

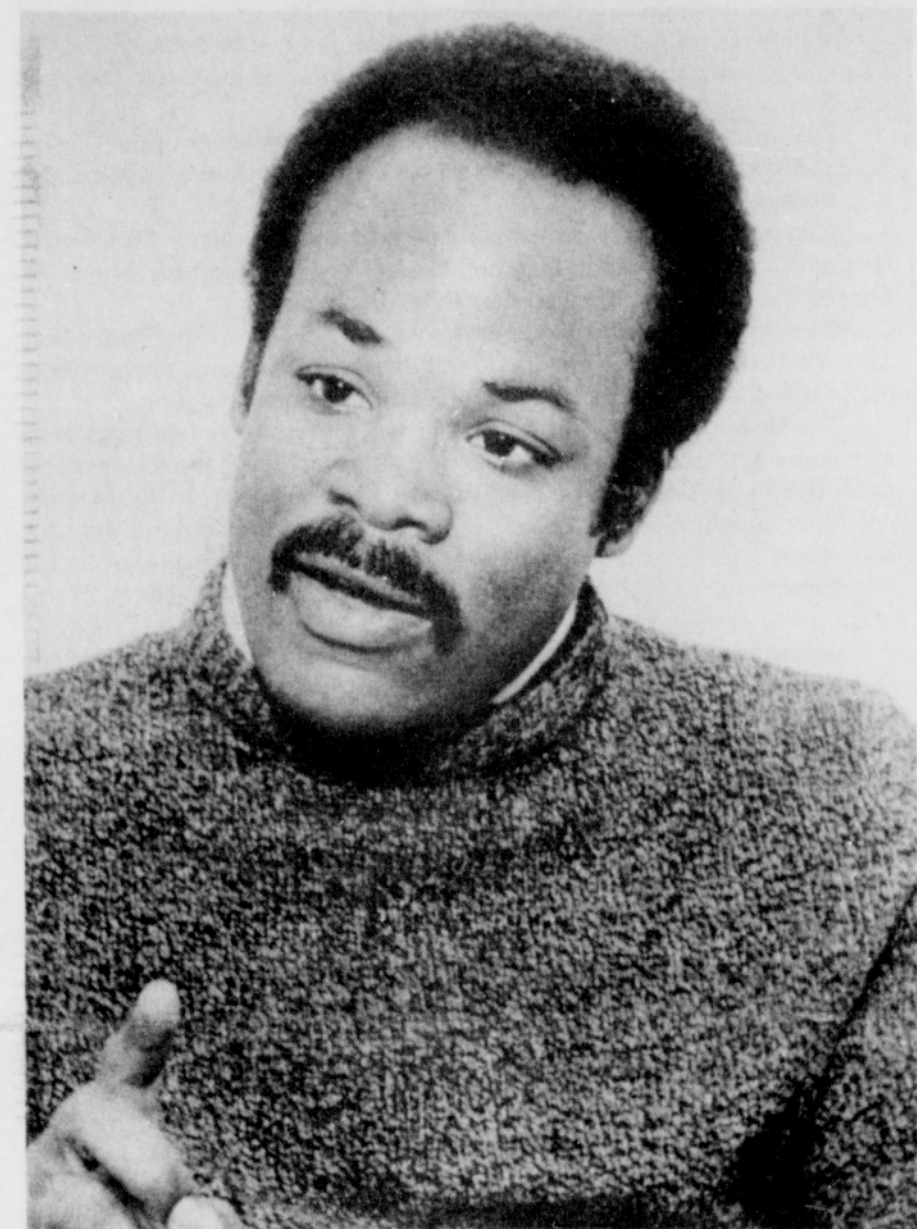
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Black Churches Challenged to Provide AIDS Education



Gil Gerald—"AIDS does not discriminate, it's a human disease."
Photo by Richard J. Brown



Amani Jabari (standing) and Joe Hooker sang "That's What Friends Are For" during the opening ceremony of the 50 hour A.I.D.S. vigil. The 2nd annual A.I.D.S. Vigil was held from Friday, Sept. 11 thru Sunday, Sept. 13 at Metropolitan Community Church.

Photo by Richard J. Brown

by Avel Gordly

A "50-hour AIDS vigil", with the theme "A Time to Heal", was held September 11-13 at the Metropolitan Community Church in Portland. The second annual event was developed to raise community awareness about AIDS, education resources, and to foster more compassion and empathy for AIDS victims.

Gil Gerald, Director of Minority Affairs for the National AIDS Network, was the keynote speaker for the vigil. In an interview, he commented that the National AIDS Network based in Washington, D.C., is a 2-year old organization representing 300 community based groups. A primary concern of the organization and the focus of Gerald's work is developing education programs for Black and Latino communities. According to Gerald, some of the best sources of information for the Black community have been developed through "model" programs such as the Minority AIDS Project in Los Angeles, Blacks Educating Blacks About Sexual Health Issues in Philadelphia, and the Hispanic AIDS Program in New York.

Gerald pointed out that getting AIDS prevention information to Black communities is critical because although Blacks make up 12% of the population, they are 25% of the people with AIDS. Approximately 10,000 Blacks nationwide are known to have AIDS.

Gerald's message is basically one of hope and challenge. Growing numbers of Black churches are beginning to deal responsively to this health crisis. Gerald cited the example of Rev. Joseph Lowery, his wife and the Atlanta based Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), which had the first major conference on AIDS and the Black community in the spring of 1986. Mrs. Lowery, according to Gerald, has been a driving force behind the Atlanta education effort. Black churches were initially reluctant to tackle the AIDS issue, but that is changing considerably. They are focusing on the need for education to bring about prevention of this "disease which knows no geo-

graphic, racial, social or class boundaries", and seem to be more concerned with "the principles of compassion, civil rights and leaving judgment to a higher authority" says Gerald.

Gerald believes that in addition to what churches can do, the best way to impact Black communities with AIDS Prevention information is to develop programs "more akin to door-to-door voter registration... that we... need to put volunteers on the street and provide them with stipends." He further stated that, "Some of the people who need information don't have the literacy level to understand wordy brochures", so that what is needed is verbal communication at the street and peer level. Reformed intravenous drug users and reformed prostitutes could be extremely helpful at this grassroots level and this approach has been tried successfully in Newark, Baltimore, Washington, D.C. and San Francisco.

Gerald, who travels extensively around the United States, also authored the Gay/Lesbian Issue Papers for the Jesse Jackson '84 presidential campaign and recently attended the Minority AIDS Conference sponsored by the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta. His organization was instrumental in developing outreach for the conference. Black health professionals attending the conference made it very clear that resources to fight the disease are desperately needed in Black communities. The argument that there would be an equitable distribution of available resources to Black and Latino communities, which are most heavily impacted by the disease. Asked to comment on the reality of AIDS for the Black community, Gerald said, "AIDS does not discriminate, it's a human disease".

Gerald was invited to Portland by Amani Jabari of People of Color United Against AIDS, a local coalition recently formed to develop an AIDS education program especially for communities of color.

"Children Helping Children" Program To Collect Clothing for Needy Kids

School-age children's clothing is especially needed in the Portland-Vancouver area for this year's "Children Helping Children" clothing drive. The annual event will be held from September 1 through October 31.

Children can directly help children less fortunate than themselves through the drive.

"Children Helping Children" is a simple idea, according to its sponsors. Kids (or parents) can bring outgrown or unneeded clothing to any of nine child care centers operated by Children's World, or to KGW Television, two of the sponsors. There will be clothing collection barrels inside the entrance at each location.

Once the barrels are filled, the clothing will be collected by Low Income Families Emergency (LIFE), a human service agency which operates clothing and food banks and other programs serving families. LIFE will sort and display the clothing and provide it free for those in need.

Charles Carter, Director of LIFE, said that last year's drive provided clean, wearable, used clothing for 375 children of more than 100 families. "All of last year's donations were immediately picked up, so this year we hope to more than double the number of children clothed," Carter said. "We need clothing for kids through high school age."

Clothing donations are tax deductible in the amount of the value of the clothing.

Following are locations where clean and wearable clothing may be dropped off during business hours: Children's World locations: Beaverton: 18425 N.W. Walker Road, or 4845 S.W. Murray Blvd., or 12360 S.W. Pioneer Lane; Gresham: 3200 N.E. Hogan; Hillsboro: 1771 S.E. Minter Bridge Rd.; Rockwood: 840 N.E. 181st St. E.; Sunnyside: 10501 S.E. Sunnyside; Vancouver: 622 S.E. 117th Ave., or 10021 N.E. Hazel Dell Ave. KGW-TV location: Portland, 1501 S.W. Jefferson.

For information about the program or donation locations, call (503) 626-6266.



Dr. Dorothy L. Alexander

Photo by Richard J. Brown

Alexander Accepts New Position at Grambling State University

Dr. Dorothy L. Alexander, Chair, Oregon Commission on Black Affairs, has accepted a faculty position at Grambling State University, Grambling, Louisiana. Dr. Alexander will head the Department of Developmental Education in the College of Education, beginning this fall.

For the past seven years, Dr. Alexander has been employed as a Research Associate at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory in Portland. She received the Ph.D. in Education Research and Evaluation from the Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio; M.S. in Guidance and Counseling from Portland State University, Portland, Oregon; M. Librarianship from the University of Washington, Seattle, Washington; B.S. Biology from Tougaloo College, Tougaloo, Mississippi.

In addition to her work with the Commission, Dr. Alexander has been very active in her church, Mallory Avenue Christian Church, where she is an elder and trustee. She loves Oregon and plans to return for her retirement years.



Reggae star Peter Tosh, 42, was killed in his Kingston, Jamaica, home by gunmen during an attempted robbery. Another guest in his home was also killed and five others were wounded. Tosh, a former member of the Wailers, along with Bob Marley and Neville Livingstone were the fathers of Ragga music.

Photo by Richard J. Brown