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Atlanta Welcomes Concert Series To Ebenezer

By CYNTHIA POST

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The Atlanta edition of Project People Foundation's Celebrating Life: Concert Series – a benefit for women, children and youth in South Africa's AIDS-ravaged communities – will be held Sunday, Nov. 18 at 4 p.m. at Ebenezer Baptist Church, 407 Auburn Ave., N. E., under the Rev. Raphael G. Warnock, senior pastor.

Project People Foundation, a New York City-based charitable organization that focuses on economic and social empowerment of disadvantaged women and children in South Africa, has enlisted the help of Atlanta dignitaries and a coalition of churches and faith based organizations, including the Atlanta Black-Jewish Coalition, Atlanta's African-American church community, and the American Jewish Committee – Atlanta Chapter, to join forces in support of the Celebrating Life Concert.

The purpose of the Celebrating Life: Concert Series, which will be presented across the nation over the next two years, is to provide a platform to inspire and effect change while celebrating life, bridging communities, and building hope.

Dr. Johnnetta B. Cole, president emerita of Spelman College in Atlanta and Bennett College for Women in North Carolina, and Elaine B. Alexander, American Jewish Committee – Atlanta Chapter, are honorary chairs for the event.

"I got involved for two reasons," Cole said. "As Martin Luther King Jr. said, 'life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'what are you doing for others?'"

"The world is constantly shrinking," she continued. "As Martin Luther King Jr. said, 'we are interdependent.' What is happening in South Africa, on the continent of Africa and in the world concerns us. In particular, I have spent my life in support of programs that support women and girls."

Cole hopes the audience will experience several emotions during the concert.

"I hope they feel the joy of moving music," she said. "I hope they experience belief - that we can cross cultural, national and religious boundaries.

"I hope they feel hope – that we can affect even the most wretched situation like AIDS in South Africa," Cole continued. "I hope they will feel inspiration – to continue what each person can do to affect positive change in the world."

Archbishop Desmond Tutu is the honorary patron for the concert.

Major supporters include Atlanta icons Congressman John Lewis; the Rev. Gerald L.



Durley, pastor of Providence Missionary Baptist Church; Rabbi Alvin Sugarman, Rabbi Emeritus of The Temple, Atlanta; and Rabbi Neil Sandler, Ahavath Achim Synagogue.

Manini Mkhabela, a 16-year-old who resides in a South African AIDS orphanage supported by Project People Foundation, will also speak at the benefit as a special guest.

Mkhabela was orphaned when her mother died five years ago of AIDS.

“The mission of the Celebrating Life: Concert Series is to bring to life our common vision of delivering hope, strength and justice to the women and children of South Africa who struggle with the burden of poverty and disease,” said the Rev. Linda Tarry-Chard, Project People Foundation founder and president. “We live out our concert theme by bridging community and building hope in South Africa and in the United States among our audiences at the concerts.

“What’s happening in Atlanta and in the U.S. is critical to the success of what we can do in South Africa,” Tarry-Chard continued.

The concert will feature soloist Diana Solomon-Glover from The Riverside Church of New York City.

Guest artists include the Morehouse College Glee Club; Ken Ford, electric jazz violinist; Cantor Deborah Numark, The Temple, Atlanta; and acclaimed New York composer Deborah Nodel Gordon.

Gordon, who was inspired, in part, by the poetry of Mkhabela, will perform Dreams Are Never Free, an original composition that also draws inspiration from the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Rabbi Hillel, and South African poet and political activist Don Mattera.

All are welcome and tickets, \$30, may be purchased online at www.projectpeoplefoundation.org or by contacting Project People Foundation representative, Sidmel Estes Sumpter, at 404-630-1976.

All tickets must be purchased in advance.

Funds raised from the Celebrating Life concerts will enable PPF to build its capacity and expand its programming for the women and children in South Africa.

The Coca-Cola Company is the official corporate sponsor of the Atlanta Celebrating Life Concert.

For more information on Project People Foundation and the Celebrating Life: Concert Series, visit www.projectpeoplefoundation.org.