black America's Response to the HIV/AIDS Epidemic



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Black HIV/AIDS Advocates Convene *Summit on Black Lives* in Advance of National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

WASHINGTON, DC – Today marks the 17th annual observance of the [National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day \(NBHAAD\)](#), a national HIV testing and treatment community mobilization initiative targeted at Black people in the United States and the Diaspora. In advance of NBHAAD, Black HIV/AIDS advocates from across the country traveled to Washington, DC on February 2-4, 2017, to participate in a historic meeting to strategize and chart a course to develop a Black agenda with a comprehensive path forward to end the HIV/AIDS epidemic that continues to disproportionately impact African Americans. Convened by the National Black Justice Coalition (NBJC)—in collaboration with the National Black Gay Men's Advocacy Coalition, SisterLove, the National Black Women's HIV/AIDS Network, and the Global Network of Black People Working in HIV—this meeting served as the first of a series of strategy sessions and convenings for Black leaders to create a comprehensive solution to address and eradicate the HIV/AIDS epidemic among African Americans. The *Summit on Black Lives: Black America's Response to the HIV/AIDS Epidemic* will be a yearlong endeavor to ultimately produce a robust action plan to address the current state of the epidemic and its impact on Black lives.

"As our nation and world faces political and health policy uncertainty with a new Administration and Congress, there is an urgent need for Black leadership to unite and define *Black America's Response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic*," said Sharon J. Lettman-Hicks, Executive Director and CEO of NBJC. "Black families and communities—particularly Black gay, bisexual and same gender loving men, other men who have sex with men, cisgender and transgender women, and our youth—continue to be most impacted by this devastating, yet treatable disease. Our communities cannot afford to wait for others to define the solutions that center our needs as Black people. We are convening this space to plot a path forward to end HIV/AIDS in our communities and lead to collective community empowerment across all demographics within the African American population."

[Data](#) released from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) last week makes the case for the urgency of a Black response. According to the study of the more than 12,200 Black men and women diagnosed with HIV in 2014, nearly 22 percent had progressed to AIDS by the time they were diagnosed. The study further reported that in 2013 among all Black Americans with HIV, only about 54 percent were receiving continuous medical care. Of those getting care, less than half had effectively suppressed the virus demonstrating a continued urgent need to respond to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

"James Baldwin said: 'The Future is Black' and certainly future solutions to the HIV/AIDS epidemic at home and abroad will come from strategies and tactics designed to address the specific needs of Black people in research, medical advances, support service access, and pharmaceutical access, especially gay, bisexual, and same gender loving men who continue to be most disproportionately impacted by HIV in the U.S.," said Ernest Hopkins, Chair of the National Black Gay Men Advocacy Coalition. "President Trump has the opportunity to build on the achievements of prior U.S. presidents, by promoting policies, funding, and initiatives that serve to end HIV disease as an epidemic, prevent new HIV infections, and promote the health and wellness of those living with HIV."

This first meeting of the *Summit on Black Lives* brought together a diverse group of Black advocates and professionals working directly in the HIV/AIDS public policy arena to set the initial plans for producing this comprehensive response, outline the long term and short term goals of the *Summit on Black Lives*, and confirm a series of further action steps. Summit participants heard from Congresswoman Maxine Waters (CA-43) and Congresswoman Barbara Lee (CA-13), who both have been champions of HIV/AIDS funding and programs to Black communities throughout their extensive careers in Congress. Other presenters during the weekend included Symone D. Sanders, Democratic Strategist & CNN Political Commentator; Rachelle Johnson, Vice President of the Podesta Group; and Chiquita Brooks-LaSure, Managing Director of Manatt Health. Summit participants spent their time in Washington strategizing to combat emerging public policy changes at the federal level that are likely to impact important programs and policies like the Affordable Care Act, the National HIV/AIDS Strategy, CDC's High Impact Prevention, Ryan White Care Act and the Federal Budget.

"As an organization with a mission to reduce the burden of morbidity, mortality and stigma of HIV/AIDS and other health disparities associated with gender, social, and economic inequities among Black women and girls, the National Black Women's HIV/AIDS Network stands firm with the principles of the *Summit on Black Lives* as it confirms our commitment as a collective to address the many challenges associated with and exacerbated by the HIV epidemic within the Black community and in particularly among Black women and girls," said Dr. Ivy Turnbull, Vice Chair of the National Black Women's HIV/AIDS Network. "Today, we call on our nation's leaders to commit to a comprehensive federal response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic to support our efforts as we move into a higher level of consciousness, action, and urgency to stem the tide of this disease in our

communities across the country, and save the lives of Black people.”

“At this crucial time in our nation’s discourse on the future of several critical aspects of health policy, it was an honor, privilege and imperative for SisterLove to collaboratively convene the *Summit on Black Lives*,” said Sable Nelson, Esq., Policy and Advocacy Program Manager of SisterLove. “Leaders were able to develop a framework and initial plan to constructively channel our energy and collaboratively coordinate efforts to improve the health and wellness of people of color, especially cis and trans women, both domestically and globally. Many of the policy issues discussed at the *Summit on Black Lives* are addressed in SisterLove’s [2017 Policy Report: Intersections at the Grassroots](#).”

The first meeting of the *Summit on Black Lives* convened Black HIV/AIDS public policy experts from more than 40 organizations working to end HIV/AIDS in our nation and world. In addition to the five convening organizations, leadership from the following Black-centered organizations also contributed to the policy-focused meeting of the *Summit on Black Lives*: Black AIDS Institute; Black Women’s Health Imperative; National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS; NAESM; Young Black Gay Men’s Leadership Initiative (YBGLI); Center for Black Equity; TruEvolution; Us Helping Us, People into Living; Thrive SS; Community Education Group (CEG); and Holistic Empowerment Institute.

“It is very important for African American leaders to come together and move beyond our individual silos to identify the intersectionality of our collective needs,” said Marsha A Martin, Director/Coordinator, Global Network of Black People working in HIV (GNBPH). “By convening our HIV/AIDS policy leadership, NBJC is helping to curate our movement toward solidarity.”

Future convenings of the *Summit on Black Lives* in 2017 will include Black leaders and representatives of national and grassroots advocacy efforts that center HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention. The convenings will intentionally bring together the broader African American civil rights community, millennials, Black social and civic organizations, and health care advocates focused on Black lives. In the coming weeks, the five convening Black organizations, along with other diverse organizations committed to centering Black people and families in the fight to end HIV/AIDS, will be releasing an official statement that will outline the overall mission, long and short term goals of advocacy efforts, and next steps for action for the *Summit on Black Lives*.

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The National Black Justice Coalition (NBJC) is a civil rights organization dedicated to the empowerment of Black lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people, including people living with HIV/AIDS. NBJC’s mission is to end racism, homophobia, and LGBTQ bias and stigma.