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Council of National Religious AIDS Networks

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Council of National Religious AIDS Networks

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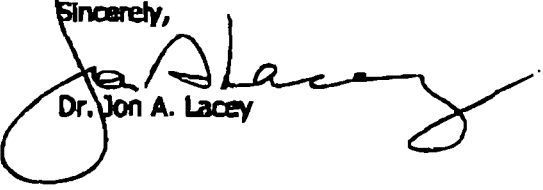
Dear Sandy:

I had hoped to see you in Zambia this past week at the ICASA conference on AIDS in Southern Africa; I was disappointed that you were not able to come. Though there was a visible presence of Agency for International Development contractors and projects throughout the conference, there was an awareness, or a perception, stated even from the Chair, that the US doesn't care enough for the suffering people of Sub-Saharan Africa. I spoke with one of the Belgian interpreters who was working behind the scenes of the conference and he said that there was great consternation that the US officials from the CDC who'd been advertised as coming, didn't show. That morning Dr. Helene Gayle had been the published co-chair of the final session. For whatever reasons, the US did not come off as especially concerned or even interested in that part of the world and its AIDS pandemic.

I happen to believe that that is not the case. I was pleased to read of the President's remarks before the UN and his promise to convene a special meeting to address US efforts for the region. This may be the same group that you informed us of when we, the Council of National Religious AIDS Networks, visited with you a bit more than a month ago. Is anything happening on that front? As the Council reiterated in our meeting with you, we would very much like to be involved with the White House in such an effort—and we do represent the religious networks who are actively involved both domestically and internationally in delivering AIDS care and prevention. I remain convinced that our faith communities can and have to make a difference and have special challenges because many of the faith communities in Africa are themselves major barriers to addressing the pandemic.

I look forward to hearing from you about developments that may involve us and our members. Maybe we will see one another from afar on Sunday at the AIDS Walk in Detroit.

Sincerely,


Dr. Jon A. Lacey