



A UNAIDS Initiative

The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS

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Global Coalition on Women and AIDS Announces 2006 *Empower Women: Fight AIDS* U.S. Tour to Promote Solutions that Work for Women and Girls in the Fight Against AIDS.

Tour to visit Detroit, Houston, Minneapolis, Washington, DC

Detroit, MI – In an effort to inspire action, encourage meaningful dialogue, and increase public awareness about the unique challenges facing women and girls in a world with AIDS, the UNAIDS-led Global Coalition on Women and AIDS (GCWA) has announced the kickoff of its 2006 four-city *Empower Women: Fight AIDS* U.S. Tour. In Detroit, Houston, Minneapolis and Washington, DC members of the tour will engage leaders and advocates in the political, business, NGO, religious, academic and women's communities to discuss how real progress can be made to prevent the spread of HIV among women and girls and to provide women and girls with essential treatment, care, and support services.

Today, more than 17 million women and girls are living with HIV, representing nearly 50% of those living with the disease worldwide -- and almost 60% of those with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa. HIV infection rates among women and girls are on the rise in every region of the world. In the United States, AIDS is currently the leading cause of death for African-American women ages 25-34 and increasingly affecting Hispanic women. Women are uniquely vulnerable to contracting HIV due to a lack of power in preventing violence, accessing education, gaining economic self-sufficiency, and receiving information about HIV prevention and legal rights. Women and girls also face barriers to accessing treatment and bear a disproportionate burden of care for those living with and affected by HIV.

Launched in 2004 by UNAIDS in response to the growing feminization of AIDS, the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS (GCWA) is a broad-based alliance of community

organizations, networks of women living with HIV, and United Nations agencies, supported by activists, political leaders, and celebrities, which develops, promotes, and supports real solutions for women and girls in the global fight against AIDS.

“Empowering women and girls is key to turning the tide of AIDS,” said Dr. Peter Piot, Executive Director of UNAIDS. “As we design and evaluate AIDS programs, we must always ask: does this work for women and girls? Unless the answer to that is yes, we cannot expect to succeed in the global response to AIDS.”

The 2006 *Empower Women: Fight AIDS* U.S. Tour will travel to Detroit (June 8-9), Houston (June 10-12), Minneapolis (June 13-14) and conclude in Washington, DC (June 15) to highlight the need for AIDS solutions that address the realities of women’s lives.

The tour is comprised of women leaders and advocates who span the globe and are at the forefront of AIDS efforts worldwide, including **Kathleen Cravero**, GCWA Leadership Council Chair and UNDP Assistant Administrator; **Mary Fisher**, Founder of the Mary Fisher CARE Fund and UNAIDS Special Representative; **Idah Mukuka**, Director of community outreach for the Centre for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia; **Celina D’Costa**, Advocacy Officer for HIV/AIDS Programs for Project Concern International in India; and **Devorah Elizabeth Davis Zelaya**, support worker for the Association of People Living with HIV in Honduras.

Each of the women has both a compelling personal story to share and works for women on the front lines of AIDS in their home communities and countries. The vast experiences and inspiring efforts of these women allows them to connect with the millions of women living with HIV worldwide, and with citizens from all walks of life. This will be the second year for the GCWA tour. Last year’s tour visited New York City, Nashville, Miami, Chicago, and Washington, DC.

The 2006 tour promotes progress by combining both local and national media outreach with local community forums and town hall meetings that encourage women to share their stories and join forces to develop and implement proven solutions that address the vulnerabilities that women everywhere face. “Unless we create a paradigm shift in our approach to combating global AIDS, women and girls will continue to bear the brunt of the epidemic. If we value women, if we want to stop AIDS, we have no choice,” said Kathleen Cravero, GCWA Leadership Council Chair. “Initiatives such as this tour allow us to place the issues that women face and the strategies that work front and center before those with the capacity to make a difference.”

The 2006 Tour is co-sponsored by the UNAIDS, the United Nations Foundation, World Vision, and the World YWCA. “The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS is making a significant contribution to the world: calling attention to the growing toll of AIDS on women and girls around the world,” said United Nations Foundation President Timothy E. Wirth. “Citizens and governments the world over have a responsibility to hear this message and respond to it by providing women with the services and rights they need.

The United Nations Foundation is a proud sponsor of this tour, and the work of the courageous women sharing their experiences and ideas.”

“The religious community must help lead the global AIDS response, particularly given the impact of the epidemic on women and girls,” said Richard E. Stearns, President of World Vision. “We must advocate for the right theology in our churches and the right policies by our government, pray for people living with AIDS, the children they leave behind, and their caregivers, and volunteer our time and resources to organizations delivering essential services to people affected by AIDS.”

“It is time to recognize the fact that the number of women and girls living with AIDS is escalating. To stop this trend we have to empower the lives of women, eliminate violence against them, and give women equal access to prevention, treatment, and care,” said Peggy Sanchez Mills, CEO, YWCA USA.

A full list of public activities featuring the women of the tour can be found at <http://womenandaids.unaids.org/tour> or by calling Phyllis Cuttino (202) 777-3516. A small sample of events from each city is listed below:

- *Detroit, MI*: “Preventing HIV – A Girls Only HIV Awareness Event at Youthville”. Sponsored by the Detroit Youth Foundation with FM 98 WJLB On-Air Personalities Coco, Foolish & Mr. Chase. Collaborating Partners: The Horizons Project; YWCA of Detroit; Alternatives for Girls; AIDS & Adolescents Networking Committee; Henry Ford Health Systems; and Gospel Against AIDS. Date and Time: Thursday, June 8 from 3:30pm to 5:00pm. Location: Youthville, 7375 Woodward Avenue, Detroit, MI.
- *Houston, TX*: “What Works for Women and Girls in the Fight Against AIDS”: A Public Forum at the University of Houston moderated by Emmy Winning Journalist Linda Lorelle. Local Panelists include: Sister Kathy Foster, Casa de Esperanza; Janis Hutchinson, Associate Professor of Anthropology, University of Houston; Vera Johnson, Vice President of Client Services, AIDS Foundation Houston; and Dr. Mark Kline, Baylor College of Medicine. Date and Time: Sunday, June 11 from 3pm to 5pm. Location: Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture, 1st Floor Auditorium, University of Houston.
- *Minneapolis, MN*: Exploring the Link Between Violence and HIV in Women: A Community Discussion Sponsored by the Minnesota AIDS Project with co-sponsors MN Coalition of Battered Women; MN Coalition Against Sexual Assault; Rape and Sexual Abuse Center; University of Minnesota School of Public Health; Minnesota AIDS Project; and UNA-MN. Moderated by Diane Knust. Date and Time: Wednesday, June 14 from 11:30am to 1:30pm. Location: Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota, 301 19th Avenue South.

Again, for more information on the tour, please contact Phyllis Cuttino (202) 777-3516 or visit <http://womenandaids.unaids.org/tour>.

The **Global Coalition on Women and AIDS** is a worldwide alliance of community organizations, networks of women with HIV and AIDS, governments and UN organizations. The Coalition works at global, regional and national levels to highlight the impact of AIDS on women and girls and mobilize actions to enable them to protect themselves from HIV and receive the care and support they need. The GCWA was launched by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS).

UNAIDS, the **Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS**, brings together the efforts and resources of ten UN system organizations to the global AIDS response. Cosponsors include UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank. Based in Geneva, the UNAIDS secretariat works on the ground in more than 75 countries worldwide.

Created in 1998 with a gift from entrepreneur and philanthropist Ted Turner, the **United Nations Foundation** enables other to support United Nations (UN) causes and activities. The UN Foundation is a public charity that builds and implements public-private partnerships in support of the UN's efforts to address the most pressing humanitarian, socioeconomic, and environmental challenges facing the world today. The UN Foundation also broadens support for the UN and global cooperation through advocacy and public outreach.

World Vision is a Christian relief and development organization dedicated to helping children and their communities worldwide reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty. World Vision serves the world's poor regardless of a person's religion, race, ethnicity, or gender.

Founded in 1858 and headquartered in Washington, DC, the **YWCA USA** is a women's membership movement whose mission is to eliminate racism and empower women. Strengthened by diversity, the YWCA draws together members who strive to create opportunities for women's growth, leadership and power to attain a common vision: peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all people. Currently, the YWCA represents 2 million women, girls and their families in the United States, and 25 million women worldwide. The YWCA has nearly 300 associations throughout the United States. The World YWCA is at work in 100 other countries.

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