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SisterSong, SPARK, and SisterLove

Expose Hijacking of Civil Rights Movement

Atlanta, GA – July 20, 2010: Atlanta-based women of color organizations say an anti-abortion billboard campaign in Atlanta, along with so-called “freedom rides” scheduled this summer are no more than a ploy to turn back the clock on Black women’s right to reproductive freedom. In response to the billboard campaign, three reproductive justice groups plan a counter-protest at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center on July 24, at 2:30 pm.

“We are offended by their cynicism, opportunism, and outright distortions of historical facts. Both Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King firmly supported reproductive justice for women. Lies by anti-abortionists, no matter how often repeated, cannot change those historical facts,” said Loretta Ross, National Coordinator of SisterSong.

“It is important that we are reminded of the rich tradition of Black women Civil Rights leaders like Coretta Scott King, Ella Baker, and Fannie Lou Hamer, who not only believed but exercised their belief that we, as Black women, are capable of making critical, personal, and just choices about our bodies, our families, and our communities,” said Paris Hatcher, Executive Director, SPARK Reproductive Justice NOW!

Dazon Dixon Diallo, SisterLove President/Chief Executive Officer, said, “SisterLove denounces the so-called “Freedom Ride” proposed by anti-woman, anti-choice, anti-sexual health fanatics who have chosen to defile the original dream of our civil and human rights icons of the original Freedom Rides. The actions planned by Priests for Life are insulting, disrespectful, and completely antithetical to the struggle for women's human rights. They should be ashamed of themselves, and it is our job as Black women and people of color to shame them!”

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It is in the tradition of human rights movements that the reproductive justice movement is rooted, and it is in their legacy that these three women’s organizations denounce all attempts to vilify and shame the agency, power, and morality of Black women.

Funded by Priests for Life of New York, coordinators of the billboard campaign have organized a “Freedom Bus for the Unborn” to launch on July 23 in Birmingham, Alabama – using the historical site opposite the 16th Street Baptist Church where four Black girls were killed in a bombing by the Ku Klux Klan in 1963. Alveda King, the niece of Dr. King and an employee of Priests for Life, will lead the anti-abortion campaign disguising this thinly-veiled attack on Black women’s rights with a Black figurehead.

[SisterSong](#), [SPARK](#) Reproductive Justice NOW!, and [SisterLove](#), Inc. will host a counter rally and press conference of faith-based leaders, civil rights leaders, and women’s health supporters in front of the King Center on July 24, 2010, 2:30 pm in Atlanta. Ross says the reproductive justice groups will set the record straight about the anti-abortion campaign and call on the public to trust Black women to make their own decisions about what’s best for them and their families.

“You cannot save Black babies by discriminating against Black women,” says Loretta Ross, SisterSong’s National Coordinator. “Civil rights has always been about expanding freedoms for Black people, not rolling back the clock to the 19th century like these anti-abortionists want. Should Black women again become breeders for their cause?”

Ross says true freedom ensures human rights for all people, including reproductive rights and reproductive health care options for women. She says the anti-abortion Freedom Rides offer no concrete action to help communities to access comprehensive reproductive healthcare, sex education, economic justice through jobs, nor do they prevent the crib-to-prison pipeline for Black youth.

Dozens of rides may be scheduled across the country over the next year. Reproductive justice, health, and rights activists, nationally, will mobilize to educate women about their reproductive rights and announce a call to action to advocate for these human rights.

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The mission of SisterSong is to amplify and strengthen the collective voices of Indigenous women and women of color to ensure reproductive justice through securing human rights. We fight equally for the right to bear – or not to bear – a child, along with the subsequent and necessary enabling conditions to realize these rights. We implement our work within the structure of three national impact goals: 1) Support: To create spaces for Indigenous women and women of color to strategize on developing a national movement of women of color for reproductive justice, 2) Mentor: To build the capacity of Indigenous women and women of color organizations and to increase their visibility, sustainability, effectiveness, and influence, and 3) Advocate: To lift the voices and perspectives of Indigenous women and women of color into the mainstream reproductive rights movement, into communities of color, and into public policies.