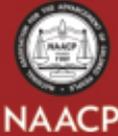




THE BLACK CHURCH & HIV THE SOCIAL JUSTICE IMPERATIVE



Faith Leaders Across the U.S. Address HIV/AIDS from The Pulpit

We, as faith leaders, can make a difference in the lives of our congregates and community by using available resources and the Word of God to raise awareness about health injustices and ways to stop the HIV epidemic in Black America. One of the most important ways we can educate our Church is from the pulpit.

Below are testimonials from faith leaders across the country who have brought the conversation of HIV/AIDS to their congregations and **raised awareness** of the epidemic.

Awareness and Education

Reverend Ronald Bishop

Chicago, Illinois

"I have family members who have HIV/AIDS. I was very ignorant, and I had heard so many different things about HIV/AIDS. When I entered a room [with them], I was scared to death to breath the same air they were breathing. I thought I might [contract it]. Education is what allowed me to move forward and to understand."

Reverend Dr. Al Sampson

Chicago, Illinois

"There are four types of Churches. The Entertainment Church does a lot of celebrating on Sunday but doesn't provide any transformation Tuesday through Saturday. The Containment Church is where the educated gather but do not reach out to the community. The Prosperity Church is where people ride in the community and after Church, they ride back out without helping anyone. What we need for liberation is what I call a Martin Luther King Church. When Dr. King was alive, he took the Church out of the Church and into the community. When Dr. King got assassinated, the Church left the community and came back to Church. Our problem is, we're not at the liberation point where we come out[side] the Church and into the community. It's all in disarray."

Reverend Elaine Flake

New York, New York

"I think that it is irresponsible for us to just say 'I'm not going to do it because of funds.' It really doesn't require a whole lot of resources because the information is certainly there, and if you have any health care professionals or those who are knowledgeable, they can facilitate it. I think it [HIV] should definitely be addressed."

Reverend John Johnson

Los Angeles, California

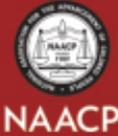
"I know within my community of faith; our Bishops have publicly tested for AIDS and encouraged our congregations to lift up the importance of testing through partnerships with some other agencies here in the Los Angeles area. So, those kinds of initiatives have taken place in some congregations. We know that we are not doing enough, but I think we also need to be aware of the strides that have been made and celebrate and build on them."

Reverend Rivers

South Carolina



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"I think that part of the problem is that we don't have enough women leading our ministries. Oftentimes, male leaders, counsel boys to use protection, don't get [someone] pregnant, and that's just straight up. You tell boys, 'don't make them pregnant', and you think that's abstinence? You've gone past abstinence, gone past faithfulness, straight to what? To safe sex for the boys? The girls are supposed to figure it out themselves?"

Reverend Cecelia Williams Bryant

Chicago, Illinois

"We have to resist the internalized rage, fear, and self-rejection that leads us to neglect the Black body. We need a theology of wellness so that we can address the disregard for Black bodies that is manifested in the lack of health screenings and the prevalence of obesity, body shame, hair hatred, and yes, HIV in our community."

Reverend Charles McWells

Los Angeles, California

"Martin Luther King said, "There comes a time where silence is betrayal" ... for too long, the Black Church has been silent about HIV/AIDS ... that is unforgiveable, and it has to change. We have a moral, ... ethical, and spiritual obligation to speak out, to support, and to embrace people who are at risk for, and who are living with this disease."

New Orleans Faith Leader

"We have people on Facebook that are crying out for help, that are crying out, 'I have HIV/AIDS.' My Church has a Facebook page. I post questions on it, and people respond. Well, everybody's on the internet. They look for help in the wrong places. Jesus went out, and he went to others. We have to use that same avenue to reach other people. We can't sit here in Church. Go to where they are and help them there. Then watch them come to you. That's what we've been doing. So, I feel that us Church leaders, pastors, commissioners, researchers, you all need to get on Facebook or Twitter and talk."

Los Angeles Faith Leader

"We found ways to aid also through our drama ministry. We do an annual benefit with music where we use it as a fundraiser. We raise money and we give it to a facility in South Central that provides housing for persons living with HIV."

Ft. Lauderdale Faith Leader

"I volunteer with the NAACP, and I've been doing this for years in schools and Churches...When I got to St. Louis County [and attended] this big board meeting, I want you to know [that] the Black community, led by the ministers, predominately did not support the efforts of the health department. When I got up to speak, I said, 'let me tell you one thing. These numbers tell me that if you don't get on board, you are about to lose everybody in this town to this disease. Now do you want that on your hands?' And I'm asking, 'how many of you would raise your hand' (this is in a school board meeting). I'm talking to the ministers and to the Black community, 'raise your hand if you want death on your hands. Now if that's what you want, then put your hand up. But if you don't want it on your hands, then this school board and this health department should take your children, because it's not their children, it's your children, and try to save them...' I know it's going to take a lot of work on our parts in order to get the message across."

Atlanta Faith Leader

"I'm comfortable with talking about HIV. I usually bring in a health professional. I get the feeling that they will open up to a health professional a little more freely than they will to the one who is standing before them every Sunday."