



MWPHA Health Disparities Committee and DC FIGHTS BACK Report on the March and SpeakOUT on HIV and AIDS

November 3, 2007

Summary - March

About 150 people mobilized at the corner of Malcolm X and MLK Avenues, SE to raise awareness of HIV and AIDS, and to engage the community in fighting for solutions to the social problems causing HIV. Marching in multi-racial solidarity were members of MWPHA, APHA, and DCFB, students from Howard, Georgetown, and GWU; members of the Regional Addiction Prevention, Inc. (RAP), neighborhood residents, local health professionals, and activists.

Chanting “Treat It (drug addiction) to Defeat It!,” “Save Lives, Free the Condoms,” “What do we do when we’re under attack? Stand up, Fight Back!,” “Housing is the name of the game, Stadiums – Shame Shame Shame!,” the marchers brought people out of their homes as passersby honked their horns and gave us thumbs up. Several joined the march to the Library.

Outside the Library, the rally continued as speakers told their stories of living with HIV and their ideas for fighting it – from demanding more prevention and treatment to eradicating the social problems of profit, racism, and poverty that create the epidemic. As one speaker reminded us, “HIV doesn’t discriminate, but society does!”

SpeakOUT

People moved inside for refreshments and condom art pins. Everyone stayed for the SpeakOUT as Naomi Long and Geno Dunnington led the group in an exercise highlighting our similarities: Stand up if you ever had trouble getting health insurance – or good health insurance. Stand up if you have HIV or know someone who does. Stand up if you were ever fired or knew someone who was. We then moved into 4 small groups to discuss actions around the following issues.

Jobs

Why?

- ◆ Employment with good pay and benefits helps people stay healthy and make a contribution
- ◆ Good jobs can boost self esteem and independence
- ◆ Gainful employment reduces the risk of crime, drug use and sales, and hopelessness that there’s no future

Demands

- ◆ Well paid jobs with justice and a career path – end discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, or arrest record



- ◆ A percentage of jobs set aside for DC residents with more jobs (such as construction) for ex-offenders, people in recovery
- ◆ More “green jobs”
- ◆ Workforce training funded by the contractors and employers to make it relevant
- ◆ Jobs to expand services and the city infrastructure, such as transportation, Metro
- ◆ Mentors and tutors – ‘city liaisons’ - to help people to transition to work

Activities

- ◆ Attend hearing on poverty in December (announced by Mr. Barry)
- ◆ Link jobs to affordable housing, summer youth employment and recovery

Housing

Why?

- ◆ Stable housing prevents HIV and helps people take better care of themselves
- ◆ No TBRA providers
- ◆ Unsuccessful transitional housing with unruly access process – long wait for HOPWA
- ◆ Inadequate, uneducated workers
- ◆ Unused buildings

Demands

- ◆ Home sharing program
- ◆ Link HIV, Substance Abuse, Mental Health programs
- ◆ Habitat for Humanity buildings

Activities

- ◆ Research number of affordable housing units needed to plan our demands
- ◆ Housing Committee meets November 17th at noon at the Library
- ◆ HUD Town Hall Meeting (soon)
- ◆ See www.nahc.org for facts, information, and membership

Youth

Why?

- ◆ High rates of HIV among young people
- ◆ No standard, science based health education in the public schools
- ◆ Many students have no HIV education
- ◆ Lack of summer jobs and other youth programs – leads to unsafe conditions

Demands

- ◆ Comprehensive sexuality education for all students
- ◆ End federal support of abstinence only programs
- ◆ Youth programs to reinforce self-worth and respect



- ◆ More free HIV testing for young people and mental health screening
- ◆ Summer jobs program with *meaningful* work with *marketable skills* in safe places (rec centers) that help beautify the community

Activities

- ◆ Attend November 28th hearing on health standards at Board of Education
- ◆ Use *peer education* and integrate youth culture, sports, artists to promote healthy decisions in safe places
- ◆ Create school assemblies and forums for youth to ask questions
- ◆ Literature reviews to document that sex ed doesn't lead to sexual behavior

Drug Addiction Treatment and Prevention

Why?

- ◆ Over a third of HIV infections are related to drug use
- ◆ Drug related incarceration affects employment, housing, voting opportunities
- ◆ Not enough programs to treat drug addiction

Demands

- ◆ Longer length of stay in drug recovery programs
- ◆ More mental health screenings with drug treatment
- ◆ Deal with the *causes* of drug use, not just the addiction itself
- ◆ More treatment *housing*
- ◆ *Long term* substance use treatment: transitional housing, job skills, coping, continued support after moving out, client centered support groups
- ◆ Train more providers on substance use on a continual basis
- ◆ More collaboration among providers, APRA, and other programs
- ◆ More funds for the expansion of existing programs

Activities

- ◆ Support Treatment on Demand legislation
- ◆ MWPHA Annual Conference on Substance Use

Upcoming Activities

1. *November 17, 2007*; Washington Highlands Library, 115 Atlantic Street, SW
noon to 1pm: Housing Committee meets, All others debrief and plan
1 to 2:30pm Street Outreach (let people know we're still here!),
6 to ?pm: *Thanks for Fighting Racism Dinner*, hosted by Linda, Karyn, Sarah,
4103 Gallitan St., Hyattsville, MD. 301.779-0256
2. *November 28, 2007*; State Board of Education, 441 4th St. NW, Judiciary Square
Testify in support of comprehensive sexuality education;



3. *November 30, 2007; World AIDS Day*
1:00pm – Lafayette Park, White House 5:00pm – Dupont Circle vigil

4. December 1, 2007; World AIDS Day
TBA: CVS picket line to demand accessible condoms
TBA: Queen Latifah movie on HIV at Westminster Presbyterian Church