

Healing for the Mind, Body & Soul

News Notes from California Black Women's Health Project

Volume 2, Issue 3

CABWHP GEARS UP TO TRAIN 2nd GROUP OF HEALTH ADVOCATES

The California Black Women's Health Project will soon begin training a new class of students for the Advocate Training Program (ATP). The ATP is a program that is designed to train women from the grassroots community to become effective health policy activists and advocates. The inaugural program in 2002-2003 was enormously successful. We anticipate that the 2003-2004 ATP will be equally (if not more) successful. The ATP focuses on advocacy that addresses the intersection between Black women's mental, emotional and physical health. The training program emphasizes skill-building so that participants learn community organizing and advocacy skills, including initiating and sustaining letter-writing campaigns, writing press releases and becoming effective legislative advocates, in an interactive environment. The central focus of the ATP is to empower Black women who are not traditionally part of the policy advocacy arena to advocate for their health, the health of their families and the Black community. Graduates of the ATP will enhance and expand the network of activists, policymakers and leaders striving to improve the health of Black women in California.

The ATP is a ten-week course that meets for approximately 3 hours per week in the evenings. The program will begin during

the week of September 22, 2003 and end during the week of December 1, 2003 with a graduation ceremony and group project presentation. A brief orientation will be held one week prior to the beginning of classes. The meetings are held in Inglewood, California. The ATP has a curriculum designed to provide a broad overview of health policy advocacy, agenda setting, effective strategies and leadership and social action training. The specific topics covered include:

- The Legislative and Budget Process
- Effective Systems/Public Policy Advocacy
- Impacting Public Policy through Community Organizing and Media Strategy
- Black Women's Health: Mind, Body & Soul
- Strategy Building and Implementation
- Individual and Self Advocacy
- Community Organizing

CABWHP staff, policy experts, healthcare experts and social activists provide instruction and facilitate discussion at weekly seminars/discussion at weekly seminars/workshops. Textbook and hands-on interactive material will also be used as a core component of the program. ATP members must commit to completing a group project that can

potentially impact the communities where they live and serve. In addition, members will have an opportunity to attend several day-long workshops and trainings in the Spring of 2004.

The CABWHP is currently seeking bright, motivated individuals committed to policy advocacy for Black women's health. Criteria for selection to the program include individuals who have:

- Previous grassroots involvement
- An interest in Black women's health
- An interest in learning and developing policy advocacy skills
- A background in women's health or similar background
- Little or no policy experience and
- Will commit to attend at least 8 out of 10 classes during the ten week program

CABWHP will select up to 15 participants for the fall 2003 program. Participants will be carefully selected to represent the community in terms of age, education, work, socio-economic backgrounds and volunteer experience. Completed applications must be postmarked by August 16, 2003. Applications are available online at www.cabwhp.org or by calling (310) 412-1828.

**Women Building on the Past -
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Additional information about this and any other publications and projects is available at www.cabwhp.org

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They Say: ATP Graduates Speak about the Program

CABWHP interviewed four graduates of the Advocate Training Program - Karen Anthony, Adesuwa Ogiamien, Gina Raymond-Embry and Lois Newell about their experience.

CABWHP: What made you want to be a part of the Advocate Training Program?

Karen: I was interested in learning more about policy issues.

Gina: Well, it's funny how life evolves and unfolds like you need it to. I had been looking previously for opportunities to work with people who are committed to the issues in under served communities. So when I received the information on the Advocate Training Program it was ideal. I thought, "Wow this is interesting." Since I have been studying psychology and have been involved in the social sciences, I thought "how does one become involved in public policy issues?" This was the ideal opportunity for me to gain additional knowledge to enable me to apply my social studies background in a way that was going to influence public policy.

CABWHP: Has the training helped you? If yes how?

K: I learned how to advocate.

Adesuwa: The training has definitely helped me... By exposing me to legislative processes that exist in

California and what you were interested or pursuing bills and legislation the health of Black women delivery of healthcare. The different training speakers who came in the legislative process do if we wanted to get

G: The way it helped dating my observation other people out there interested and committed about the same thing. Another way that it has that it has successful and has provided me group and additional how to go about writing now. I can actually sit at goals and know how achieving them.

Lois: Yes, I know how makers... to gather information and learn policymakers.

CABWHP: Do you think you will be able to use what you learned in the Advocate Training Program in a real way?

A: Yes, I believe so, and in fact I'm already doing that. I am working with someone who was also in the training program and we're going to be collecting some data from women who are HIV positive and we are going to try and determine the psychological impact of being HIV positive on their daily lives and on them. Hopefully we'll be able to write a policy brief at the end to ensure that these women have access to free or low-cost mental healthcare.

G: Absolutely. For the past 6 months I have been trying to build on the culminating project that I chose during the ATP: a grass roots advocacy program that addresses the education of African American Women about HIV and AIDS. I created a Sister Circle. We address a variety of health related issues that impact African American women. The women themselves were able to dictate what would be meaningful to them and what they wanted to learn about.

L: During our Sacramento trips, we talked with policy makers about women's issues. I had a chance to use the information I learned.

CABWHP: How would you describe the Advocate Training Program experience?

K: Good.. Rewarding... speakers provided insight about many different topics.

A: I would describe it as extremely

process and just things that I could do to get involved in this activist process. I feel I've learned a lot and I feel privileged to have been able to participate.

K: The new relationships and networking.
G: Meeting a variety of fascinating African American women who were doing all kinds of things on a daily basis in the community to try to make things better for other people lives. It was the diversity of age, educational background... every one brought something very important and vital to the table. We were able to learn from each other. The openness and expressiveness of all the women towards each other and the positive energy was great.

L: Learning about community organizing... Every aspect of the program was conducted in a professional manner.

CABWHP: What is the most significant personal victory you've had since graduating from the ATP? How (if at all) did the skills/relationships you gained during your ATP experience impact you in that situation?

A: I would say it's the fact that our abstract got accepted by the Sister Song Women of Color Reproductive Health Conference. Working with Gina Raymond-Embry and Erica Browne, this is the first time that I have submitted an abstract where we're going to be using original data and that was a major personal victory for me. Major. And so, how did the ATP impact me? First, I met Erica and Gina there. Second, the abstract we worked on was derived from the group project that we did for the ATP. Therefore it is directly because of my experience with the ATP that I will be presenting at the Sister Song Conference.

G: When I was thinking about moving from the strategic planning aspect from our project to actually generating a women's group, one of the challenges I faced was that many, many of the women weren't really orientated towards advocacy or towards social issues or social changes. So, one of the questions I had to ask myself was how I am going to bring this very diverse group of women together to collaborate with each other because the reality is that among women we can be very competitive. So, one of the challenges I faced was trying to recreate that communal spirit like we had at the ATP. This new group of women didn't necessarily see things the same way, and so being able to consult with Crystal of the CABWHP and getting some ideas on how to address some of my concerns was helpful.

Continued on the next page

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I was actually able to bring these women together so that we could work in a proactive way to support one another. I think that was my biggest challenge. But, I would say we have gotten a very positive response and we have been able to generate a sense of cohesion in the group.

L: For me achieving a better awareness of community issues and learning how to perform legislative research on the internet was a victory.

CABWHP: What advocacy activities have you participated in since graduating from the ATP?

A: My church has started something with Q Nurse Affair to provide free nutrition and dieting classes to the women who attend the church for them just to know how to eat well, why you should exercise, what that does to the body and things like that. So, we're still in the beginning stages but we've been having all these planning meetings and we've done two focus groups with the women in the church to figure out how we're going to lay it out, and we're supposed to start in October. So, we've just been planning everything right now, but it was a major thing that I would have just never thought of doing before. I probably would have just been like, 'OK, let's write a paper about it. And now I'm like, 'OK, you have to be proactive and let's see if we can get some results and things' so that's what we're still doing and we're in the process of adding other things to it too. So, it will be a holistic approach to health and not just nutrition and dieting, but that's just where we're starting from.

G: We went to "Women in Action Lobby Day" at the State Capitol and that was very interesting because we actually got to sit down and talk to lawmakers and to lobby on behalf of women's health issues. We actually got to speak with lawmakers and to advocate on the behalf of various of bills. Each one of us was assigned a different bill, we were briefed on it and then we went in there and we actually got to use some of the skills we were taught in ATP. It was interesting to see how others advocate on behalf of a variety of issues and to see what works and what doesn't.

(Gina, Erica, & Adesuwa plan to present their group project in November 2003 in Atlanta.)



ATP Highlights 2002 - 2003

September 2002
Applications Deadline
First Day of Class

October 2002
Orientation meeting & First day of class
Guest speaker: Holly Mitchell, CEO of Crystal Stairs

November 2002
Guest speaker: Tamara Rasberry,
Speaker Herb Wesson's Office
Last day of classes

December 2002
Group project presentations
Graduation

February 2003
ATP graduates attend Policy Summit
2003, Sacramento

April 2003
ATP graduates attend AIDS Lobby day,
Sacramento

May 2003
ATP graduates attend Women in Action
Lobby Day, Sacramento

ATP Graduate completes Policy Summit
proceedings

ATP graduates submit abstract for Sister
Song: Women of Color Reproductive
Health Conference, Atlanta, GA

June 2003
Sister song Abstract accepted

July 2003
Application submission begins for '03-'04

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VOTE NO ON THE RACE INFORMATION BAN! (Proposition 54)

When Californians go to the polls on October 7 to decide whether to remove Gov. Gray Davis from office, they will also vote on a measure that if approved, would prevent the state, including public colleges, from collecting and using information on race and ethnicity.

Known as CRECNO (Classification by Race, Ethnicity, Color or National Origin) and backed by Ward Connerly, the University of California regent who successfully promoted referendums in California and Washington to ban affirmative action, the measure was originally scheduled to appear on the primary-election ballot in March 2004.

But under state law, the measure must be on the next statewide ballot, which is now slated for October 7. The special recall election was certified for the ballot recently. The shift left supporters and opponents of the referendum only 11 weeks to mount their campaigns.

Passage of CRECNO would have dire consequences for all Californians, particularly affecting public health, education and civil rights enforcement. The University of California's Board of Regents voted overwhelmingly in May to oppose the referendum. The governing board of the state's community colleges also agreed to oppose the measure.

Researchers have also come out against the measure, saying that without the data, they will be unable to study discrimination and stratification in health, housing, and education.

For more information on this initiative contact the Coalition for an Informed California at 510 452-3552 or log on to website at: www.informedcalifornia.org

Visit us at Health Pavilion at the
18th Annual
African Market Place & Cultural Faire

When: August 16-17
23-24
30-31

Time: 10 am - 9 pm

Location: Exposition Park
Los Angeles, CA 90016

The National Health Law Program (NHLP) has
officially launched HealthCareCoach.com: <http://www.healthcarecoach.com>
Dedicated to helping consumers get the most out of their health care.

Check out our new and improved website at www.cabwhp.org



"Committed to improving the health of Black women and girls in California"

We're on the Web!
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4th Annual African Village & Weekend

Friday - Saturday, September 10-11, 2003

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