

## Black abortion opponents latest to lay claim to King legacy

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Monday's holiday honoring the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., has never been just about the civil rights icon.

Established in 1983, Martin Luther King Jr. Day was born in a cauldron of accusations by Sen. Jesse Helms of North Carolina that King had associated with communists, committed adultery and was undeserving of the recognition. Helms' 300-page report on King's "transgressions" outraged New York's Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who threw it to the floor, stomped on it and called it a "packet of filth," Time magazine reported.

When the first official King holiday was held on the third Monday in January 1986, only 27 states and Washington, D. C., recognized it. It was not observed nationwide until 2000, when South Carolina became the last state to recognize it as a paid holiday.

In the years since, Martin Luther King Jr. Day has become less about his life and accomplishments and more about invoking his name to

promote causes.

On Monday, abortion opponents will gather at Acacia Park, then march to the former West Colorado Avenue home of Planned Parenthood. Sponsored by the Catholic Diocese of Colorado Springs, the Rocky Mountains March 4 Life upholds King's commitment to civil rights for all, which King would agree includes the unborn, organizers say.

"We are tying the civil rights movement of Martin Luther King to the civil rights of the pre-born," said the Rev. Bill Carmody, a long-time abortion protester and director of the diocese's Right for Life Office.

Keynote speaker at the event is the Rev. Walter B. Hoye, a Baptist minister who founded Issues4Life Foundation, a nonprofit in Union City, Calif., that views the high rate of minority abortions as genocide.

Black women account for about a third of all abortions in the U.S. annually and Monday's gathering and march are intended to raise awareness.

Event organizers place much of the blame for the high abortion rate among blacks on Planned Parenthood, a women's medical clinic that provides abortions.

Hoye and James Tucker, publisher of the Springs-based monthly African American Voice, say Planned Parenthood targets minorities, especially blacks, for abortions, by locating clinics in minority neighborhoods.

"You are dealing with genocide, the killing of African-Americans," said Tucker, a former head of the local NAACP chapter. "There is a conspiracy to target African-Americans from society as a whole."

Planned Parenthood denies Hoye's and others' claims that it's programs are racist - although a founder of

the birth control movement, Margaret Sanger, has been attacked for her views on who was fit to have children, which abortion opponents have compared to the eugenics policies of Nazi Germany.

Neither Planned Parenthood's former west-side office nor its new one in northeast Colorado springs at 3480 Centennial Blvd. is in a minority neighborhood.

"Planned Parenthood provides affordable health care to all women and is not based on race," said Monica McCafferty, spokeswoman for Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains. "The extreme anti-choice hardliners are using race as a wedge issue. They don't trust women to make choices by themselves."

The Rev. James McMearn, president of the Black Pastors Union of Southern Colorado, said the high number of abortions among black women needs to be discussed, but disagreed it is appropriate to link it with Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

"Abortion was not King's focus, and I don't think the Martin Luther King celebration is the time to deal with divisive issues," McMearn said.

Colorado Springs isn't alone in debating what's appropriate in observing the King holiday:

- In Greeley this week, school board member Brett Reese was rebuked by colleagues for broadcasting attacks on King on his radio stations. Reese read a listener's letter on 104.7 FM Pirate radio that called the slain civil rights leader a sexual degenerate, a communist and modern-day plastic god.
- A school in Charlotte, N.C., was criticized for scheduling a make-up snow day on Martin Luther King Jr. Day.
- Last January, Democrats were accused of co-opting King's birthday by saying the civil rights leader would have backed the federal health care bill, which became law last March.

Paul Harvey, an American history professor at the University of Colorado in Colorado Springs, said it's not uncommon for advocacy groups to tie their causes to national observances.

"Groups want their cause to take on the theme of the holiday," Harvey said.

For more on the King controversy, go to Barna's blog, The Pulpit, at <http://www.thepulpit.freedomblogging.com/>.

Rocky Mountains March 4 Life events on Monday, Martin Luther King Jr. Day

- Breakfast, sponsored by the African American Voice, at 8:30 a.m. at the Academy Best Western Hotel, 8110 North Academy Blvd. Suggested donation \$15.
- Acacia Park gathering at 11:15 a.m., followed by a peace march to the former Planned Parenthood location at 1330 W. Colorado Ave.