

# THE NIA ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2011

Volume 3, Issue 1

## *Reflection on the ASHA Conference*

Monday, February 7th marked the date of our 2nd Annual ASHA Conference, in honor of National Black HIV Awareness Day, where this year's theme was "It Takes a Village to Fight HIV/AIDS".

**ASHA (Life) - Addressing Sexual Health and AIDS** is a one-day conference designed to bring women together to Address Sexual Health and AIDS. Topics, which for some people, communities and churches, are taboo due to the stigma of AIDS and, Sex!

With registration open for 4 weeks, we had 100 women registered to attend the conference held at Mount Aery Baptist Church, and by the end of the day we had welcomed 85 women! The event started with an interpretive dance by Divine Creation followed by a presentation by the Bristol Myers representative on how to deal with Stigma and HIV. The attendees received greetings from the State of CT Department of Health; followed by a presentation from NASTAD challenging the attendees to increase their involvement. After which came spirited discussions during the table topic questions at the working lunch portion of the conference. A presentation from the Center for Women and Families about the intersection of Domestic Violence and HIV followed the working lunch. A second interpretive dance by Divine Creation helped to end the conference on a high note along with a call to action by the Project Director to reach out to a minimum of 5 people and increase their awareness of HIV/AIDS concluded the event.

It can be said that our attendees come out to hear the insight of the speakers, but I contend that some of the greatest insight about this disease often comes from the questions and comments by the attendees - those infected and affected by the virus. It is in their questions and responses that we learn of the areas requiring more understanding, the areas where folks could use more help.

Visit our website for more reflections regarding the ASHA Conference, as well as pictures from the event! [www.niaalliance.com](http://www.niaalliance.com)

## *The Ashe Faith Project is Moving!*

**Join Us for the House of the ASHE WOMEN'S CENTER  
105 Frank St, Bridgeport, CT 06604**

Saturday, March 12 from 10-2pm  
Sunday, March 13 from 10a-11a

*Light Refreshments will be served*

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*Nia in the Spotlight*

Welcome to the first of our Nia in the Spotlight series, where once a quarter we'll interview and feature a member of the Nia Alliance.

Last month I had the opportunity to catch up with my fellow Nia sister, Loretta McPhearson while working at the University of Bridgeport's Martin Luther King event.

**Editor: Hi Loretta,**  
**Loretta:** Hello

**Editor: Which Nia Alliance cohort did you graduate from?**  
**Loretta:** The 2nd cohort.

**Editor: We were in the same class, right?**  
**Loretta:** Yes

**Editor: Tell us a little about yourself.**

**Loretta:** I work as a consultant for the Ujima Project doing outreach for the past three years. In January 2010 I became an HIV counselor, tester and I also facilitate workshops. I have three children and I'm also a recovering addict. I've been sober for 9 years.

**Editor: Congratulations.**  
**Loretta:** Thank you.

**Editor: What lead you to take an active role in the HIV crisis and with Nia?**

**Loretta:** My friend, Elaine Ward, graduated from the first cohort and she suggested I take the class. In 1997 my sister died from the disease, so this is my way of giving back to someone else if I can help to reduce the spread of HIV, one person at a time.

**Editor: Do you mind if i ask how your sister contracted the virus?**

**Loretta:** Either IV drug use or prostitution

**Editor: Thank you for your honesty and openness to share**

**Loretta:** I learned about HIV after my sister became infected.

**Editor: What did you learn?**

**Loretta:** I learned stereotypes, which I later learned weren't true.

**Editor: Like what?**

**Loretta:** Like I could get HIV from eating from the same utensils, sharing bathrooms. Again, I learned throughout the course of my sister's life that those stereotypes weren't true.

**Editor: Tell us about your program, the Ujima Circle.**

**Loretta:** Our target population is women of child bearing age that can have kids and are at risk to contract the HIV virus; our group is to identify these women and get them into care and follow up with them throughout the course of their pregnancy. Our target audience is African American women primarily, but also women of other descents.

**Editor: How successful have you been in identifying women who meet your criteria?**

**Loretta:** I've tested one pregnant woman, but she was already under prenatal care. It is difficult to get pregnant women to consent to testing.

**Editor: Why is that?**

**Loretta:** There is shame associated with not having sought prenatal care, even for those most at risk.

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*Nia in the Spotlight, continued*

**Editor:** How do you find your target population?

**Loretta:** We do outreach all over the City of Bridgeport, with a focus on places where our target population may be assembled; for example, we go to the projects, community events, strip clubs - anywhere where you generally find people at risk.

**Editor:** Are there other members of the Ujima team?

**Loretta:** Yes, LaJeune Pollard, Ryan Grant and Erika Younger.

**Editor:** How can people reach you for services?

**Loretta:** We can be reached through the Greater Bridgeport Adolescent Pregnancy Program (GBAPP), located at 158 Mill Hill Ave, Bridgeport, CT. Our phone number is 203-366-8255.

**Editor:** Where can people find you in the community?

**Loretta:** We're in the Bridgeport Public Library on Broad St every Tuesday from 12:30p - 3pm and we'll also at United Congregational Church of Bridgeport every

**Editor:** In closing, what would you say to someone who is thinking about volunteering, but is unsure of themselves?

**Loretta:** Our people are destroyed from a lack of knowledge. If you want to help, contact GBAPP for free training.

**Editor:** Thank you, Loretta.

**Loretta:** You're welcome.

### *A focus on HIV in the Caribbean*

“The Caribbean remains the only region, besides Sub-Saharan Africa, where Women and Girls outnumber Men and Boys among people living with HIV.”

In 2009, some 240,000 people were living with HIV/AIDS in the countries of the Caribbean, where adult HIV prevalence is estimated at 1%, and AIDS is the leading cause of death among people aged 15-49 years. The statistics shows that 17,000 people were newly infected during 2009, a decrease from 20,000 in 2001; the number of children living with HIV were 17,000 and 12,000 people died from AIDS. An effort to track HIV in this region tends to be difficult, as a result of inadequate surveillance system, homophobia and other preventative factors.

The main mode of HIV transmission in this region is believed to be unprotected sex - heterosexual sex, much of which is associated with commercial sex. The Caribbean remains the only region, besides Sub-Saharan Africa, where women and girls outnumber men and boys among people living with HIV. It was estimated in 2009, that 53% of people with HIV were female. High levels of infection have been found among female sex workers in the Guyana (27%), Jamaica (9%) and the Dominican Republic (4%). Due to these findings most countries in the region focused their HIV prevention efforts on paid sex.

Other factors influencing the epidemics are sex between men (MSM), which is a major factor because several countries still criminalize sexual relations between men, therefore fear of discrimination, stigmatization and abuse impedes this group from accessing HIV prevention programs or being reached by prevention efforts. A survey done in Trinidad and Tobago showed that one in five men who have sex with men (MSM) was living with HIV; and one in four said that they regularly have sex with women. In addition, gender inequalities, lack of confidentiality, economic need and cultural and behavioral pattern are components that also fuel the epidemic.

To a lesser degree, injection drug use also contributes to the spread of HIV, notably in Bermuda and Puerto Rico. In Puerto Rico, 40% of males and 27% of females, who were newly infected in 2006, was due to contaminated injecting equipment.

Since 2001, the Caribbean region has received approximately USD 1.3 billion of grant and concessionary funding to fight HIV/AIDS. In 2002, the Pan Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS (PANCAP) signed an agreement with six pharmaceutical companies to provide access to cheaper antiretroviral treatment (ART) drug. Due to the differences in drugs prices, progress tends to fluctuate.

It was reported during the 10th Annual General Meeting of the (PANCAP), that "more than 90% of pregnant women in 11 Caribbean countries are now tested for HIV annually. About 52% of pregnant women receive services for the prevention of mother-to-child-transmission (PMTCT) of HIV. This led to an 18% reduction in new HIV infections among children in 2008. Governments across the region provide (ART) to 51% of people in need in 2008 - up from just 1% in 2004. Increased access to antiretroviral treatment (ART) has led to a decrease in the mortality associated with AIDS. Since 2001, there has been a 40% decline in AIDS-related mortality in the Caribbean. Access to treatment has meant that people are living longer, healthier, productive lives.

The 2011 Caribbean HIV Conference: Strengthening Evidence To Achieve Sustainable Action will sharpen the focus on HIV in the Caribbean, the region with the world's second highest adult HIV prevalence. The conference will be held November 18-21 in the Bahamas.

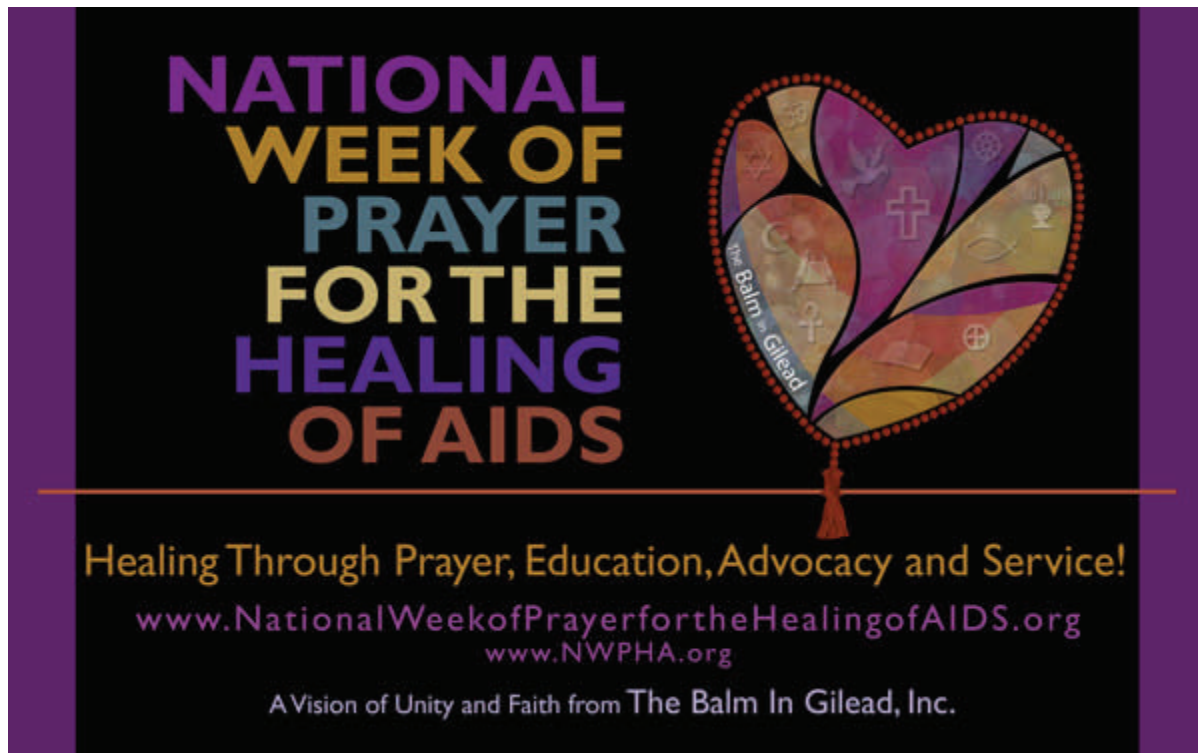
Sources: World Health Organization (WHO) 2010 Global Report  
Pan Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS (PANCAP)  
Caribbean Epidemiology Centre (CAREC)

Submitted by Doreen Cotter, Nia Chaplain (3rd Cohort)

### *Upcoming Events: Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS*

Once again we are in the planning stages for the National Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS!

As members of the Alliance, we want to ensure that your house of worship is included in this year's list of events. We also want to ensure that you have first access to resources such as literature, speakers, ribbons, etc.

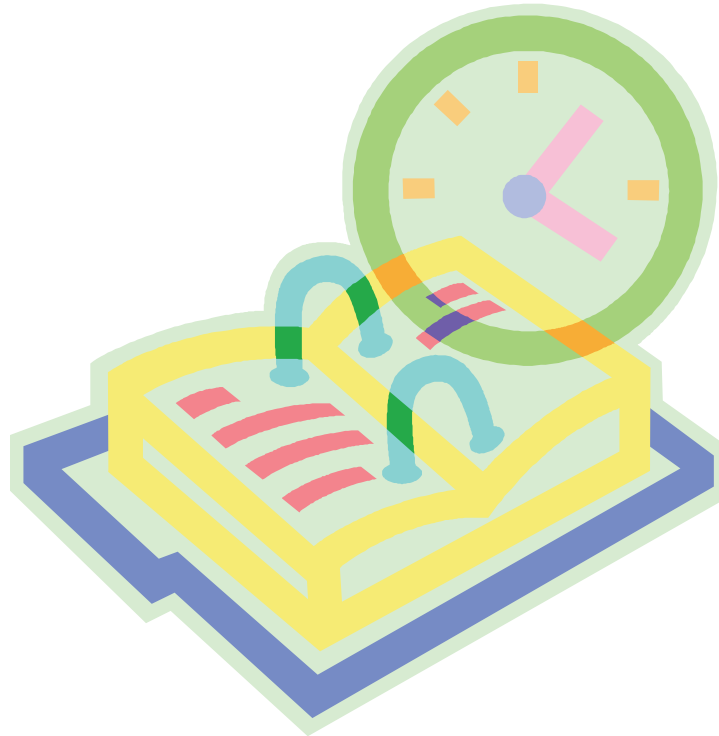


If your church has already decided on how they will participate this year, then please respond to this email letting us know the details of your event and how Nia can be of assistance. Or, we can just add your event to our calendar.

If your church needs assistance with planning, we are happy to help! Please reply to this email address or give us a call at 203-870-0761 and we can provide you with ideas to engage your congregation.

***We are entering into the 30th year of this epidemic, but we are all witnesses to the fact that prayer changes things! Please join us this season!***

## *EVENT CALENDAR*



Access our calendar below for information regarding our upcoming events.  
Please come out and support the community as your calendars permit!

For more information regarding our upcoming events, please bookmark the following web address: <http://niaalliance.com/Events.html>

If you're aware of a community or faith based event and would like to add it to the calendar, please submit the following information to [newsletter@niaalliance.com](mailto:newsletter@niaalliance.com)

- ◇ Event Name
- ◇ Point of Contact
- ◇ Date and time of Event
- ◇ Description of Event

**RESOURCES: WHERE TO FIND IT...**

Need HIV, STD or statistical info and not sure where to find it?  
See the list of resources below.

**FREE LOCAL HIV TESTING LOCATIONS****Ashe Women's Center**

105 Frank St, Bridgeport, CT 06604  
Hours: Monday-Wednesday, 10am-2pm  
Thursday, 3pm-7pm  
Fridays by appointment only  
203-870-0761

**GBAPP**

158 Mill Hill Ave, Bridgeport, CT 06604  
Hours: Mon-Fri., 9am-5pm  
203- 384-3629

**Optimus Health Care Incorporated**

982 East Main St, Bridgeport, CT 06608  
Hours: Mon-Fri., 9am-5pm  
203-696-0085

**Southwest Community Health Center**

361 Bird St, Bridgeport, CT 06605  
Hours: Mon-Fri., 8:30am-5pm  
203-330-6000

**Yale-New Haven Hospital (AIDS Care Program)**

20 York St, New Haven, CT 066511  
Hours: Mon., 9am-3pm; Tues., Thurs., Fri., 8:30am-5pm; Wed., 9:30am-3pm  
203-688-3298

**Norwalk Health Department**

137 East Ave, Norwalk, CT 06851  
Hours: Mon-Fri., 9am-5pm

**Other Related Information:**

**Local Stats:** CT Department of Public Health (DPH)

<http://www.ct.gov/dph/cwp/view.asp?a=3135&q=393048>

**National Stats:** Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

<http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/surveillance/resources/reports/index.htm>

STD info: Fact Sheets, Statistics, STD testing Sites, etc:

<http://www.cdc.gov/std/default.htm>

Substance Abuse: Treatment facilities, etc:

<http://www.ct.gov/DMHAS/site/default.asp>

2-1-1: referral services for the entire state of CT:

<http://www.infoline.org/>

**REFERRAL  
SOURCES:**

**TESTING  
SITES,  
STATISTICS,  
ETC...**

## ABOUT NIA

### THE NIA ALLIANCE

MADC  
72 George Street  
Bridgeport, CT 06604  
Tel: 203-870-0761  
[www.niaalliance.com](http://www.niaalliance.com)

The Nia Alliance is an initiative with the goal to develop a volunteer network of men and women who are dedicated to learn and respond to the growing HIV epidemic among women of color. In August 2006, GBAPP, Inc. developed a training curriculum to prepare men and women of color to serve as volunteer liaisons to faith-based organization. Objectives for participants completing the training workshop are 1) enhance knowledge of HIV, 2) develop skills to engage peers in HIV-related services, and 3) serve as community liaisons and planning body for HIV awareness events sponsored by GBAPP.

### NIA ALLIANCE MISSION STATEMENT

*The Nia Alliance is a community mobilization initiative dedicated to equip people of African descent to respond effectively and emphatically to the AIDS epidemic in communities of color through education, advocacy, direct services and community collaboration. Grounded in faith, we recognize the importance of being inclusive and nonjudgmental as we empower our participants to make informed decisions.*

### The Ashe HIV Faith Project

*funded by the Substance Abuse Mental Health Service Administration's Center for Substance Abuse Prevention Faith and Community Based Support Initiative*

The Ashe Faith Project aims to reduce substance abuse and HIV/AIDS in communities of color by strengthening the partnerships between local community organizations and faith groups, utilizing a wealth of knowledge, experience and passion to maximize local synergies, promote program collaboration, and encourage service integration.

For more information regarding the Nia Alliance, please contact:

**Contact: Nancy Kingwood, MSHS, CHIVC**

**Project Director**

**Mount Aery Development Corporation (MADC)**

**72 George Street**

**Bridgeport, CT. 06604**

**Tel: (203) 870-0761**

**Fax: (203) 394-9957**

**Email: [ashefaithmadc@yahoo.com](mailto:ashefaithmadc@yahoo.com)**

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contribute to the  
newsletter?**

Please email your article,  
event, pictures, etc to  
[newsletter@niaalliance.com](mailto:newsletter@niaalliance.com)  
by the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month.

