

# A Personal Letter

Dear Friend and Colleague,

## Welcome to the Sixth Annual National Latino AIDS Awareness Day (NLAAD) 2008!

The HIV/AIDS epidemic continues to have a disproportionate and devastating impact on the Latino/Hispanic population residing in the United States and its territories. The persistence and growth of the HIV epidemic among Latinos/Hispanics is nothing short of a public health crisis that demands immediate and ongoing action and mobilization. The numbers from the Centers for Control and Prevention tell part of the story. In 2006, Hispanics represented 15.3% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau), but accounted for 24.3% of the new HIV infections in the U.S. (Centers for Control and Prevention). But these figures do not reflect the true magnitude of the impact of the Latino/Hispanic HIV/AIDS epidemic, since data from states and territories with large Latino/Hispanic populations, such as California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Puerto Rico are not included. Despite the significant threat posed by HIV/AIDS to the health and well-being of Latino communities across the nation, public and private resources provided for prevention and care have been woefully inadequate.

In response to the high HIV/AIDS infections among Hispanics/Latinos, National Latino AIDS Awareness Day (NLAAD) was established to draw attention to the critical role HIV testing and prevention education plays in stemming the spread of HIV/AIDS.

NLAAD was created in 2003, by the Hispanic Federation and Latino Commission on AIDS, as a national organizing vehicle to foster

collaboration among organizations to help stem the tide of HIV/AIDS in our Latino communities. Additionally, October 15th was designated as NLAAD, as it culminates the celebration of Hispanic Heritage month and represents a call to action to Latinos/Hispanics across the country to protect the ones you love by getting tested for HIV.

**On October 15th, over 300 institutions in 250 cities across the U.S., Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands** will sponsor activities that respond to the state of HIV/AIDS among Latinos in their specific communities, ranging from HIV testing to cultural events, in an effort to reduce new infections and provide care for Hispanics/Latinos living with the virus. NLAAD will galvanize our voices and actions, and through our collaborative efforts – together with our brothers and sisters from the African-American, Pacific Islander, Native American and Anglo communities – we will be better prepared to respond to this crisis. Our hope is that NLAAD will become a year-round active network that promotes collaboration and partnerships.

This year's theme: *Unidos Podemos: HIV/AIDS Stops Here. Prevention Starts With Us* – speaks to the importance of working together to educate *nuestra gente* to prevent the infection from spreading; encourage HIV testing; provide medical treatment and care; and to continue to advocate for those living with HIV/AIDS. Prevention comes in many forms, and through our work as a united community, we will have a stronger and louder voice. Please join us in commemorating National Latino AIDS Awareness Day 2008.

The Latino Commission on AIDS and the Hispanic Federation, in conjunction with local, regional and national partners, are active participants in the planning process and will assist you with any help you may need in organizing your local or regional events. For more information or **if you have any questions, please contact Liliana Rañón**, NLAAD Director, (212) 675-3288 ext. 315 or [Iranon@latinoaids.org](mailto:Iranon@latinoaids.org). Please **visit [www.nlaad.org](http://www.nlaad.org)** to join the campaign, register your NLAAD event, and to request additional campaign materials.

Unidos Podemos,

Dennis deLeon  
President  
Latino Commission on AIDS

Lillian Rodríguez López  
President  
Hispanic Federation