

# Blacks bear huge brunt of AIDS scourge

Only 13 percent of the population, Black people account for more than 50 percent of new HIV cases

**Special to Sentinel-Voice**  
ATLANTA - More than 25 years into the AIDS epidemic, HIV continues to soar in the Black community, accounting for nearly half of the newly diagnosed infections in the United States in a recent yearly assessment by the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

At the same time, health officials say, the African-American community has been slow to acknowledge the problem, prompting the CDC and grassroots organizations to mark a yearly observance to bring attention to the epidemic.

Wednesday was National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, a national effort designed to mobilize Blacks to get tested, educated and treated for the disease. Well-known African-Americans — including Tony Dungy, head coach of the Super Bowl champion Indianapolis Colts; entertainer Patti LaBelle; Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill.; and former

Secretary of State Colin Powell — have joined the campaign by taping public-service announcements to run on radio and television.

Of the roughly 1 million people estimated to be living with HIV in the United States, 47 percent are African-American, according to CDC statistics for 2005, the most recent year for which numbers are available. Though Blacks represent only about 13 percent of the U.S. population, 56 percent of the newly diagnosed cases in 2005 were African-Americans.

"The ability to manage this terrible disease has improved, and more people are living healthier and longer lives, but African-Americans have been diagnosed late and are not availing themselves to treatment," said Dr. Kevin Fenton, director of the CDC's National Center for HIV, STD and TB Prevention. "The stigma within the community has prevented people from getting tested

and accessing services needed to help manage infections."

African-American women are disproportionately affected, and Black men who have sex with men have a much higher rate of infection than men of other backgrounds who have sex with men, Fenton said.

"HIV is closely associated with socioeconomic disparity in our country. Poverty, poor access to services and lack of knowledge all factor into this," said Fenton. "Stigma, homophobia and lack of open conversation in the Black community have further compounded the problem."

Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day is an important part of a comprehensive awareness program to stop the spread of the disease, according to supporters, and it helps to get the message out.

"Black people are going to have to take responsibility for themselves in this epidemic," said Debra Fraser-Howze, president of the National Black Leadership

Commission on AIDS. "We have to make some serious decisions, a decision to first talk about the epidemic and a decision to own it. It is ours, with 56 percent of all new infections."

## Healthcare

*(Continued from Page 2)*  
coverage for all Americans and boosting the value of every U.S. dollar spent on healthcare. The business and union leaders' coalition, dubbed "Better Health Care Together," pledged to convene a national summit by the end of May to recruit others from the private sector, labor, government and non-profits.

In response to a reporter's question, Scott said Wal-Mart is not committed to spending more on healthcare or making any immediate promises to provide health coverage to more workers.

The Bentonville, Ark.-based company, which employs more than 1.3 million

U.S. workers, has made several changes to its healthcare policy since 2005, including lowering premiums and shortening eligibility periods. The business executives did say that any universal coverage in the U.S. must be flexible enough to give consumers choices about their coverage, unlike plans in some foreign nations.

Stern said the SEIU would continue to fund its Wal-Mart Watch campaign, which as recently as last month said Wal-Mart's health plans were a raw deal for employees. Stern said he expects to be criticized for teaming up with Wal-Mart, but that he felt it was in the best interest of workers who lack coverage, and their

families. Stern said he and Scott first met face-to-face to discuss the partnership "around the holidays."

Joseph T. Hansen, president of the United Food and Commercial Workers union, was critical of other union leaders for teaming up with Wal-Mart.

"It's not appropriate to take the stage with a company that refuses to remedy its mistreatment of workers," Hansen said in a prepared statement. The union he represents funds the WakeUpWalMart campaign, which challenged the company to immediately provide health care to all of its uninsured employees and their families.

## Funding

*(Continued from Page 1)*

According to the bill, the defense spending continues while:

—"Federal spending on elementary and secondary education has fallen to less than 10 percent of the proposed 2007 outlay for the Department of Defense.

—Schools throughout the nation are eliminating programs in music, foreign language, and physical education;

—Sixty-one million individuals in the United States lack health insurance during some period of any given year, and half that number of individuals (more than 10 million of whom are children) lack such insurance for the entire year.

—The Government Accountability Office estimates that [a third] of the nation's public schools, serving 14 million children, need extensive repair or need to have their entire physical plants replaced. Eighty-five percent of the nation's public schools, 73,000 facilities serving 40 million children, need some repair work, costing more than \$120 billion, repairs that could have been paid for nearly five times with the money America has spent on the war.

In addition, the Washington-D.C.-based Center on

Budget and Policy Priorities reports that the U.S. has a budget of \$5.1 billion dollars for the Children's Health Insurance Program that covers less than half of the eligible children. Moreover, more than 100,000 children a year lose the coverage because the funding is frozen due to budgetary constraints.

If it were not for war spending at the rate of \$100 billion a year, the U.S. could fully fund Child Health Insurance at least 10 times, according to CHI cost estimates by the Georgetown University Center for Children and Families, which estimates the cost of fully funding CHI at a total of \$50 billion over the next five years.

"Everybody should worry about the depletion of our resources, about the rebuilding of Iraq and about the investments abroad when their children here at home are going lacking with educational supplies, when their family incomes are being lessened because job losses are taking place in this country," said House Majority Leader Clyde Clyburn.

But what will mobilize citizens to act?

Howard University Political Science Chair Lorenzo Morris said, "People will not be mobilized until someone says, 'You can't pay for this

very good idea'. And so, to some extent, issues like national health care or major innovations in educational need to be identified as policy options in order to really mobilize people," said Morris.

"The cost issue will help [the Democrats], but it may not be dramatic because the alternative expenditures are not always evident."

Congresswoman Lee's bill, H. R. 489, aims "To reallocate funds toward sensible priorities such as improved children's education, increased children's access to health care, expanded job training, and increased energy efficiency and conservation through a reduction of wasteful defense spending."

The bill, which she expects to introduce late this month or early March, is just one response to what is being increasingly criticized as wasteful spending by the Bush Administration.

"The president is out of touch," Congressional Black Caucus Chair Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick (D-Mich.) said in an interview. "It's social justice that people want, it's access to capital, it's really the American way of life that all of us want and deserve. Americans have got to demand it and Congress has got to act."

Kilpatrick, Lee and other Congressional Black Caucus members have joined Democratic leaders — and even some top Republicans — in opposing the president's defense spending plan.

"We ought to really be concerned any time you have just ordinary, hard-working people finding it harder and harder to make a living and prepare for their family's future. And that's what this war is doing to us," said House Majority Leader James E. Clyburn (D-S.C.) in an interview.

"It's sapping our resources, it's sapping our energy in this country. And I would hope that we get out of this thing before it begins

to sap our aspirations as well."

The economic impact of the war not only affects the poor, but the economy of the nation as a whole, says Bill Spriggs, chair of the Howard University Economics Department.

"People have to guess about the future, so their attitudes about the future will affect their spending," said Spriggs. "So, if people think that housing prices will moderate or fall, and continue to think that their taxes down the road will have to go up based on war, then you can see people saying that, 'When I get extra money, I'd better not spend it. I'd better reduce my debt. If consump-

tion pulls back and the rate of increase slows because enough people get more pessimistic, then the rate of the economy slows."

In addition to money, the war in Iraq has cost 3,000 American military lives since 2003.

African-Americans, who live in areas with the poorest schools and whose unemployment rates are consistently double the national average, are being hit the hardest, says Lee.

"African-Americans must march, call, email, have meetings with their members of Congress and tell them to stop supporting this huge military build-up," Lee stated.



Teaching the Art of Beauty

- Pre-Registering for 2006 Classes
- Bi-Lingual (Spanish) Courses
- Excellent Placement Record - 92% Success Rate
- Financial Aid Available for Those Who Qualify
- Prepare for the Nevada State Exam

902 W. Owens | Las Vegas, NV 89106  
702-636-8686 | www.expertisebeauty.com

“After graduating from the Expertise Cosmetology Institute, I immediately landed the perfect opportunity at Hot Headz Salon... Money's great and my schedule is MY SCHEDULE. Thanks, Expertise”

—Ms. Kris, Las Vegas Class of 2002