



THE STAY STRONG FOUNDATION “HEALING STARTS WITH US”



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THE STAY STRONG FOUNDATION LAUNCHES NATIONAL “HEALING STARTS WITH US” CAMPAIGN WITH CELEBRITY GUESTS DENZEL WASHINGTON, RUBY DEE, MO’NIQUE, TERRY MCMILLAN, REV. AL SHARPTON AND OTHERS

*Campaign Seeks One Million Pledges in Support of Movement and Encourages Open Dialogue
Within The Community*

New York, NY – March 18, 2008 – The Stay Strong Foundation unveiled its plan today to launch a national campaign entitled “Healing Starts With Us.” On the heels of Terrie M. Williams’ latest book, *BLACK PAIN: It Just Looks Like We’re Not Hurting*, emerges a powerful movement aimed to provide a support network that encourages open dialogue about emotional distress within the African American community. The “Healing Starts With Us” campaign kicks off at The Malcolm X & Dr Betty Shabazz Memorial & Educational Center, formerly known as the Audubon Ballroom, on Tuesday, March 18, 2008 from 6-8 pm.

The impetus of Williams’ book, which fuels the campaign, came in 2005 after she shared her own personal battle with depression in *ESSENCE* magazine. With over 10,000 letters from people relieved to speak about their pain for the first time, the urgency to educate, bring awareness and transform the lives of individuals who suffer through episodes of emotional distress became an urgent call to action.

There is a stigma of shame related to mental health issues in Black and Hispanic communities. “This taboo topic,” says Williams, “is linked to most street violence, drug/alcohol abuse, homelessness, domestic violence, child abuse as well as physical health problems such as obesity and heart disease. We’re afraid to talk to a therapist—we’re afraid to talk to each other and the silence is killing us. According to the World Health Organization Report on Mental Illness, by the year 2020, depression is projected to become the second largest killer in America behind heart disease. Ultimately this work helps us to recognize what depression looks, feels and sounds like and offers solutions.”

“When you know better, you do better. The ‘Healing Starts With Us’ campaign was created as an ‘open book’ to encourage people to share their life challenges, so that the healing can begin. Creating support

networks around the country and the pledge commitments will return power to individuals and to communities,” said Xavier Artis, Creative Philanthropist and CEO of Artis Connection, the company responsible for creating and producing the campaign and tour. “The Malcolm X & Dr. Betty Shabazz Memorial & Educational Center is the perfect place from which to launch a community message of hope and healing.”

The event, hosted by **Susan L. Taylor**, founder of the National Cares Mentoring Movement and editor emeritus of *ESSENCE*, and **Geoffrey Canada**, educator and founder of the Harlem Children’s Zone, brings together civic, social, political leaders and entertainers such as **Academy Award® nominee Ruby Dee**, **John Amos**, **Mo’Nique**, **Terry McMillan**, HBO’s *The Wire* co-stars **Jamie Hector** and **Felicia “Snoop” Pearson**, **Rev. Al Sharpton** and **Madeline McCray** – all reading insightful and provocative excerpts from *BLACK PAIN* and beginning an open and honest public discussion around depression. **Academy Award® winner Denzel Washington** will also pay special tribute to Malcolm X.

Campaign sponsors include The Dixon Group, Inc.; Forest City Ratner Companies; Macy’s; Coca-Cola; The River Room; Columbia University Office of Government and Community Affairs; Jonathan Tisch Foundation, CareerPeeks; The Malcolm X & Dr. Betty Shabazz Memorial & Educational Center; The Loreen Arbus Foundation; Moët Hennessy USA; The Middleton Law Group; Shabazz Fish & Grill; The Terrie Williams Agency; Bad Boy Entertainment Worldwide; The Artis Connection; Planet Hollywood; BET; Sean Jean; National Cares Mentoring Movement; Alpha International Travel; and Sean John.

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Quote from Jeff Johnson – Campaign Spokesperson

“In an era of emotionally-charged campaigns that propose change, I am honored to endorse one that truly affects our communities to the core,” said Jeff Johnson, national public speaker and campaign’s spokesperson. “I am equally honored to work alongside Terrie Williams whose mentorship and support have been a great inspiration to me,” added Johnson.

About Terrie M. Williams

Terrie Williams is a nationally acclaimed author, public speaker, youth and mental health advocate. The Terrie Williams Agency, which she founded in 1988, has represented some of the biggest names in entertainment, business and sports. Founder of The Stay Strong Foundation for youth, Terrie shared her story of living with depression in the June 2005 issue of *ESSENCE*. Her latest book *BLACK PAIN: It Just Looks Like We’re Not Hurting* builds on the article’s phenomenal response. *BLACK PAIN* reveals the untold story of depression among African American corporate executives, celebrities, noted professionals and everyday people, as well as Terrie’s own story of chronic depression.

About The Stay Strong Foundation

The Stay Strong Foundation (SFF) is a 501c (3) organization that works to support, educate and inspire America’s youth through Terrie Plus One, a series of engagement opportunities including internships, mentoring, and shadowing programs. These programs also provide opportunities for young people to join Terrie Williams and her colleagues in the business world as they attend corporate board meetings, private dinners, black-tie fundraisers, speaking engagements and other special events – ultimately encouraging the realization of dreams through educational, career and professional development.