

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Community Draws Attention to Dire Need for Culturally-Specific  
Services for Violence Victims in Sherman Park Neighborhood of  
Milwaukee**

**Event includes** a 12-hour (9am to 9pm) candle light vigil on 10/28/16 inside the now darkened offices of Asha Family Services that acknowledges awareness to the victims of domestic abuse and sex trafficking in the community who will not be served. The power is off; however, there is still some light. The lit candles represent “Some light” that is still present. Further, the event highlights the lack of support for or inadequate support for culturally specific organizations in Milwaukee and WI that are established and led by the population served.

On **Friday, October 28, 2016**, a coalition of survivors, advocates and supporters of the former 28 year old Asha Family Services, Inc., (Asha) will hold a 12 hour, lights-out, Candle Light Vigil inside Asha Family Service’s location in the Sherman Park area – 3717-3719 W. Center Street, Milwaukee, WI 53210. **A Press Conference is scheduled at 3:00pm.**

In an earlier Press Release by the City of Milwaukee Commission on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, “The closing of vital resources, like Asha Family Services, an agency that supported victims of domestic violence and sex trafficking around the state for nearly three decades, represents a devastating loss of culturally-specific services for some of our community’s most vulnerable members at a time when they are needed most.”

**The vigil goals:**

- **To provide awareness and recognition for October as national Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM). And, sadness for the victims who will go un-served.**

- **With the recent defunding of Asha Family Services, there is a critical lack of culturally specific services for African American victims of domestic and sexual violence and human trafficking in Milwaukee and in prisons.**

**WI has a historic track record of disparate treatment of African Americans in the criminal legal system, the housing system, and the economic opportunity systems. The radically inequitable conditions that exist in Milwaukee due to segregation make it all the more difficult for community-based, community-driven organizations to deliver services. The playing field for culturally specific services by and for African Americans in Milwaukee is unequal. Those who most need the services in communities with the greatest barriers have the least resources.**

- **Recommendations of the WI Long Range Plan for Domestic Violence Services acknowledges the need for increased culturally-specific services to ensure that every Wisconsinite lives free from violence and with dignity. The plan recommends the following: *Support community-driven services for culturally-specific and underrepresented populations, including services to LGBT communities throughout Wisconsin. These services should be by, for and of communities they serve.* <http://www.widvplan.com/cslgbt>**

#### **Press Conference Speakers:**

- \*Patricia McManus, Ph.D. President, Black Health Coalition of WI**
- \*Erin Perkins, Coordinator, City of Milwaukee Commission on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault**
- \*Pastor Greg Lewis, President, Pastors United**
- \*Victim Advocates**