National Black Leadership Commission on Health

CELEBRATES THE LIFE & LEGACY
OF

REVEREND DR. CALVIN O. BUTTS, III

The Board of Directors and staff of the National Black Leadership Commission on Health (formerly known as the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS (NBLCA), Inc., extend deepest sympathy and condolence to the Butts family and membership of the Abyssinian Baptist Church on the passing of Reverend Dr. Calvin O. Butts, III.

When many leaders and influential voices in our community turned a blind eye, the Reverend Dr. Calvin O. Butts, III led with courage and compassion to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic. He was a Founding Member of the NBLCA and served as Chair of the Board of Directors from 1998-2009.

In partnership with Debra Fraser-Howze, NBLCA Founder and President/CEO, Reverend Butts was influential in establishing affiliate chapters in eight U. S. cities to support leadership mobilization efforts to combat HIV/AIDS and other health disparities. These pioneering efforts resulted in the accomplishment of significant policy changes and the allocation of resources for HIV/AIDS education, prevention, treatment and care for African Americans and other communities of color. During this period, among his many efforts include:

• Created the first HIV/AIDS initiative for Black clergy, including clergy retreats to develop strategies to address HIV/AIDS and to support outreach efforts to church congregations.

• Lead Advisor to the Congressional Black Caucus 105th Congress to create the Minority HIV/AIDS Initiative which over the past decade has resulted in the allocation of over $2 Billion in new federal funding for HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care in African American and other communities of color nationwide.

• Convening a two-day leadership public health summit in Atlanta, GA of 100 national African American leaders, June 2001, to develop a Community Plan of Action on HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, and care for minority communities and a set of related recommendations presented to President George W. Bush.

• Convening, as co-chair with Bishop T.D. Jakes, October 2007, the National Conclave on HIV/AIDS Public Policy for Black Clergy, a historic meeting of over 160 African American clergy and other leaders to address the growing crisis of HIV/AIDS in communities of African descent nationwide.

The leadership of Reverend Butts, as Board Chairman, expanded in partnership with C. Virginia Fields, President, and CEO, in establishing affiliate chapters in Metropolitan Washington, DC, Metro Atlanta, GA and Tampa, Florida.
• Convening a day long follow-up meeting, November 2009, to the National Conclave on HIV/AIDS Public Policy for Black Clergy, which was held in October 2007 that resulted in development of HR1964 Bill - the National Black Clergy for the Elimination of HIV/AIDS Act of 2009. The HR1964 Bill was introduced by Charles Rangel, Congress Member, in 2009 and reintroduced in 2011 with over fifty representatives having signed on in support.

• Engaging three hundred community-based partners across six states in developing the “African American Response to the National HIV/AIDS Strategy” culminating in a public policy report providing critical recommendations to key public health leaders and policymakers.


In March 2010, the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance selected Reverend Butts to represent the United States at “Religious Leadership in Response to HIV—A Summit of High-Level Religious Leaders,” in The Netherlands. Leaders from around the world acknowledged and gave high praise for his commitment in the fight to eliminate AIDS, stigma, and discrimination as a worldwide problem.

In 2016, President Barak Obama appointed Reverend Butts as a member of the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS.

Upon concluding his term as NBLCA Board Chair, in 2009, he was unanimously appointed as Board Chair Emeritus where he served with distinction unto his transition on October 28, 2022. Through his years of service, leadership, and participation we experienced the depth of his commitment and dedication to his beloved community.

On a personal note, stated C. Virginia Fields, “Rev. Butts was a spiritual leader, mentor, political supporter, and confidant for which I am ever so grateful. Memories are far too numerous to express and will be forever cherished!”

Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote, “As life is action and passion, it is required of a man to share the action and passion of his time at the risk of being judged as not to have lived.” We proclaim that Reverend Butts shared the action and passion of his time and lived a life of selfless service and thanksgiving. He leaves a legacy of action and passion, as a distinguished HBCU Morehouse graduate, Senior Pastor of the Historic Abyssinian Baptist Church, State University President, visionary leader, social justice activist, and a beloved community icon.

Our lives have been enriched by having known the Reverend Dr. Calvin O. Butts, III.

Deborah Wafer  C. Virginia Fields
Board Chair  President, and CEO
Pictured with Black Health Founder Debra Fraser-Howze and early HIV leaders and activist.

Marching to the White House

Pictured with President/CEO C. Virginia Fields, Black Health, and Founder of Black Health Debra Fraser-Howze

Pictured with former late Mayor of New York David Dinkins, Harriet Michelle and founding member of Black Health

Getting tested for HIV/AIDS with actor Dennis Haysbert
Greeting friends & supporters

Addressing the press

Advocating for State funds