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Black Religious Leaders Say Free Speech Rights Violated -- Come From Around Nation to Support Pastor Facing Prison Term

Contact: Pastor Stephen Broden, 214-394-0098



OAKLAND, Calif., Feb. 17 /[Christian Newswire](#)/ -- Top leaders in the Black pro-life movement are flying here to attend the sentencing of an African American pastor they say was wrongly convicted of violating Oakland's ordinance barring contact with women approaching an abortion clinic.

Walter Hoyo II was convicted January 15th of two misdemeanor counts of unlawfully approaching clinic patients in violation of Oakland's recently enacted ordinance prohibiting any contact within 100 feet of an abortion clinic.

"We're coming here because Black pastors and bishops around this country are just learning of Walter's fate and to silence the Gospel is unacceptable. It violates the freedom of speech of every Christian in this nation," said Rev. Johnny Hunter, president of Life Education And Resources Network (LEARN), a prominent African American pro-family, pro-life organization with members in 27 states.

Hoyo's sentencing by California Superior Court Judge Stuart Hing is scheduled for February 19, 2009 at 1:30 p.m. in Department 109 (5th Floor), 661 Washington Street, Oakland.

Hoyo is also party to a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of Oakland's ordinance and a hearing will be held in March in federal district court. Hoyo filed the constitutional challenge before his May 13, 2008 arrest in front of the Family Planning Specialists clinic.

"We see brother Hoyo standing for life and we ought to stand with him," said Dr. Levon Yuille of Ypsilanti, Mich.,

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president of the National Black Pro-Life Congress.

More than a third (37 percent) of pregnancies for black women ended in abortion, compared with 12 percent for non-Hispanic white women and 19 percent for Hispanic women in 2004, according to an April 14, 2008 report by the National Center for Health Statistics, a division of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In 2004, 453,000 black babies were aborted while 418,000 white and 269,000 Hispanic babies were aborted, according to the federal report.

"This is a deliberate attempt to silence the Church and its prophetic role in protecting the innocent lives in our community and especially Black babies," said Pastor Stephen Broden of Dallas, Texas. "Pastor Hoye represents a legacy of resistance by Black preachers to injustices perpetrated on the beloved community. Prenatal murder of Black babies by the abortion industry should be resisted by every black pastor across this country."

Hoye could face up to two years in prison and \$4,000 in fines.

He is represented by Life Legal Defense Foundation. For more information, contact Dana Cody at 916-727-4396.

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