



MENDEZ NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
TRANSPLANTATION FOUNDATION

***FEBRUARY* IS NATIONAL BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

***MARCH* IS NATIONAL KIDNEY MONTH**

***APRIL* IS NATIONAL DONATE LIFE MONTH AND**

NATIONAL MINORITY HEALTH MONTH

A staggering **1 in 7 people have kidney disease** - an estimated 37 million Americans - and most do not find out until their kidney disease is advanced. In addition, **17 people die every day** waiting for a life-saving organ transplant and a new name is added to the transplant waiting list every 9 minutes.

African Americans have a prevalence of chronic kidney disease that is **25% higher** than White Americans, and they are **10 times** more likely to develop hypertension-related kidney failure and almost **4 times** more likely to develop kidney failure. COVID-19 has further exposed the significant healthcare disparities that exist within this population.

Just in time for the upcoming National Black History Month, National Kidney Month, National Donate Life Month and National Minority Health Month comes a PSA featuring Vanessa Williams, who stars in the ***Linked by Love*** “**Get the Facts! Get Checked! Get Healthy!**” PSA campaign for the Mendez National Institute of Transplantation Foundation (MNITF). In the PSA, Williams shares her personal story of her grandmother who passed at an early age from complications due to diabetes and delivers a strong call-to-action about kidney disease prevention, getting the facts, getting regular check-ups and learning more at [LinkedbyLoveTV.org](https://www.linkedbylove.org)

“Awareness of diabetes and organ donation is personal to me. I lost my grandmother at 64 from complications of diabetes and failing health, and my father was an organ donor so it’s always been in my family history,” remarked Vanessa Williams. “Being a part of the *Linked by Love* PSA is my opportunity to be part of the education and awareness to guide people towards solutions and hopefully, it’s a wake-up call for more needed attention to a culture and community that hasn’t been treated fairly by the medical environment.”

“*Linked by Love* is an effort to decrease the disparities of kidney disease and increase access to transplantation in an engaging and innovative way. Lack of awareness and information, mistrust of the health system, fear and anxiety, denial and ignoring health issues are leading barriers which contribute to the disparities,” said Nicole Mendez, Executive Director of Mendez National Institute of Transplantation Foundation. “*Linked by Love* tackles these barriers. It is a beautiful story of the strength of family and faith to help get through the challenges of kidney failure.”

The *Linked by Love* PSA campaign and award-winning companion digital series about kidney transplantation and living donation targets the needs of African American patients and families facing end-stage renal disease (ESRD).

“When a person is given a diagnosis of kidney failure, it radically changes their life. It is difficult and scary. *Linked by Love* addresses the difficult challenges that a person faces in a warm and loving story of a family that rallies together to face these challenges head on. It addresses not only what the patient is facing, but the loved ones as well. *Linked by Love* exposes the challenges that black people face when it comes to kidney disease, providing education, promoting awareness, and building understanding,” added Nicole Mendez.

On LinkedbyLoveTV.org, [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com), [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com), [Youtube](https://www.youtube.com) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com), the general public can get information about kidney disease and prevention, becoming an organ donor, how to access transplantation, how to be proactive in healthcare, and what they need to know about living donation.

About the Mendez National Institute of Transplantation Foundation (MNITF):

MNITF is a public non-profit organization that adheres to its mission of advancing the science and practice of organ transplantation and end-stage organ disease therapies through research, education, and innovation. MNITF's commitment to education and outreach has resulted in successful, community patient education programs that target underserved populations to increase awareness and access to transplantation.

The award-winning web series, *Fixing Paco*, which was shot in both English and Spanish, is a groundbreaking 10-episode telenovela-style series created to provide vital information about kidney transplantation and maintenance to Latinos and those with end-stage renal disease (ESRD).

Similar to the award-winning *Fixing Paco* series, *Linked by Love* presents transplant and living donation information by combining education and entertainment (edutainment) to create a fictional story that incorporates drama and comedy. The project is unique because scientific research is being used to help create the main characters and storyline by addressing the common barriers that prevent Black or African Americans from accessing and utilizing transplantation as a treatment option.

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