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## The Cyrenian Project

*Walter Hoye Reaches Out to Churches*



Rev. Walter Hoye, the Baptist minister jailed in March, 2009 for his pro-life witness outside an Oakland abortion clinic, is starting what he calls the Cyrenian Project to reach out to African-American churches on abortion. The project is named after Simon of Cyrene, who helped Christ carry his cross on Calvary.

Rev. Hoye has lined up African-American supporters in Oakland and San Diego. Hoye responded to questions about the project in an August 17 email:

*What gave you the inspiration to start the Cyrenian project?*

As an African-American minister I was challenged by the faith and the commitment to the sanctity of life of the co-founders of the Walk for Life West Coast. Facing an uphill battle Eva and Dolores built a team and moved forward with the walk despite overwhelming odds and the mighty forces of evil against them.

With my own experiences having taught me that the baby inside the womb is a person, a living human being and having reached out to the mothers and fathers walking into an abortion clinic to end the life of their child as a sidewalk counselor, I was already convinced that abortion is the number one issue in the African-American community today and so in 2006 I volunteered to help promote the Walk for Life West Coast. My goal was to share the truth about the impact of abortion in the African-American community, and strengthen our stand against abortion by resolving the issues regarding abortion surrounding the African-American pastor.

Early in 2007 Dr. Alveda C. King agreed to speak at the 2008 Walk for Life West Coast. While in a Walk for Life West Coast volunteer meeting in November of 2007, I learned that Dr. King had heard about my struggles with the Oakland City Council's intention to install a "bubble law" that redefines "harassment" to mean "holding a sign," "passing our literature," and "having a conversation" on a public sidewalk one hundred (100) feet in front of an abortion clinic and suggested that we walk in Oakland as well as in San Francisco.

So once again, I was challenged by the faith and commitment to the sanctity of life and accepted the request to honor Dr. King's suggestion to walk in Oakland by leading the effort. With literally nothing in place, I watched the Lord make a way in less than two months for our first walk in Oakland with both Dr. King and Dr. Clenard H. Childress, Jr. as our speakers and Father Frank Pavone in attendance.

As we worked night and day to organize the first walk in Oakland I watched God open closed doors and touch the hearts and lives of His people with His truth. Since then I have witnessed African-Americans rethink their position on abortion and renew and revive their faith in God by simply supporting our walk in Oakland.

The Cyrenian Project is an extension of my effort to reach out to California with the facts regarding the impact of abortion in the African-American community. This project broaches the discussion surrounding abortion and the humanity of the child in three ways:

1. The rally/walk creates an opportunity for everyone to safely take a public stand for their biblical values regarding the life of the child inside the womb of his or her mother. We believe all life is precious, but human life has been uniquely created in the "image and likeness of God" and should be respected.

2. The conference that follows the rally/walk creates a unique opportunity for a public discussion with nationally recognized voices for those who have no voice. In our conferences all the hard questions are asked and answered.

3. Finally, in the evening our memorial service offers healing and hope to the lives touched by the horror of abortion. Both individuals and groups are invited to attend the service and offer a rose that represents the life of each child lost to abortion and/or the millions of lives lost to abortion each year since the *Roe v. Wade* decision by the Supreme Court in 1973.

All three of these events take place in one day, really one afternoon and then later in the evening of the same day. We do this to respect everyone's time. Essentially in one day individuals, families and organizations can walk, talk and pray for the end of abortion in America. I am inviting everyone to support this project in your city. If anyone has any questions regarding how to realize this project in their city please visit our website (<http://www.issues4life.org>) or contact me at: [life@issues4life.org](mailto:life@issues4life.org).

*Tell us about the African-American churches and the particular challenges in telling them the truth about abortion?*

I was born into the African-American community and raised in the African-American church. Currently, I serve as the executive elder of the Progressive M.B.C. of Berkeley where my pastor is Dr. Earl C. Stuckey, Sr. I am very familiar with the difficult challenges facing the African-American church and particularly her pastor. In the African-American church most of the members are women and understanding that one out of every two women over the age of forty in America has had an abortion it is not hard to see what's at stake when addressing abortion in the church.

Every seventy-two seconds an African-American baby dies in the womb of his or her mother. Currently the fertility rate for African-Americans is 1.9. This rate is below the replacement level which means that African-Americans are no longer replacing themselves. When you consider that fact that the abortion ratio for African-American women is 467 abortion (i.e., deaths) per 1000 live births and understand that an African-American baby has less than a 50% chance of being born, it becomes apparent that discussing abortion in the African-American church will impact the lives of the entire membership. When you understand that abortion is a subject that has the power to split the church and/or cost the pastor his job you begin to visualize both the necessity and the challenge facing the decision to talk about abortion in the church.

Between 1882 and 1968, 3,446 African-Americans lost their lives to lynching. However, abortion surpasses this number in less than three days, so the necessity to talk about abortion in the African-American church is obvious. Yet the media has politicized the abortion issue and in so doing made the decision to talk about it in the church the equivalent of walking in a minefield. Nevertheless, either we talk about abortion in our churches or we face the very real possibility of becoming an endangered species before the year 2100. In my opinion, abortion is first and foremost a moral issue and needs to be forthrightly addressed from that perspective. When standing in front of an African-American congregation, one of the ways I address abortion is by asking the question: Who is the baby and what does abortion do to him or her?

I agree with the Catholic Church that "the human being is to be respected and treated as a person from the moment of conception; and therefore from that same moment his rights as a person must be recognized, among which in the first place is the inviolable right of every innocent human being to life." — *Dignitas Personae*. I believe the Bible is very clear (Jeremiah 7:30-31; 32:35) regarding child sacrifice and the fact that such is an abomination to God. I embrace the wisdom of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who said: "The Negro cannot win as long as he is willing to sacrifice the lives of his children for comfort and safety." And after having seen with my own eyes and having held in my own hands a baby weighing 1.9 pounds, I am committed to promoting the personhood of the child in the womb and the sanctity of human life.

*Tell us how you deal with the Obama issue.*

Regarding President Obama. I regularly pray for him. However, while I pray for the President, I do not agree and stand opposed to his promotion of abortion, the funding of abortion with tax payer dollars, embryonic stem cell research, homosexuality, the expansion of government financed by deficits that run into the trillions and the proposed rescission of the provider conscience rule.

As you can imagine, standing in front of a African-American audience as a representative of the two percent of African-Americans that did not vote for President Obama is tough. However, I publicly stand by my decision not to vote for the President and answer the "why" question by sharing my seven biblically-based and non-negotiable criteria for leadership:

1. Godly Judges
2. Protecting Pre-Born Human Life
3. Opposing The Ennoblement Of Homosexuality
4. Parental Rights
5. Publicly Acknowledging God And Honoring Him In Policy
6. The "Ten Commandments"
7. Helping the Poor.

After sharing these principles in detail, I asked the audience to share their criteria for leadership. In the end the audience is challenged regarding their decision to support leadership that does not reflect their biblical values. I have had members of the audience meet with me privately to express how sorry they were for voting a leader whose platform, position and proposals did not embrace their heart felt values. Still others have come to me asking for more information and thank me for helping them establish their own biblically based criteria for evaluating leadership. Some have even admitted to me that the color of President's skin was the determining factor in their decision on who to vote for as president of the United States of America.

As my time with the audience comes to an end I like to answer the questions "why" have I taken such a public position against abortion and "why" do I feel all Christians have a moral responsibility to do the same with following quote:

“Cowardice asks the question - is it safe?  
 Expediency asks the question - is it politic[al]?  
 Vanity asks the question - is it popular?  
 But conscience asks the question - is it right?

And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic[al], nor popular; but one must take it because it is right.”  
 - *Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

I believe Christianity becomes real when material comfort contends with moral conviction and loses (Acts 21:10-14; Philippians 2:5-8; Jude 1:3). Looking in the mirror, I regularly ask myself this question ... Walter, is your Christianity real?

The Stadup4Life Walk set up by the Cyrenian Project will take place Friday, January 22, 2010.

For more information, [click here](#).

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