

HIV/AIDS talks highlight annual NAACP Religious Summit

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Faith leaders commit to addressing HIV/AIDS in the black community

(Atlanta, GA) – The NAACP hosted its 14th annual National Religious Leaders Summit in Atlanta recently to help move the faith community back to its long-held leadership role in matters of social justice. Faith leaders committed to working with the NAACP to address the HIV/AIDS crisis and other important issues.

“The NAACP is committed to strengthening our historical connection with the faith community at this crucial moment in our nation’s history,” stated NAACP Chairman Roslyn M. Brock. “We are excited to continue our partnership in the coming year.”

During the three-day meeting, held December 10 to 12, faith and lay leaders created a post-election political agenda for communities of faith, focused on protecting voting rights and advancing strategies for job creation in the African American community. NAACP Board of Directors Chairman Roslyn M. Brock helmed a dialogue session with mainline protestant denominations to discuss the NAACP’s Five Strategic “Game Changer” areas.

A significant outcome of the dialogue was a national commitment from faith leaders to address HIV/AIDS in the black community, in response to the NAACP’s report *The Black Church and HIV: The Social Justice Imperative*. The leaders agreed to work with the NAACP to expand HIV testing opportunities and offer faith-based training and prevention education in churches, seminaries, historically black colleges and universities and organizational national conventions.

The Summit featured a national training session on HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention that was attended by approximately 100 pastors, faith leaders and members of local NAACP units and state conferences. Representatives attended from cities with some of the highest rates of HIV prevalence.

“The commitment to engage in this important work from the highest offices of these denominations solidified the Black Church’s overall concern and commitment to reverse the HIV/AIDS epidemic,” said Brock.

Faith leaders also paid tribute to a leader of their own. A Master Preacher Award was bestowed

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upon Rev. Joseph Lowery for lifetime achievement in civil and human rights advocacy.

“Rev. Lowery represents a lifetime of preaching and living the gospel of justice and fairness,” stated Rev. Nelson Rivers III, Vice President of Stakeholder relations with the NAACP. “It was a powerful moment for all the generations present to see a civil rights icon like Dr. Lowery, as well as Dr. C.T. Vivian, another legend who presented him the award.”

The black churches represented at the meeting included AME Zion, Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME), Black Methodist for Church Renewal (BMCR), National Baptist Convention-USA, National Baptist Convention of America, Progressive National Baptist and Primitive National Baptist.