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## Berkeley preacher calls for blacks to fight abortion

Leslie Fulbright, Chronicle Staff Writer  
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Saying they are faced with a civil rights crisis that demands immediate attention, African American anti-abortion advocates will hold three events in the Bay Area later this month in an aggressive push to combat the high number of abortions among black women.

"The abortion issue is huge. It is the Darfur of America," and it's time to educate the public about it, said **Walter Hoyer**, a Berkeley preacher who founded the **Issues4Life Foundation**, a recently formed Union City-based organization intent on drafting more African Americans into the fight against abortion.

Issues4Life has organized the events to coincide with the Jan. 22 anniversary of Roe vs. Wade, Martin Luther King Jr. Day on Jan. 18 and Black History Month in February. All three events will feature Alveda King, the niece of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

A two-mile Walk for Life will be held in Oakland and a conference will be hosted at a Berkeley church Jan. 18. The following day, a walk similar to the one in Oakland will take place in San Francisco.

But Hoyer has bigger plans, hoping to eventually open chapters of Issues4Life across the country as a way to create a "one-stop shopping place" where black leaders, particularly pastors, will be able to get the information they need to teach others about the problem.

"We want to create opportunities to dialogue on issues concerning life, and abortion is the leading cause of death in the African American community," Hoyer said. "It is a moral issue as far as the church is concerned, and we want to strengthen the African American leadership.

"We have always taught abstinence. That is Christianity 101. But when people decide to have sex outside of marriage, we want to do other things like post-abortion counseling, anger management, day care and recovery programs."

Hoyer said he sees a problem with abortion clinics located in black neighborhoods and says people should be just as concerned with them as they are homicides, liquor stores and genocide in Africa.

But not everyone agrees with him.



The Rev. Amos Brown, president of the San Francisco branch of the NAACP, said that abortion is not a civil rights issue and that he has no plans to take part in the events.

"San Francisco's top civil rights issues are education, economic empowerment and political engagement," Brown said. "African American students are behind every ethnic group in this city academically. People who are learned and informed do the right thing. If not, they engage in destructive behavior.

"These pro-life people are demagogues and ideologues and are not receiving overwhelming support from the black community."

The African American anti-abortion groups base their argument in part on statistics from the Guttmacher Institute that show black women account for 32 percent of those getting abortions nationwide, while they make up just 13 percent of the population.

"Black women are nearly four times more likely than white women to have an abortion," said Lawrence Finer, director of domestic research at Guttmacher, a nonprofit research and policy organization. "The numbers have been like that for awhile."

Finer said black women are more likely than white women to have an unintended pregnancy and the reason for that is that they are less likely than white women to use contraceptives. He also said poor women are less likely to use birth control, and women of color are disproportionately poor.

Organizers hope that King, the keynote speaker for the Berkeley conference, will be a draw. Also speaking at the events will be New Jersey Pastor Clenard Childress Jr., an anti-abortion advocate and president of Life Education And Resource Network (LEARN) since 1999. He created an anti-abortion Web site, [www.blackgenocide.com](http://www.blackgenocide.com), in 2002 to try to reach the black community and strengthen the black anti-abortion leadership.

He compares abortion to slavery and says the fetus has a right to be protected by the Constitution.

"It is not the first time a segment of the community has had their rights denied," Childress said. "It is a civil rights issue because it is dehumanizing and not giving proper status as a citizen. Most people on the opposite side think it is not a person, just like they did during slavery. It is not the first time this country has done us wrong."

Childress said he expects there will be counter-protesters and looks forward to interacting with them.

## **Online resource**

### **Issues4life's web site:**

[links.sfgate.com/ZBYX](http://links.sfgate.com/ZBYX)

## Anti-abortion events

### Jan. 18

**Noon:** Standing Up for Life Walk at Oakland City Hall, 1 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza

**2:30-4:30 p.m.:** Leadership for Life Conference at the Progressive Missionary Baptist Church, 3301 King St., Berkeley

### Jan. 19

**11 a.m.:** Walk for Life in San Francisco at Justin Herman Plaza

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