Look Who's Organizing to End Black HIV Now [VIDEO]

Southern nonprofit SBPAN launches a new awareness campaign and announces a network advisory council.

February 11, 2019 By Trent Straube

Efforts to battle HIV among Black communities in the South got an extra boost this week with the launch of the awareness campaign "Organizing to End Black HIV Now." (You can watch a video promoting the campaign above.)

What's more, the nonprofit spearheading the campaign—the Southern Black Policy & Advocacy Network (SBPAN)—has convened a network of leaders to help organize and strategize a plan to fight the epidemic in the region. That group is called the Southern Black HIV/AIDS Network, and the 2019 members of the network's advisory board have just been named.

According to the SBPAN website, members of the network advisory board include:

- Aquarius Gilmer, MS, Southern AIDS Coalition, Alabama
- Bambi Gaddist, PhD, South Carolina HIV Council, South Carolina
- Devin Barrington-Ward, Black Futurists Group, Georgia
- Carmarion Anderson, Black Transwomen, Inc., Texas
- Linda Dixon Rigsby, Esq., Mississippi Center for Justice, Mississippi
- Linda Goler Blount, MPH, Black Women's Health Imperative, Washington, DC

- Lisa Diane White, Sister Love, Inc. Georgia
- June Gibson, PhD, My Brother’s Keeper, Mississippi
- Mark Johnson, Brotherhood, Inc., Louisiana
- Sabrina Taylor, Southern Black Policy & Advocacy Network
- Tonia Poteat, PhD, MPH, The University of North Carolina School of Medicine, North Carolina
- Venita Ray, Esq., Positive Women’s Network–USA, Texas
- Raniyah Copeland, MPH, The Black AIDS Institute, National
- Stephen Hicks, MPH, Virginia
- Venton Hill-Jones, MSHCAD, Southern Black Policy & Advocacy Network

As SBPAN’s background on the network explains, “The U.S. South continues to be the epicenter for the domestic HIV/AIDS epidemic. Over half (54 percent) of all new HIV diagnoses occur in the South despite the region representing only 38 percent of the total U.S. population. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Black communities account for a higher proportion of new HIV diagnoses, those living with HIV, and those who have ever received an AIDS diagnosis, compared to other races/ethnicities. In 2016, African Americans accounted for 43 percent of HIV diagnoses, though they comprise 13 percent of the U.S. population.”

Advocates in the campaign. Watch the video at the top of this page.YouTube/Southern Black Policy and Advocacy Network

Information about the Organizing to End Black HIV Now campaign is also available on SBPAN.org. As you can see in the video above, advocates spell out the need for movement created by and for Black people in the South.

“In the South, we have tremendous disparity, particularly [among] transgender women,” says Carmarion D. Anderson, of Black Transwomen Inc., in Texas. Evelyn Ullah of Unique Solutionz in Florida, says, “Stigma is the driving force behind the epidemic. Stigma and discrimination.”

“There’s not going to be anybody who comes and saves us,” adds Leisha McKinley-Beach, an HIV prevention consultant from Georgia. “It’s going to be you all [the Black community in the South] that end this epidemic and create the plan.”

To learn more about SBPAN, which launched just last year, read the POZ Q&A with its chief executive officer Venton Hill-Jones.

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