



## DIALOGUE ON DIVERSITY

### NEWS ADVISORY

Contact: Clarissa Mendez, 703-631-0650

#### HEALTH CARE IN THE GOOD SOCIETY: HOW FAR HAVE WE NOW COME?

May 14, 2010, Washington, D.C. — Dialogue on Diversity's 2010 Health Care Symposium *Health Care in the Good Society: How Far Have We Now Come?* brought together an exciting lineup of speakers Wednesday, May 12 at the fourth floor conference salon at the American Federation of Teachers in Washington. Attendees included women entrepreneurs and the policy-conscious of diverse cultures and occupational niches, to hear and critique the analyses of an array of health care experts on topics ranging from the far reaching recent restructurings of America's health care basics to the late wrinkles in the diagnosis of AIDS and Cancers.

The early morning session included a discussion by the **Hon Donna M. Christian Christensen**, Delegate of the U.S. Virgin Islands in the House of Representatives, of the special rules for U.S. territories, including Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, the Northern Marianas and other U.S. Territories, under the recently enacted legislation. and an overview of health care policy as **Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton**, voice of the District of Columbia in the U.S. House of Representatives, reviewed the health care changes, especially the changes in rules on medical insurance, lamenting the storm of strident, largely unreasoning attacks on the new statute, which she termed "demagoguery". **Randi Weingarten**, President of the host American Federation of Teachers, host for the 2010 Symposium.

A highlight of the 2010 Symposium was the presentation of Dialogue on Diversity's Corporate Health Care Award to **Kaiser Permanente of the Mid-Atlantic States**. The Award presenter was long-time Dialogue friend Gregory L. Rohde, president of the international IT engineering firm e-Copernicus, who noted KP's creative provision of services to households in an America where many teeter on the "razor edge" of ruin with any medical disaster. Monica Villalta, who presides over the company's diversity programs, accepted the Awards, which honors a firm directing extraordinary corporate energies toward rendering its health care services accessible and affordable to the country's diverse ethnic minorities and economically disadvantaged households.

A reception at the conclusion of the Symposium followed in the conference hall foyer, treating guests, speakers, and sponsors with wine and a spread of hors d'œuvres. The reception closed – in keeping with the day's emphasis on service to the local region – with the presentation of recognition to two outstanding activists in the Washington metro community. The first award, for Community Mentorship, went to **Bettie Baca**, long distinguished in local and national civic work (and, it may be mentioned, a mainstay of Dialogue of Diversity's Board of Directors). An award for Community Leadership was conferred on **Rodrigo Leiva**, a skilled management counselor, with significant expertise in international economic matters. Mr. Leiva is the founder and Executive Director of the Latino Federation of Greater Washington, a consortium of organizations making up the essential civil society network of Washington's Latino community.

Haiti's Ambassador to Washington, **His Excellency Raymond A. Joseph**, as Symposium keynote speaker, noted the calamitous January earthquake that devastated the national capital. He recounted the ways in which many official agencies of the U.S., combining with countless NGOs, have stepped promptly into the breach and brought the populace through the immediate aftermath of the disaster. He sketched the sort of development that will be aimed at in the long reconstruction – a plan that will locate the essential infrastructure facilities not solely in the capital, but in the northern and central sections of the horseshoe-shaped country as well. Ambassador Joseph is an august and familiar figure, in Haiti itself and among the U.S. diaspora, through his forty years as journalist, radio commentator during the Duvalier era, and diplomat.

**Ivette Fernandez**, Pfizer's Director of Advocacy and Professional Relations for the Northeast Region and Puerto Rico, brought a commentary on health care economics and technology from the key perspective of that leading pharmaceutical producer. Pfizer had supported the now enacted Health Care reform statute, believing it to be the best route toward abating a number of unacceptable features of the system and in particular the practices of much of the insurance industry. She described the intensely human import of Pfizer programs, now assembled under the single rubric of *Pfizer's Helpful Answers*, for making medications available at reduced or no cost, reviving the life chances for countless individuals.

The Symposium centerpiece was an extended panel commentary and critique of the new health care reform statute. **Prof. Leighton Ku** of George Washington University reviewed salient provisions of the new statute . . . while **Tevi Troy** of Hudson Institute laid out his critique of facets of the statutory schema, analyzing the problematic tasks of implementation. The necessary complement of regulations will voluminous, complex, and long in coming. The workings of the new rules will be difficult to foresee with precision: one has to wait to observe the reactions of businesses, individuals, insurers, and providers in order to adjust the rules correctly – far from a trivial task. **Karen Davenport** of the Center for American Progress spelled out the explanation of the workings of

newly instituted system, **Daniel Dawes** of Premier Health Alliance, a service organization for a combine of several thousand U.S. hospitals, reviewed the elaborate time line prescribed by the long and complex statute for the kicking in of its many provisions, some to take effect immediately, some at various point later this year, and many others at points through 2014. Other experts reviewed its effects on minority communities, small business, families, and other groups in American society. Other experts will offer a critique of sundry features of the new law, discussing the arduous tasks lying ahead, the problems of detail in building the texture of regulations that will ultimately impart its final form and render it operational.

**Monica Villalta**, Diversity Director for Kaiser Permanente, Mid-Atlantic States, described the techniques her health-care organization has instituted for mediating medical expertise to patients of a variety of linguistic and ethnic settings, aiming at that cultural competency that forms the goal continually striven after in health care delivery. **Henry Acosta**, Deputy Director of New Jersey Institute for Mental Health, outlined in a rapid fire account the cultural barriers blocking optimal approaches and treatment procedures in matters of mental health. Mr. Acosta brought a special focus on questions of the Latino population, and the forms of resistance that my be met with by providers and facilitators in the encounter with mental disorders in these family settings.