

[Skip to comments.](#)

## Pro-Life Rally Disrupted: Alveda King: 'I Dare You to Arrest Me on My Uncle's Grave'

[NC Register](#) ^ | July 28, 2010 | Steve WeatherbePosted on **July 28, 2010 10:39:32 AM PDT** by [NYer](#)

**SPEAKING UP.** Alveda King said 'This is a time for boldness' after Freedom Riders were denied the right to gather at the tomb of Martin Luther King Jr.

ATLANTA — A pro-life event at the Martin Luther King Jr. historic site was disrupted by officials July 24.

Participants in the "Freedom Rides for the Unborn" rally — more than 100 pro-life supporters — were kept from rallying on the federal park surrounding the gravesite of the black civil-rights activist even though they had a permit.

Meanwhile, pro-choice opponents who showed up without a permit were ushered onto the grounds for a counter rally.

Organized by Priests for Life and Martin Luther King's pro-life niece Alveda King, who heads the organization's African-American Outreach, the event brought several pro-life black pastors and a busload of supporters to the King Center in Atlanta in emulation of the civil-rights Freedom Rides of the 1960s.

The Martin Luther King Center for Nonviolent Social Change, an independent nonprofit founded by the King family, is part of a National Historic Site under the National Park Service, so both King Center staff and Park Service personnel were present at the event.

### Free Speech Obstructed

When King and Father Frank Pavone, the national director of Priests for Life, arrived with the Freedom Riders, they were denied access to the King tomb by King Center staff.

When Park Service staff finally allowed King onto the federal property surrounding the center, she managed to get to the gravesite via a back way.

When she was stopped by the King Center's CEO, John Mack, King was distressed enough by the obstruction that she climbed into a reflecting pool and reportedly said, "I dare you to arrest me on my uncle's grave."

Later she joined Father Pavone across the street from the center in front of a laundromat to deliver a speech calling for justice for the unborn.

Before the Freedom Riders arrived at the site, local pro-lifers were already running into trouble from the Park Service, according to Bridget Kurt, an Atlanta pro-lifer and event participant.

"When we got there, a rally of pro-choicers was already going on right on park property, chanting and using a bullhorn," reports Kurt. "The park superintendent told us we couldn't congregate on the sidewalk or go onto the grounds and that we couldn't carry signs. She told us the pro-aborts had a permit but later changed that to say they had permission."

Kurt was shocked by what transpired: "The Park Service and the King Center disrupted something that was to be very peaceful and prayerful. It all was totally contrary to the spirit of nonviolence that Martin Luther King stood for. I heard one park ranger joke about whether they should get their clubs out. It was a joke, but still, how nonviolent was that?"

Kurt published her version of events on the CNN iReport [website](#) under the headline "National Park Service violates free-speech rights of Alveda King and pro-lifers at MLK grave."

For its part, the Park Service denies that remarks about clubs were made. Moreover, according to Marianne Mills, the public affairs spokeswoman for the National Park Service's southeast region, any ordering about of pro-life supporters was intended to keep them and pro-choice demonstrators apart.

"The actions directed by Park Superintendent Judy Forte were focused on trying to separate the parties present as their conflict escalated, not show support for one group over another," Mills told the Register in an e-mail.

### **Pro-Lifers Assert Rights**

Some pro-lifers began turning their signs over to park staff, says Kurt, but she told Superintendent Forte, "We had every right to be on a city sidewalk. She told me to shut up and told a staff member to call 911. I said, 'Fine, and I'll call CNN.'"

Both followed through on their statements. However, neither CNN nor any local news agencies sent reporters. The Atlanta police did, however, eventually respond to Forte's call.

"They told Forte," says Kurt, "that we could use the sidewalks."

According to Park Service spokeswoman Mills, Alveda King told Park Service southeast regional director David Vela in an e-mail exchange that the problems that day were with the King Center "and not the National Park Service." Therefore, Mills told the Register, "the assertion that the 'National Park Service violates free-speech rights of Alveda King and pro-lifers at MLK grave' is incorrect."

Not so, says Kurt. Egged on by King Center staff, Park Service officers did impede King initially, and before she arrived, they bullied and coerced pro-lifers into giving up their signs and tried to disperse them

from city sidewalks.

“Park Service staff escalated a tense situation rather than calming it down,” Kurt says. “And it was quite apparent to me the superintendent did not understand free speech and the boundary between what was public and private property and that free speech is allowed on public property.”

---

**TOPICS:** [Constitution/Conservatism](#); [Culture/Society](#); [Government](#); [US: Georgia](#)

**KEYWORDS:** [abortion](#); [dralvedaking](#); [moralabsolutes](#); [prolife](#)

1 posted on **July 28, 2010 10:39:36 AM PDT** by **NYer**

[ [Post Reply](#) | [Private Reply](#) | [View Replies](#) ]

---

To: **netmilsmom**; **thefrankbaum**; **markomalley**; **Tax-chick**; **GregB**; **saradippity**; **Berlin\_Freeper**; **Litany**; ...

### **Catholic Ping**

Please freemail me if you want on/off this list



2 posted on **July 28, 2010 10:40:24 AM PDT** by **NYer** ("God dwells in our midst, in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar." St. Maximilian Kolbe)

[ [Post Reply](#) | [Private Reply](#) | [To 1](#) | [View Replies](#) ]

---

To: **NYer**

Violation of civil rights under the guise of authority.

Mr. Holder, Mr. Eric Holder, please pick up the white courtesy phone, Mr. Holder.

3 posted on **July 28, 2010 10:46:57 AM PDT** by **battlecry**

[ [Post Reply](#) | [Private Reply](#) | [To 1](#) | [View Replies](#) ]

---

To: **NYer**

Well of course the union-thug/federal “employee”/RATs would suppress free speech and support the baby killers.

It’s their job, that’s what they do.

4 posted on **July 28, 2010 10:49:50 AM PDT** by **ROCKLOBSTER** (Celebrate: Republicans freed the slaves Month.)

[ [Post Reply](#) | [Private Reply](#) | [To 1](#) | [View Replies](#) ]

---

To: **battlecry**