

# Stand Strong for Freedom of Choice

BY THE REVEREND CARLTON W. VEAZEY, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF THE RELIGIOUS COALITION FOR REPRODUCTIVE CHOICE

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. broke the silence and laid the foundation for a community to stand with dignity against terrorism and inequality. As I celebrate Dr. King's birthday, I reflect again on his commitment to non-violence.

Over the years, the African American community has honored Dr. King's life by further committing ourselves to standing for freedom. As an African American Baptist minister and President and CEO of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive choice, I am dedicated to faithful preserving a women's freedom to control her reproductive health. I am committed to protecting a women's right to choose, a right that is fundamentally lodged in our constitution, affirmed by the Supreme Court, and grounded in faith.

Twenty-five years ago, Roe v. Wade made abortion a legal right. There are those who do not agree with the decision. Instead of entering a reasonable and rational discourse, they have resorted to hurling violent epithets of hatred and intolerance. Instead of regarding the consciences and values of others, they harass and terrorize. Women and families who choose abortion as the most responsible choice are exercising their freedom to choose, not committing an act of violence. Ironically, it is the anti-choicers, in the name of God, who commit the acts of violence, claiming to be compelled by their religious convictions to scare, wound and kill. The God I serve compels me to do otherwise.

Thirty-one years after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther Jr., there are still those who stand in the way of our rights, trying to restrict our choice. But we who have been oppressed must stand steadfast in our opposition to those who attempt to take away our choice. We must remain firm in protecting reproductive freedom.

Anti-Choice have not won in the courts, nor in the eyes of American people. They have not won at the polls, and we must not let them win by terrorizing women and reproductive health workers with hateful speech and violent actions. We will no longer tolerate them violating a woman's right to choose and we will not back down at the threat of their cowardly violence.

We are at the dawn of a new era! As people of faith, we are the real religious right. We must not remain silent when doctors, nurses and clinic staffers are terrorized by bomb threats, acid attacks or the very real threat of death. By taking a public stand against violence and for freedom of choice, this culture of terror will stop.

I call upon those who oppose violence to stand up and speak out in

pulpits, classroom, living rooms and board rooms. In January, we must speak out for freedom and honor the life of Dr. King. In February, our voices should proclaim and end to intolerance. And come March, we must rededicate ourselves to carrying out the dream of a great man. We must resolve to do these few things in this new year to honor all those who lost their lives standing for freedom, to all those working to ensure that all women may exercise their hard fought, hard won rights of freedom over their bodies and their lives.

The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice is breaking the silence through our Black Church initiative and exploring new ways to strengthen the foundation laid by Dr. King. In this memory, as a child of God, I loudly proclaim to end the violence and to remain faithfully, prayerfully pro-choice.

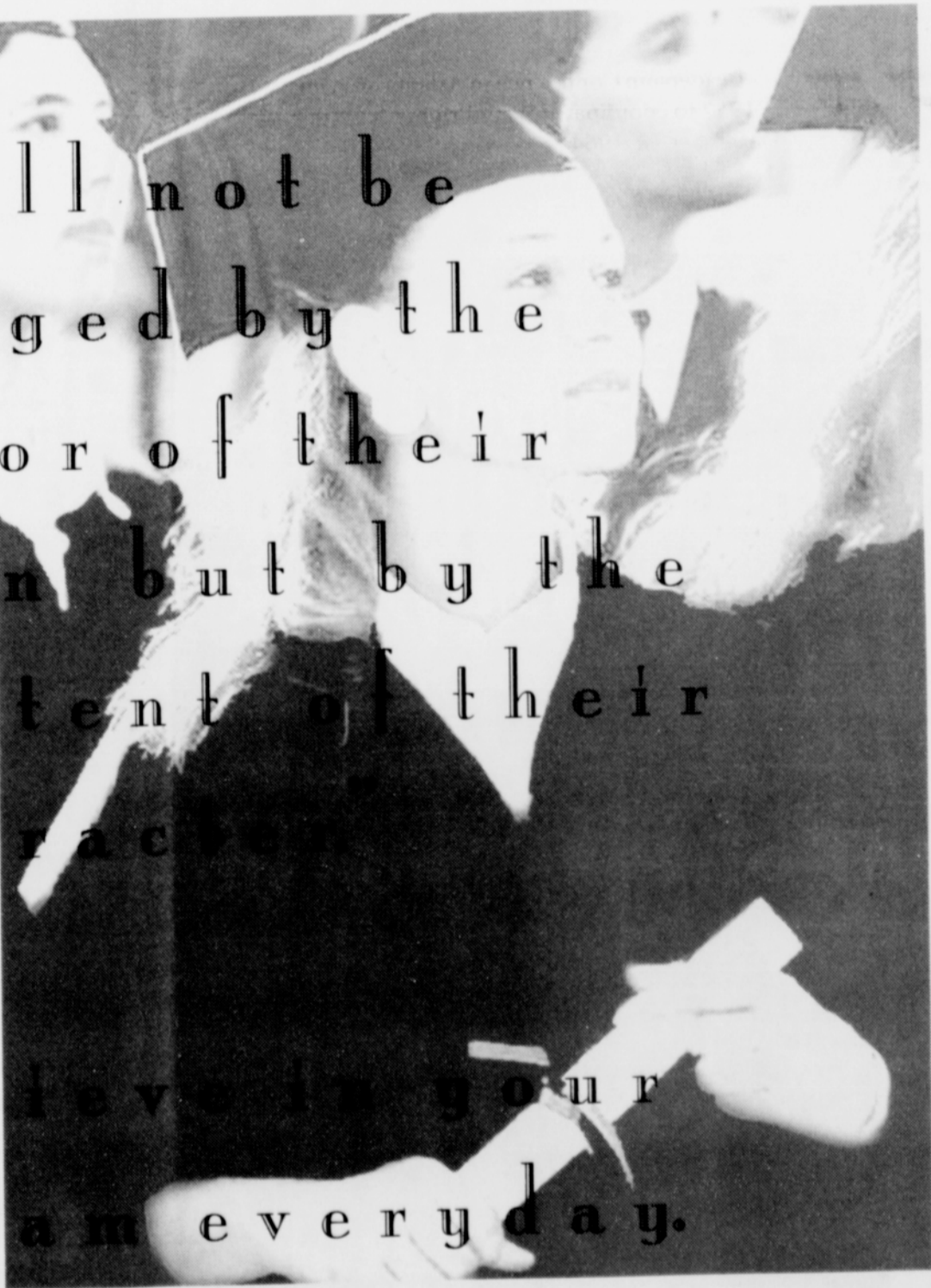
A Minister of the National Baptist Convention U.S.A. Veazey is President and CEO of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive choice, founded in 1973 as a national organization of denomination and faith groups that support reproductive choice. The Religious Coalition launched the Black Church Initiative in 1997 to assist African American clergy and laity in addressing teen pregnancy and other sexuality issues within the context of African American culture and religion. For more information about the Black church Initiative, contact Leslie Watson at 202-628-7700.

# MLK Celebration Takes To The Street



MLK "Wellness March" Celebration, was a Community Call To Action for the values outline by the late Martin Luther King, Jr. The rain didn't dampen the spirits for commitment to participate.

“..w i l l n o t b e  
j u d g e d b y t h e  
c o l o r o f t h e i r  
s k i n b u t b y t h e  
c o n t e n t o f t h e i r  
c h a r a c t e r  
B e l i e v e y o u r  
d r e a m e v e r y d a y.



In honor of Martin Luther King's profound legacy, Toyota recognizes the power of determination and its infinite possibilities. Now more than ever, we believe in following your dreams.

**TOYOTA** | Everyday

## ACADEMIC WORKSHOP

Presented by  
Business &  
Professional  
Women's Ministry

WHERE: Mt. Olivet, F.L.C.  
WHEN: January 23, 1999  
Who: Students, Parents  
Time: 10:00 a.m.

### Discussion Topics:

- SAT, PSAT
- Night School
- Alternative Schools
- Study Skills
- Transcripts
- College Applications
- Project Plus
- Progress Reports
- Quarter Grade Reports
- Scholarships
- Preparation Tests
- Mesa