

God's House International, Inc.

"Bridging medical, cultural, social and economical gaps at home and abroad."

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Statement from the Founder of God's House International

World AIDS Day 2008

Another year, another logo, another commemoration. It has been 28 years since the onset of this pandemic that we now know as HIV/AIDS and we act as if it is only yesterday that we have discovered it. According to UNAIDS, we have more than 33 million people in the world living with HIV/AIDS More than 2.5 million dying each year from the same and 2.1 million still acquiring this disease. Two-thirds of those impacted live on the continent of Africa and they have yet to receive adequate support in their efforts to control and eradicate this pandemic. Here in the United States, with more than one million people infected, the black population bore 49% of the 35,314 newly acquired infections in 2006. This disease which is 100% preventable continues to flourish even in the advent of multiple behavior and biomedical interventions such as HIV/AIDS counseling and testing, HAART, Treatment etc; and billions of dollars being put into Faith Based, Community Based and governmental initiatives.

I believe that it is time for us to CHANGE our invention. It has long been said: "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." It is time we placed our focus of prevention, coupled with treatment and behavior modification. How do we do this? At the recent World AIDS conference in Mexico City, a representative from UNAIDS reported that there were very few agencies applying for funding that included condoms as a line item. We already know that much of the monies for these agencies goes for salaries, facilities and supplies is usually one of the last item. We must insure that there is adequate money allocated for prevention. This includes ongoing outreach education in all areas and all walks of life. In the developing world, our focus should be on ensuring that there are jobs, mentoring programs, HIV/AIDS outreach education and yes, treatment facilities.

With Africa bearing the burden of this malady by more than 75% it is crucial that we are proactive in helping those countries such as South Africa which has a 35% incidence of HIV focus more closely on increased prevention efforts. How can you tell someone not to have sex, use a condom when you do and then not ensure that they have the accessibility of these tools? Work training programs are important on the continent because when young people have nothing to do, they experiment with sex. If they do not have the appropriate tools then they will acquire the disease. My experiences have shown me that the young people on the continent, particularly Sierra Leone where I have done much outreach, are ready and willing to use the condom. Accessibility to Male and Female condom is a must. Here, in the United States, I find many of my female colleagues, in the healthcare arena know nothing about the female condom. Most of them have never seen one. It is interesting to watch the interactions of these women as I show them the Female Condom. I impress upon them the fact that this is a tool you can control. While there is some reluctance, many of them are happy to know that this intervention is available for them.

Maximizing new outreach approaches, rethinking the old way of doing things and advocacy for more prevention efforts is necessary in order for use to combat this catastrophic illness. It is not about individualizing this pandemic by city, state or country. Our eyes should be looking at how we can intervene as a nation. The stronger vessels have got to pull the weaker vessels up; bare their burdens.

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Our President elect Barak (Blessing) Obama used the motto Yes, We Can. I say Yes We Can Can. America is the hope of the world. We must help our ailing populations to help themselves. We have many resources to fight HIV/AIDS yet we, too, have failed in our prevention efforts. It is time for a CHANGE. As a people who are indivisible, who want liberty and justice for all, we can make that change.

Do not let next World AIDS Day come to pass without ensuring that you have done your best to decrease the incidence. If you don't know, educate yourself. If you have the information about risks put it into action in your life and tell at least one person you know. If you are HIV positive, do not have unprotected sexually intercourse, share needles, donate blood; tell your partners or those who would be impacted...be responsible. As clinicians, we must talk to and educate our patients. There are options for people who are serodiscordant. Be open discuss them with all parties involved.

In Africa, we say, it takes a village to raise a child. This is true. It takes the entire community to be conscientious and empowered to rid itself of this disease. Martin Luther King said, "I have a dream.....". I, too, have a dream that one day the people of this nation and Africa will be rid of this monstrous disease. HIV is 100% preventable. HIV is 100% preventable. HIV is 100% preventable. When are you going to do your part to put PREVENTION into HIV?

Minister Yvonne Washington-Turay MSN,FNP-BC

President/Founder

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"Impacting The World One Country at a Time"