

LIFE ABUNDANTLY

"Tuskegee: Apology is not atonement"

By Minister Abdul Alim Muhammad, M.D.
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The hallmark of Tuskegee was that medical scientists in the employ of the U.S. Public Health Service and associated with the Tuskegee Institute, were involved in efforts to study how a sexually transmitted disease, i.e., syphilis, would spread among an unsuspecting population.

Once we examine AIDS policy in this light, the strains of Tuskegee ring loud and clear. Although we are constantly being bombarded by "statistical information" concerning HIV, the single most important fact is almost never given to any of us as individuals or communities — our HIV status.

The epidemic is literally being spread from infected people who do not know that they are infected to uninfected people who are also unaware of their HIV status... sound like Tuskegee?

When hopeful treatment news emerges out of Kenya and other places, this information is kept secret - just as penicillin, a nearly perfect treatment for syphilis, was not made known to Tuskegee's subject population.

Could it be that Tuskegee was just the dry run for what is going on now? We would like to

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think that if the experimental subjects in Tuskegee, Ala. had been made aware of what was going on in the middle of the experiment, they would have risen up in outrage.

What we should insist on today, however, is a full disclosure of the facts behind the HIV global pandemic.

We know that AIDS has supplanted homicide as the leading cause of death among young black males in certain urban areas, especially along the East Coast. It also has become the leading cause of death among young black women.

We should also note that more than 60 percent of those infected in the United States are either black or Hispanic, though they constitute only 20 percent of the general population.

A black woman is 13 times more likely to be HIV infected than her white counterpart and that more than 90 percent of the children born with congenital HIV are black children.

Globally, of the more than two thirds of the infections that have occurred in the world, according to the World Health Organization

(WHO), almost 30 million have occurred in sub-Saharan Africa.

A recent French-sponsored study revealed that in the former Zaire, more than 50 percent of the soldiers tested positive for HIV.

On the African continent, life expectancy after diagnosis is less than two years. Further, it is estimated that early in the 21st century there may be as many as 12 million cases of HIV infection in South Africa alone.

What does this say about the future of sub-Saharan Africa?

Let us note that all this is happening at the same time that President Clinton is offering his initiative to bring about a new day in African-American/white relations.

What is needed are public hearings on AIDS, perhaps convened by the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC).

If we are concerned that the U.S. government is waging chemical warfare against the black community, via crack-cocaine/George Bush/CIA, then why not complete the job and take a look at HIV/Ebola biological warfare too?

Why not write a letter to your congressional representative demanding such hearings take place immediately?

Man sentenced to 3 months in Cosby extortion

Special to Sentinel-Voice

NEW YORK — A man convicted for a minor role in the attempt to extort \$40 million from comedian Bill Cosby was sentenced Wednesday to three months in prison.

U.S. District Judge Barbara Jones also ordered an additional three months of home confinement for Boris Sabas, 42, of Los Angeles, who was acquitted of extortion but found guilty of conspiracy and crossing state lines in the plot.

Autumn Jackson, 23, who claimed to be Cosby illegitimate daughter, was sentenced last week to 26 months in prison. Jackson apologized for her role in the extortion case but said she still believed that Cosby was her father.

Cosby admitted to having an affair with Jackson's mother during the 1970s.

"Mr. Sabas' participation was extremely limited, a minimal role," the judge said as she departed from federal guidelines that call for a sentence of more than three years.

Sabas apologized before sentence was pronounced.

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