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The National Minority AIDS Council Commemorates World AIDS Day

December 1, 2007—Washington, DC— Today, the National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC) honors World AIDS Day, and the many people who have dedicated their lives to fighting this disease throughout everywhere.

Established by the [World Health Organization](#) in 1988, **World AIDS Day** takes place each year on December 1 to help raise awareness and spread information about HIV/AIDS. Despite media reports that AIDS has become a manageable disease, people are still being infected and dying of AIDS. The United Nations estimates that 33 million people are infected with the AIDS virus globally, about a million of them in the United States. Each year in the U.S. approximately 40,000 people are diagnosed with AIDS, and nearly 20,000 succumb to the disease. An overwhelming number of these are in communities of color.

African Americans represent over 50% of all new HIV infections reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) each year, though they who make up approximately 13% of the US population. AIDS is one of leading cause of death among African Americans overall, and is the number one killer of black women aged 25-34. Latinos, who account for approximately 20% of all new HIV/AIDS diagnoses reported to the CDC annually, have a rate of infection is 3 times higher for males and 5 times higher for females than for their white, non-Hispanic counterparts. Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and Native Americans/Alaskan Natives also are reporting rising HIV/AIDS rates.

“If you look at the number of people who are dying of AIDS, everyday should be World AIDS Day. But it isn't,” says NMAC Executive Director Paul Kawata. “I just appreciate the fact that there is this annual moment that we all stop as a planet and take the time to remember, take the time to think, take the time to look at where we need to go from here.”

Just a few weeks ago, the 2007 Unites States Conference on AIDS convened in Palm Springs, California, bringing together over 3000 people with the same goal in mind: to fight the AIDS epidemic. The main focus of the meeting was on communities—communities who are affected and infected by this disease, communities who are working together to offer services to those who need them, communities who are making a difference. At a time when many AIDS organizations are closing or consolidating due to budget cuts, NMAC has kept its doors open for twenty years, setting an example of what communities can accomplish when they work together.

“This day gives us an opportunity to celebrate those whose lives have been ravaged by this disease,” says Ravinia Hayes-Cozier, NMAC’s Director of Government Relations

and Public Policy. “But it also creates a platform for implementing comprehensive treatment and education throughout the world.”

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The National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC) was founded in 1987 to develop leadership within communities of color to address challenges of HIV/AIDS. NMAC has responded to the needs of communities of color by developing programs enhancing the skills necessary to confront this health crisis, including a public policy education program; national and regional training conferences; treatment and research programs and trainings; numerous publications and a website: www.nmac.org. The agency also serves an association of AIDS service organizations, F/CBOs, hospitals, clinics, health departments and other groups assisting people and families living with and affected by the AIDS epidemic. NMAC's advocacy efforts are funded through private funders and donors only.