AIDS on the Ballot

Black America grills presidential candidates on their HIV policies.

February 27, 2008 By Nicole Joseph

In 2004, when political journalist Gwen Ifill asked then vice presidential candidates Dick Cheney and Senator John Edwards what the government's role should be in addressing AIDS in black America, Cheney said he was "not aware" of the epidemic's staggering figures among black women; Edwards tried to answer by talking about AIDS overseas.

Fast-forward to 2008—have our candidates made any progress? It depends on the candidate. Following Edwards's lead, Democratic front-runners Senator Barack Obama and Senator Hillary Clinton have released comprehensive plans to fight HIV and AIDS at home and abroad. Republican candidate Mike Huckabee has also committed to a national AIDS strategy, though party rival Senator John McCain has yet to do the same.

The black community is stepping up and demanding a response. This past December, the Black AIDS Institute released a 26-page report titled "We Demand Accountability: The 2008 Presidential Elections and the Black AIDS Epidemic," analyzing the U.S. presidential candidates' responses (or the lack thereof) to the black AIDS epidemic. As November 4 looms closer, the Black AIDS Institute will continue to follow the candidates on its website, BlackAIDS.org. Log on to stay up to date so that you know what to expect from your candidates—and so that your vote will be informed.

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