

African American Religious Affairs



is a program of People For the American Way working in conjunction with People For the American Way Foundation. AARA endeavors to build a strong association of progressive pastors, 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 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 recognized by its members as a ministry of seven initiatives that work with Christian men and women who believe in help and not harm, power and not pain, and hope in the face of hopelessness. Our Ministerial Alliance, which consists of the African American Ministers in Action and the African American Ministers Leadership Council, has over 1,000 participating African American clergy across the country representing all denominations.

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 project of People For the American Way, a 501 (c) (4) non-profit organization, enabling it to participate in election-related activity and actual partisan work, including the support of candidates where permitted.

The 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 project of People For the American Way Foundation, a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization.



“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 opened to thoughtful dialogue on the topic of the Black Church and its relationship to the LGBT community in two (2) hours of facilitated conversation. In 2012, 10 Healing Grace sessions were conducted by AARA staff.

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

VESSELS are clergy, pastors and ministry leaders firmly committed to increasing civic participation civic engagement=membership, electoral advisory 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. Since launching on November 6, 2011, VESSELS has been endorsed by 8 African American denominations representing over 10 million members. Over 600 churches nationwide are participating and are involved with VESSELS; and over 7,000 clergy and faith leaders have been trained to implement VESSELS in their churches and communities.

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. Over 20 ministers aged 25-40 are actively participating in the Micah Leadership council.

V.A.S.H.T.I. Project for African American Women and Girls

is a value-driven faith-based communication and behavior modification model for adult women and girls to address reproductive rights, sexuality and HIV and AIDS. The name Vashti means “beautiful woman.” The project is designed to embrace **V**alues such as love, kindness, humility and patience. It **A**ffirms positive sexual identity and sexual expression, promotes **S**elf-control, self-respect and self love, demonstrates **H**ealthy decision-making processes, assists in identifying and nurturing natural **T**alents, and advocates for **I**ntegrity 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.