

African American Religious Affairs

A Ministry of Civic Engagement & Social Justice

“And the Lord answered me and said, ‘Write the vision and engrave it so plainly upon tablets that everyone who passes may [be able to] read [it easily and quickly] as he [or she] hastens by.’”

-Habakkuk 2:2 (Amplified)

PURPOSE

African American Religious Affairs (AARA)

is a program of People For the American Way and People For the American Way Foundation. AARA endeavors to build a strong association of progressive clergy, theologians, seminarians and ministry lay leaders who will encourage African American churches and communities to become more civically engaged and promote social justice programs and policies in areas of public education, health care, equal justice, civic participation and economic justice for all. Representing women and men from various faith traditions across the country, leaders participate in strategic trainings, issue briefings, projects and partnerships to faithfully and effectively provide a prophetic, progressive voice and presence that counters right wing religious rhetoric and advances a vision of “a beloved community.” AARA is essentially a ministry that works with people of faith who believe in help and not harm, power and not pain, and hope in the face of hopelessness.



Supporters of **African American Ministers in Action (AAMIA)** heed the call to be a prophetic

voice to our communities and our country. They share an understanding that grace gives both the responsibility and the courage to challenge systems of injustice that prevent God’s children from reaching their potential. AAMIA embraces the historical witness of the Black Church by speaking truth to power on behalf of the powerless.

Participants reject cynical strategies that would use the moral authority of the Black Church to build power for political leaders pursuing an agenda that will further enrich the most fortunate and further impoverish the most disadvantaged. Together they raise voices in pursuit of the broad justice vision championed by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

All are advocates for public policies that support this vision, including advocacy for and against specific local, state and federal legislation. AAMIA is a 501(c)(4) non-profit organization enabling it to participate in election-related activity and actual partisan work, including the support of parties or candidates.



African American Ministers Leadership Council (AAMLC)

celebrates the historical

role of the Black Church as a place of refuge and a source of strength in the midst of oppression. The Council believes churches are called to be centers of caring and action, and that religious leaders are called to lead by example. Since 1997, members have responded to the call by giving pastors and ministry lay leaders tools and access to mutual support for strengthening congregational and community participation in civic life. AAMLC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.



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PROJECTS

“Healing Grace – Shepherds Gathering: A Dialogue on The Black Church, Stigma, Prejudice and Homophobia”

There are very few topics that provide deep personal, moral and social struggles such as that related to sexuality and religion. However, there is hope in what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. articulated as “The Beloved Community” – a completely integrated society, a community of love and justice wherein brotherhood would be an actuality in all of social life. In his mind, such a community would be the ideal corporate expression of the Christian faith.

It is in that spirit that the African American Religious Affairs Program endeavors to create and present a paradigm for faithful partnership within the Black Church as a way of addressing general perceptions and specific realities of stigma, prejudice and homophobia. Healing Grace creates an environment to engage African American clergy (male and female) who are interested and open to thoughtful dialogue on the topic of the Black Church and its relationship to the LGBT community in two (2) hours of facilitated conversation. “

“We ask God to give you complete knowledge of His will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding.”

- Colossians 1:9b (NLT)

Eight Things African American Pastors, Faith Leaders and Ministries Can Do to Create Peace, Safety and Justice for All God’s Children in Our Churches

- **E**xamine your heart and the heart of the church to ensure it has the capacity to be the place of refuge, hope, peace and safety it strives to be.
- **Q**uestion hate and hate-filled, mean spirited words or statements that discourage fellowship, religious participation, or the

ability to minister to someone who has publicly identified as LGBT.

- **U**nite the body of believers under the banner of peace and justice in personal and corporate worship.
- **A**ssess ministry areas where abuse and discrimination might occur (youth ministries, music ministry, ministerial staff) and respond with biblical teachings about stereotyping, prejudice and compassion.
- **L**ive the Great Commission without limits!
- **I**nvest time in prayer, dialogue and reflection that is specific to the concerns and experiences of Christian LGBT members.
- **T**each tolerance as a part of Discipleship and Evangelism.
- **Y**ield to the Spirit in the journey to love unconditionally.

R.E.S.P.E.C.T. African American Faith Leaders United for Immigration Reform

and by faith and in prayer stand in agreement that we are a nation of laws noting as St. Augustine declared, “An unjust law is no law at all”. We work in coalition with the Center for Community Change, the Interfaith Immigration Coalition, Reform Immigration For America (RIFA) and others to change the tone, bridge the divides and raise awareness and education on this issue for **RESPECT** in immigration dialogue, debates and conversations as well as in reform that will inspire hope, unite families, secure borders, ensure dignity and provide a legal avenue for all of God’s children working and desiring to reside in this country to



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drink for the well of justice and equal protection under the law.

“You must not mistreat or oppress foreigners [strangers] in any way. Remember, you yourselves were once foreigners [strangers] in the land of Egypt.”

- Exodus 22:21 (NLT)

- **R**espect for human dignity in our conversations, interactions and yes, legislation that does not reflect the toxins of xenophobia.
- **E**mbracing the teachings of our sacred texts to welcome immigrants as our neighbors.
- **S**ensitivity that every nation has the right to decide responsibly how one can enter its borders so as not to send mixed messages, posting “Help Wanted” signs that attract labor that can be exploited economically followed by “Get Out” signs once individuals arrive.
- **P**enalization of economic exploitation.
- **E**nforcement laws that do not promote or engage in racial profiling, intimidation, dehumanization or fear tactics.
- **C**larity in the process that promotes immigrant workers and their families already in the country toward citizenship based on fair criteria.
- **T**olerance by all people in the nation as the federal government attempts to enact comprehensive immigration reform that does not contribute to an atmosphere whereby



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individual states might pass reactionary and intolerant legislation.

V.E.S.S.E.L.S. are clergy, pastors and ministry leaders firmly committed to increasing civic participation in communities that traditionally have been disenfranchised or discriminated against. We provide a way to engage in the political process that resonates with the identity of people of faith. Standing firmly against the ploys of the conservative right, we constantly create opportunities to conduct non-partisan issue education and to inform on policies related to Election Reform, Election Protection, Voter Registration, DC Voting Rights, and Felony Re-Enfranchisement.

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power maybe of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down but not destroyed ... we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, ‘I believed and therefore I spoke,’”

2 Corinthians 4:7-9; 13a (NKJV) -

Believe and Speak With Your Vote! Believe and Therefore Vote!

- **V**ote with a vision and your values in mind for the environment, schools, families, jobs, a better city, a better county, a stronger state!
- **E**quip yourself and others with a spirit of “light to shine out of darkness”!
- **S**trengthen the presence of your church and your community at every precinct!
- **S**tand and support the democratic process!
- **E**ncourage and embrace your power to make wise decisions about those who should represent you in the state house, the Governor’s mansion and the halls of Congress.
- **L**eave excuses and apathy at home - your vote does count in every election!
- **S**tep into the voting booth, pause, pray, give

thanks for the opportunity to speak with clarity, cast your vote and give praise for good stewardship of one of God's many blessings – the right to vote!

Micah Leadership Council (MLC) represents a new phase in People For the American Way's commitment to constitutional values through progressive leadership development. MLC is a network of ministers and emerging faith leaders between the ages of 25-40, who are self identified as progressive and are engaged in their communities with faith-based organizations that are committed to civic engagement and social justice. By engaging progressive African American young ministers from across the nation, AARA is equipping these emerging leaders to be the agents of the change that they desire, in order to empower disenfranchised communities and participate in the reinvigoration of prophetic, progressive African American faith leaders.

“What can we bring to the Lord? ...the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what He requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.”

- Micah 6:6a;8 (NLT)

V.A.S.H.T.I. Project for African American Women and Girls is a value-driven 12-16 week faith-based communication and behavior modification model for adult women and girls infected and affected by HIV and AIDS. The name Vashti means “beautiful woman.” The project is designed to embrace Values such as love, kindness, humility and patience. It Affirms positive sexual identity and sexual expression, promotes Self-control, self-respect and self love, demonstrates Healthy decision-making processes, assists in identifying and nurturing natural Talents, and advocates for Integrity in leadership. The V.A.S.H.T.I. Project is coordinated in partnership with both faith and community-based agencies. It focuses on intervention and prevention education, along with awareness and skills development to

increase opportunities for responsible sexual and reproductive health behavior through facilitated dialogue and structured interactions with members from the Traditionalist to the Millennial generation.

“Do not neglect the gift that is in you”

1 Timothy 4:14 (NKJV)

CONTACT US

For more information please call the African American Religious Affairs Program at People For the American Way call 202-467-4999 or visit our website at [www.pfaw.org /AARA](http://www.pfaw.org/AARA).



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