

Civil Rights Icon Charles D. Neblett, PhD, Denied Critical Cancer Care Coverage Despite July 1 Medicare Policy Change

Denied Cancer Treatment Coverage Despite New Medicare Policy, Civil Rights Icon Inspires National Fundraiser as Black Prostate Check Challenge™ Enters Year Two

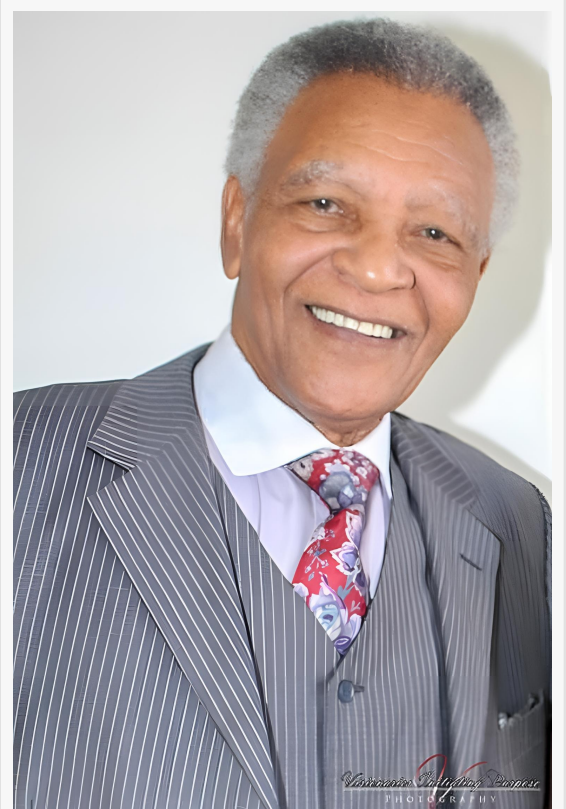
LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, July 2, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As the CMS Interoperability and Prior Authorization Final Rule took effect this week—requiring faster insurance decisions and electronic submissions—civil rights icon Dr. Charles D. Neblett is still waiting.

The 84-year-old SNCC Freedom Singer, now battling stage 4 metastatic prostate cancer, has yet to receive approval for Promacta™, a critical platelet-stabilizing medication. Despite federal reforms and public pledges by insurers like Humana, Aetna, and UnitedHealthcare, delays persist. In Neblett's case, those delays may prove fatal.

For over two months, Neblett has gone without Promacta™, and his platelet count has dropped to dangerously low threshold of irreversible damage that increases the risk of internal bleeding, hemorrhagic stroke, or trauma-induced death. The medication, which helps his bone marrow produce platelets, remains blocked by insurance even under the new CMS policy meant to prevent such life-threatening delays.

Even as Medicare announces steps to improve prior authorization, Neblett warns: a pledge is not a protection. "The same companies delaying my care now signed voluntary pledges back in 2018. If they meant it, I wouldn't be fighting for this medicine today."

"Woke up this morning with my mind stayed on freedom." It was a spiritual before it became a



Dr. Charles D. Neblett, co-founder of the SNCC Freedom Singers and civil rights icon. Neblett is currently battling stage 4 prostate cancer while leading the national Black Prostate Check Challenge™ campaign to spotlight health equity.

rallying cry—but reimagined for protest and mass meetings. Charles Neblett sang it through tear gas and jail bars as a founding member of the SNCC Freedom Singers. Facing the eve of Independence Day, he sings a different verse—one rooted in medical urgency, not metaphor.

“This isn’t freedom,” Neblett says. “Not if I’m fighting cancer while still battling for the medicine that keeps my blood from breaking down.”

His concern is echoed by Black Prostate Check Challenge panelist™ Dr. Clayton Yates, a John R. Lewis Professor of Pathology and Director of Translational Health Disparities Research at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. Dr. Yates affirms:

“Black men are more likely to experience low platelet counts during prostate cancer treatment—and if your platelets drop too low, your blood can’t clot. That raises the risk of hemorrhagic stroke.”

Johns Hopkins, where Yates leads multiple initiatives, is a global hub for prostate cancer research

“

Woke Up This Morning with My Mind Stayed on Freedom”—once a hymn, Neblett helped turn it into a civil rights rally cry. Facing the eve of Independence Day, his verse is medical, not metaphor.”

Charles D. Neblett, PhD., Civil Rights Icon

and care innovation. It was the birthplace of modern prostate cancer diagnostics and has developed leading surgical and clinical techniques used worldwide today. Its team includes one of the largest and most influential groups of prostate cancer clinicians and researchers, known for their work in urologic oncology, cancer genetics, and health equity.

Yates’s clinical findings on Black men and prostate cancer are regularly published and were recently featured in [Nature Communications](#) to demonstrate the link between inflammation-related immune responses and more lethal tumor profiles in Black men. These biological differences,

combined with systemic insurance obstacles, help explain why mortality rates remain highest among Black prostate cancer patients.



NiCole Gipson is the founder of NGPR Strategic Communications and architect of the Black Prostate Check Challenge™. Returning to Los Angeles to lead high-profile entertainment clients, she delivers cross-platform storytelling across film, television, and publishing.

Still, Charles and his family face mounting uncertainty. His prescribed medication remains inaccessible. His condition, though stable, is fragile. And the new CMS rule, celebrated in national headlines, has yet to bring real relief.

Marvinia Benton Neblett, Charles's wife of over 50 years and his full-time caregiver, underscores the urgency.

"This campaign is about visibility, yes—but also survival," she says. "Health equity means nothing if people can't access the medication their doctors prescribe. What does this say about how we treat our elders—especially in Black communities, where the combination of stroke and cancer is already too common?"

Charles Neblett, Ph.D. was honored with the Pioneer of Justice Award by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund (#NEJAD2025), commemorating the 60th anniversary of Selma. The legacy of Dr. Charles D. Neblett inspired the Black Prostate Check Challenge™, a national campaign launched by [NíCole Gipson of NGPR Strategic Communications](#) exactly one year ago after Neblett announced his metastatic stage 4 cancer diagnosis. The campaign has now reached over 67 million people, sparking vital conversations across barbershops, newsrooms, and churches—helping shift public awareness and improve shared decision-making in Black men's healthcare.

Now in Year Two, Gipson elevates the campaign—Black Prostate Check Challenge™—into its second year, expanding beyond digital storytelling into structured platforms, including development of:

- A children's book series focused on generational health and a biography of Dr. Neblett's legacy
- A health equity docuseries, feature film — rooted in the real-life struggles and civil rights legacy of Charles
- A podcast dedicated to patient voices and systemic change

Gipson, founder of NGPR Strategic Communications, continues the blueprint for the campaign strategy in across multiple platforms and in coordination with legacy leaders, journalists, doctors, and grassroots organizers.

"My work has always centered on high-profile story telling—from ground breaking sitcoms to grassroots civil rights," Gipson says. "But this campaign expanded me into public service journalism with real stakes. It's not just storytelling—it's survival strategy."

As momentum builds, the team is entering a new phase. Doug Davis of Black Information Network co-created the campaign name and is shaping the next phase of multimedia expansion.

“This challenge is about real voices,” Davis says. “We need media that shows what Black families go through while it’s still happening—not after the fact.”

This next phase of the campaign will also honor Charles Neblett’s full legacy—from his earliest days marching with John Lewis and being jailed for nonviolent protest, to his current fight navigating the healthcare system as an elder, advocate, and grandfather.

“One wrong step, one untreated bleed, and it can be fatal,” Neblett says. “That kind of fragility is hard to speak out loud—I’ve marched through tear gas and buried friends with stronger bodies than mine right now. But my faith and this campaign keep me going.”

The urgency remains. A national fundraiser is now live to help Neblett access emergency Promacta™ doses and support BPCC 2.0. Every delay increases the risk. Every voice helps restore strength.

[HOW TO HELP:](#)

□ <https://www.givebutter.com/helpcharlesneblett>

□ Checks payable to: Community Projects, Inc. (501c3)

571 E 7th Street

Russellville, KY 42276

□ Contact: Marvinia Benton Neblett – (270) 957-2836

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NGPR

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