

# Medicare Cuts to Critical Cancer Care Leave Civil Rights Icon Charles D. Neblett, PhD, Denied Coverage

*Black Prostate Check Challenge™ Enters Its Second Year with Ni'Cole Gipson, Founder of NGPR Strategic Communications at the Helm*

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, July 7, 2025

/EINPresswire.com/ -- As the Medicare Prior Authorization Rule—meant to speed up access to treatment through electronic approvals—took effect this July across the U.S., and new Medicaid cuts were signed into law, civil rights icon Dr. Charles D. Neblett of Kentucky is still denied the critical cancer medication his doctors prescribed.

The 84-year-old SNCC Freedom Singer, now battling stage 4 metastatic prostate cancer, received approval for Promacta™, a critical platelet-stabilizing medication. But the drug is suddenly not covered due to a complex tangle of shifting policies, coverage classifications, and insurer protocols. Despite meeting medical need, the red tape has pushed his monthly out-of-pocket cost from manageable to unimaginable. In Neblett's case, that delay may prove fatal.

He has gone over two months without Promacta™, and his platelet count has dropped to a dangerously low threshold, raising the risk of internal bleeding, stroke, or trauma-induced death. The drug, which helps his bone marrow produce platelets, remains blocked—even under the new CMS policy intended to speed access to lifesaving treatments. "Woke up this morning with my mind stayed on freedom." It was a spiritual before it became a 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. July is intended for America to celebrate freedom. But this Freedom Singer sings a different verse—one rooted in medical urgency, not metaphor.



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.

"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 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 University, where Yates leads multiple initiatives, is a global hub for prostate cancer research 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.

“

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.*

Yates's clinical findings on Black men and prostate cancer are regularly published and were recently featured in "[Nature Communications](#)" demonstrating 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, founder of NGPR Strategic Communications and architect of the Black Prostate Check Challenge™. Gipson has led visibility campaigns for civil rights legacy families, health equity reform, and public service journalism.

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?"



NíCole 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

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™—expanding beyond digital storytelling across multiple platforms, including the development of:

- A children's book series focused on generational health and a biography of Dr. Neblett's legacy
- A health equity docuseries and 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, is advancing the campaign's blueprint by developing strategically aligned projects with publishers, podcasters, producers, and funders—while collaborating closely with legacy leaders, journalists, doctors, and grassroots organizers.

"My work has always centered on high-profile storytelling—from groundbreaking 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 the 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.”

An urgent national fundraiser is now live to help Neblett access emergency Promacta™ doses and support Black Prostate Check Challenge™. Every delay increases the risk. Every voice helps restore strength.

#### HOW TO HELP:

□ <https://givebutter.com/CharlesNeblett-CancerFund>

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

571 E 7th Street

Russellville, KY 42276

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

Note to Editors: This release may be excerpted or reprinted. Credit: Ni’Cole Gipson, NGPR Strategic Communications.

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