

The Nat'l Black Church Initiative is Joining with The Michael J Fox Foundation to Raise Awareness of Parkinson's Disease

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, January 10, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI), a coalition of 150,000 African American churches and 27.7 million members, is launching a new program supported by [The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research \(MJFF\)](#)² to raise awareness of Parkinson's disease and research opportunities in the African American community. The pilot program, launching in Houston, Texas and St. Louis, Missouri, will engage NBCI members in educational programming and connect congregants to Parkinson's care and research resources.

Parkinson's is a progressive, neurodegenerative disorder — a condition that damages the brain and worsens over time — affecting about 1 million people in the United States. The hallmark tremor (shaking), slowness and stiffness of Parkinson's disease happens when cells in the brain that produce dopamine stop working or die.

Dopamine is a neurotransmitter, a chemical that sends messages between cells to help the body function. Other body systems impacted by Parkinson's can cause sleep disturbances, mood changes, memory and thinking issues, balance and walking problems, and other symptoms.

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— *Rev. Anthony Evans, President of the National Black Church Initiative*

Our understanding of the cause, progression and treatment of Parkinson's disease is growing but remains far from complete. Unfortunately, most of this research has not been inclusive of the broader community of people with Parkinson's, including people and families of the African American community. As a result, research has shown an incomplete picture of how PD affects patients and families

across racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, gender, sexuality and geographic spectrums. It is estimated that African Americans are disproportionately impacted in receiving care and often a diagnosis at a later stage of the disease, which may impact treatment and surgical intervention plans. Many factors such as limited access to healthcare, historical exclusion from research studies, and practitioner bias drive these disparities.

Rev. Anthony Evans, President of the National Black Church Initiative, said, “We are both honored and proud of The Michael J. Fox Foundation for their brilliant research and advocacy concerning Parkinson's disease. NBCI's effort is governed by our commitment to increase education and clinical research awareness and opportunities for both African American clinicians and patients. Our vision is to work in partnership with the Foundation to create a level-one educational and clinical delivery system to educate and empower our members toward a cure for this dreadful disease. This partnership underscores our commitment to fulfilling the principles of the NBCI National Black Health Agenda.”

MJFF, the largest nonprofit funder of Parkinson's research, runs many programs to broaden our understanding of the disease. Notably, the Foundation supports the Global Parkinson's Genetics Program, a resource of the [Aligning Science Across Parkinson's](#)¹ initiative. This program collects data and samples from more than 220 studies in over 60 locations on six continents to uncover more about genetic drivers of Parkinson's disease. The [Black and African American Connections to Parkinson's Disease](#)³ study is one contributing study. It is recruiting at 11 U.S. sites, including in Houston and St. Louis.

“The Michael J. Fox Foundation is committed to driving cures for all people with Parkinson's disease,” says Alyssa O'Grady, MJFF Head of Clinical Research. “We are grateful for this partnership with the National Black Church Initiative to educate, engage and empower the African American Parkinson's community toward better care and research participation. Momentum is building toward new treatments; only with partners from all backgrounds will we fully realize a future without this disease.”

About NBCI

The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI) is a coalition of 150,000 African American and Latino churches working to eradicate racial disparities in healthcare, technology, education, housing, and the environment. The mission of NBCI is to provide critical wellness information to all of its members, congregants, churches, and the public. NBCI, utilizing faith and sound health science and partners with major organizations and officials, reduces racial disparities in the variety of areas cited above. NBCI's programs are governed by credible statistical analysis, science-based strategies and techniques, and methods that work and offer faith-based, out-of-the-box, and cutting-edge solutions to stubborn economic and social issues.

Visit us at <https://naltblackchurch.com>

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Rev Anthony Evans, President of the National Black Church Initiative



Logo of the The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research (MJFF)

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¹ <https://parkinsonsroadmap.org/>

² <https://www.michaeljfox.org/>

³ <https://www.blaacpd.org/DJYD/>

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