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Contacts:

Chloe Walters-Wallace cwallace@iwesnola.org

Tracey Spinato – tspinato@iwesnola.org

THE INSTITUTE OF WOMEN & ETHNIC STUDIES ANNOUNCES A RAPID RESPONSE GRANT FROM THE OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

A recent grant award from the Open Society Foundations will fund rapid response services to address the rise in harassment, violence and social marginalization of vulnerable racial/ethnic and LGBTQ populations in the Greater New Orleans community, particularly among school-age youth.

The Institute of Women and Ethnic Studies (IWES) announced today the receipt of a new grant from the Open Society Foundations to conduct rapid response services focusing on alleviating youth trauma resulting from contentious rhetoric, hate crimes and racism. Over the next six months, the grant award will provide much needed crisis assessment and intervention services to New Orleans' youth.

Since mid-November, IWES staff implementing positive youth development and emotional resiliency programs in schools have reported a significant rise in the fearfulness/anxiety among the youth they serve, in response to the contentious rhetoric, hate crimes and racism experienced first-hand and often portrayed in the media. Many Latino youth report fear of deportation; black youth report fears of being re-enslaved and victimized; and LGBTQ youth report harassment based on their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. Quite alarmingly, several of these youth have reported suicidal ideation. This heightened level of fear, stress, worry, inter-racial bullying and suicidality is compounded by the post-Katrina elevation of traumatic stress disorders in vulnerable youth of color.

With funding from the Open Society Foundations, IWES, in partnership with local government, education faith-based and health agencies, will provide the following crisis intervention and anti-bullying activities:

- Conduct acute crisis response mental health services to youth, and those in need of deeper level intervention will be referred IWES psychiatrist and/or additional mental health services and supports;
- Train school faculty (i.e. teachers, social workers) on restorative justice and psychological first aid practices to increase their capacity to be the first line responders capable of diffusing racial/ethnic/cultural conflicts amongst youth;
- Collect hate incident data to contribute to the national registry; and
- Conduct city-wide public will campaign to harness more compassionate attitudes towards youth and their families



“Witnessing students face these difficult issues motivated IWES to find and provide additional support for students across the city. By uniting together and supporting the victims of these incidents the organization endeavors to help those most vulnerable in our communities,” said Dr. Denese Shervington, President & CEO of IWES.

Nancy Youman, Manager of the Communities Against Hate local initiatives also commented on the national response to the issue: "We have been heartened by the outpouring of ideas from community organizations all over the country who are determined to stand up in the face of hatred and bullying and empower the most vulnerable among us. We are proud to support the Institute in this vital work--so desperately needed in the current climate--and believe in their commitment and capability to make a real difference for children and educators, and in communities that need them most."

For more information please visit iwesnola.org or call Tracey Spinato LMSW at (504) 599-7712.

About IWES

Founded in 1993, IWES is a national, non-profit health organization that creates initiatives to heal communities, especially those facing adversity. Through community-driven research programs, training, advocacy and partnerships, IWES helps to build emotional and physical well-being, resilience and capacity among women, their families and communities of color, especially those which are disadvantaged.