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### **Money Matters: Women Coping with HIV/AIDS**

The narrative of HIV/AIDS is constantly changing shape and direction as more information comes to light. The 1980s brought the disease into public awareness. The 1990s offered significant medical advances for those living with the virus. Celeste Watkins-Hayes, African American studies, sociology, and IPR, hopes to contribute to this story by bringing focus to the economic and social experiences of women living with HIV.

While a wealth of research exists spotlighting the efficacy of HIV prevention and education efforts, the daily lives of those living with the virus is a rare focus in public and academic spheres. Through two prestigious grants—a Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) Award from the NSF and a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health Investigator Award—Watkins-Hayes hopes to explore how HIV-positive women navigate monetary needs once diagnosed with the disease. Her past work examining the intricacies of the welfare system and the general concerns of women living with HIV/AIDS serves as a foundation for the new study.

This innovative ethnographic analysis seeks to understand how women's everyday economic survival strategies shape their abilities to manage their health once diagnosed with HIV. While much is made of the medical transformation of HIV/AIDS from an inevitable death sentence to a chronic illness, little attention has been given to the new economic concerns that resulted from this change. Watkins-Hayes will actively recruit HIV-positive women from various ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds



in order to determine how being HIV positive shapes the economic and social contours of women's lives.

In addition to women living with HIV, AIDS service providers will also be studied to examine how assistance from public, private, and nonprofit organizations contributes to women's financial resources and how being connected to these institutions can be a crucial step for both the economic and social survival for those afflicted.

Watkins-Hayes will disseminate the findings through presentations for both academic and lay audiences, scholarly and popular press articles, and a book. She also plans to create a web site and policy briefs in the hopes that her findings might have a significant policy and programmatic impact as city, state, and federal government officials, service providers, and the general public fight the AIDS epidemic. ▀