



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NEGRO WOMEN, INC.

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS:

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March is Women's Empowerment Month

National Council of Negro Women Partners With Ashley Stewart Stores "to bridge the communication gap" between African-American Women and Girls

(Washington, DC) March 6, 2009 - Everyone has been talking about it since now First Lady Michelle Obama appeared on the campaign trail during the Democratic primaries. While, the positive effect she will have on young African-American girls is yet to be quantified, the National Council of Negro Women, Inc. (NCNW) through its partnership with Ashley Stewart Stores is tackling the challenge of building strong, empowered young women head on.

Every month, in more than 200 Ashley Stewart stores across the county, the NCNW network provides young girls with access to the experience, wisdom and listening ears of everyday Michelle Obamas, as they progress toward womanhood.

"It is said that it takes a village to raise a child," says Dr. Dorothy I. Height, Chair and President Emerita of the National Council of Negro Women, Inc. "Since the launch of our *We Are Listening* campaign, small villages are being created across the nation fostering multi-generational conversations between our young girls and women to talk about the real issues affecting their lives."

What began as an opportunity for local NCNW chapters to meet at Ashley Stewart stores has grown into a rallying cry to help transform the way young African-Americans girls are perceived (or are allowing themselves to be perceived) in broader society. The growing dialogue is designed to empower young girls to take charge of their lives and find support and resources to deal with the issues confronting them.

"Our stores have always served as places that bring women together. This partnership with the National Council of Negro Women is uniquely fulfilling for the Ashley Stewart Foundation as it reflects our complementary missions to transform the lives of women and youth in the community," says Renau Daniels, Executive Director, Ashley Stewart Foundation.

Through this partnership, Ashley Stewart stores serve not only as NCNW meeting venues, but also as community safe havens. Local NCNW sections will work in partnership with Ashley Stewart Stores in their area to encourage community outreach, mentoring, and local activities that will empower and inform African American women. The intergenerational dialogues will foster more open communication between generations of women and allow them to share their experiences, strength and hope with each other.

Within ten (10) weeks of the launch of the program, in November 2008, more than 20,000 women joined the campaign, and more than \$700,000 was raised via a NCNW membership drive in Ashley Stewart stores. Since then, 1800-2000 women have been joining the campaign each week. To further encourage women to join the campaign and attend the meetings, Ashley Stewart stores offers a 20% discount on all purchases after meetings. Customers who join NCNW receive a 10% discount off all purchases for one year following their enrollment.

“Even in these challenging economic times, African-American women across the country have sent a powerful message about this program and their commitment to our young girls,” adds Renau Daniels. “The work of the National Council of Negro Women continues to be transformative in our community.”

To join the campaign or attend a meeting, contact the National Council of Negro Women at 202-737-0120 or the Ashley Stewart Foundation at 201-319-9093.

About The National Council of Negro Women Inc.

The National Council of Negro Women, Inc. (NCNW) is a council of national African American women's organizations and community-based sections. Founded in 1935, the NCNW mission is to lead, develop, and advocate for women of African descent as they support their families and communities. NCNW fulfills this purpose through research, advocacy, and national and community-based services and programs on issues of health, education, and economic empowerment in the United States and Africa. With its 39 national affiliates and more than 240 sections, NCNW is a 501(c)3 organization with an outreach to nearly four million women.

About Ashley Stewart

Ashley Stewart is the leading women's specialty retailer in Urban America with over 215 stores throughout the United States and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Urban Brands Inc. is the parent company of Ashley Stewart Stores and Marianne, leading women's specialty stores in North America.

About the Ashley Stewart Stores Community Foundation

The Ashley Stewart Stores Community Foundation (ASSCF) is committed to transforming the lives of women and youth in the communities we serve by providing resources to individuals and organizations that focus on health/wellness and educational initiatives.