



DESCRIPTION
of
BIRMINGHAM LADIES POWER BELLE HATS TEA™
Healthy Action Transforming Sistas (HATS)

The Southern Christian Leadership Foundation, Incorporated (SCLF), Mayor William Bell, Mr. Harry Belafonte, and Iyanla Vanant will join citizens of Birmingham, Alabama to celebrate the 50th Year Anniversary of the Civil Rights Movement and to honor women who helped change America and ultimately the world. The Power Belle Hats Tea™ will recognize and honor women who provided leadership and participation during a most critical time. While Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and other leaders of the Birmingham Civil Rights Movement were publically renowned, women were the backbone who helped to move the Movement and demonstrations to a successful culmination. The Tea will help to put a face on many of the women who worked so diligently and with much personal sacrifice for equality for the African American community.

The Power Belle Hats Tea is part of “*The Look in the Mirror . . . Because You’re Worthy and Powerful*” campaign conducted by SCLF. The acronym H.A.T.S. stands for “*Healthy Action That Transforms Sistas.*” The women of the mass meeting churches demonstrate how “Sista” relationships can transform neighborhoods, communities, towns and cities. The tea celebrates Sistas who in the 1960s came together and assumed responsibility, broke the back of segregation, and brought about major change in the social, political and economic social system in Birmingham, Alabama.

Historically, among African American women, it was imperative to wear a beautiful crown on their heads when going before God. For many of the ancestors, dressing up for church and religious services was one of the few opportunities they had to remove work clothes and domestic aprons and housedresses. Over time, bright colors and elaborate hats replaced drab garments and uniforms. The creations were often standouts in a crowd.

From slavery to modern times, the hat signified also, how far African American women have come through years of struggles, pain and suffering. The hat tradition celebrates confidence, independence, and victory. Over time, the hat expanded from feathers, colorful pieces of cloth and beads to bigger, more colorful and sophisticated crowns. The HATS Tea in Birmingham epitomizes the changes made in the city during the past 50 years from dogs and hoses denoting the worst of times to the election of African American mayors and other political leaders symbolizing triumph and a new Birmingham.



INFORMATION ON SCLF HIV/AIDS PROGRAM

In the United States, African American women are among the fastest growing population infected with the virus – **65% new diagnosis and the first to die from it in the United States.** HIV/AIDS is an inter-generational disease that has far-reaching social, psychological and financial consequences with a chilling impact on families regardless of financial and social status. To this end, *a portion of the donation from the HATS Tea will be given to an organization that supports the treatment of women who have contracted HIV/AIDS in the Birmingham community.*

Through its *Silence Is Sinful HIV/AIDS Initiative*, SCLF partners with church organizations which are critical institutions in the African American community and are a major vehicle for communicating information to a large number of African Americans. This initiative includes providing critical information and testing to enhance the proactive stance of churches and their HIV/AIDS ministries. SCLF believes this dreaded disease will be eliminated with on the ground communication with a particular focus on African American and other women of color.

The Southern Christian Leadership Foundation, Incorporated (SCLF) has collaborative partners for the HATS Tea that include First Ladies of Mass Meeting Churches in Birmingham, The Black Leadership Commission on Aids (NBLCA), and Act Against AIDS Leadership Initiative (AAALI). AAALI is comprised of 19 community-based organizations, i.e., NAACP, Urban League, National Council of Negro Women, 100 Black Men, Black Caucus Foundation, etc. SCLF is a partner with and has the full support of the Center for Disease Control (CDC).

Another focus of SCL Foundation is **human trafficking**. Girls, boys, men and women are being kidnapped and forced to work or be a part of a sex brothel. People are disappearing every day and never being heard from again. According to a report from the Federal Bureau of Investigation:

Estimates place the number of its domestic and international victims in the millions, mostly females and children enslaved in the commercial sex industry for little or no money.¹ The terms *human trafficking* and *sex slavery* usually conjure up images of young girls beaten and abused in faraway places, like Eastern Europe, Asia, or Africa. Actually, human sex trafficking and sex slavery happen locally in cities and towns, both large and small, throughout the United States, right in citizens' backyards. (LEB, March 2011)

People who engage in human trafficking represent every racial, ethnic and social group. Not all of them are men – some are women. We must become more aware of who is in our community and how they are relating to our children, neighbors and friends. People are paid handsome sums to recruit. SCL Foundation is working to make citizens more aware of what is happening in their communities so that they can stop this heinous crime.