



For Immediate Press Release

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### Local Non-Profit Hosts Event in Recognition of National Women & Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

Today, there are approximately 1.1 million people living with HIV/AIDS in the U.S. In a report published by the Kaiser Family Foundation (September 2009), women and girls are increasingly affected by HIV/AIDS, accounting for nearly 25% of the total HIV/AIDS cases in the U.S., a number that has continued to rise over the last twenty years of the epidemic. Women of color, particularly Black women, have been especially hard hit and represent the majority of new HIV infections and AIDS cases among women, and the majority of women living with the disease. In 2008, 34% of new HIV cases in New Orleans were in women, 83% of those were in black women with 21% of the diagnosis occurring in young women.

In an effort to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS in our community and its impact on women and girls in New Orleans, the Institute of Women & Ethnic Studies, in partnership with other local community partners\*, is hosting a series of events during the week of National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, which is March 10, 2010. To kick off the week's activities, IWES is hosting the **"Red Tent for Women & Girls,"** a gathering to honor and celebrate women and girls, and raise awareness of how HIV/AIDS is impacting our community. **The gathering will be held Saturday, March 6, 2010, from 2-6pm at the New Orleans African American Museum, 1418 Gov. Nicholls St.** The Red Tent gathering is free and open to the public – RSVP appreciated. Activities will include:

- Free & confidential HIV counseling & testing, resources and information
- Speakers, break-out sessions & workshops
- Spoken word, featuring poet Asali Devine
- Musical performances by the Pinettes Brass Band, Xavier Prep High School Marching Band, and Michaela Harrison
- Art, massage therapy & acupuncture
- Healthy cooking demonstrations
- Vendor marketplace
- Health Screenings

#### About the Institute of Women and Ethnic Studies

The Institute of Women & Ethnic Studies (IWES) was founded in 1993 in response to health disparities among women of color. IWES is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) community-based organization based in New Orleans, Louisiana, dedicated to improving the physical, mental, and spiritual health and quality of life for women of color and their families. IWES develops culturally proficient, multidisciplinary and holistic public health programs, activities, and research models for women, adolescents, and people of color that promote health rights and wellness in partnership with clinicians, women's advocates, youth groups, public health organizations, governmental agencies, and community coalitions. For more information about IWES and its programs, call (504) 301-3690 or visit IWES at [www.iwesnola.org](http://www.iwesnola.org).

\*Local community partners serving as Advisory Council members include: Gina Brown, Office of Public Health HIV/AIDS Program, All About HER Coalition, Office of Public Health STD program, New Orleans Health Department, New Orleans Regional AIDS Planning Council, 7<sup>th</sup> Ward Neighborhood Center, N'R PEACE and Foundation of Youth Foundation.

The "Red Tent for Women & Girls" is funded in part by the Office of Women's Health.