

National Black Church Initiative

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For immediate release
PRESS RELEASE

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National Black Church Initiative Speaks In Support of the Child Victim Act in New York State

Black church makes stance in support of abuse victims.

Washington, DC, -- March 14, 2009: The National Black Church Initiative, a coalition of 34,000 African American churches, today raised their voice to speak in support of the Child Victims Act that is pending before the New York Legislature. The act, if approved by the general assembly, will allow victims to have their moral voice restored by temporarily lifting the five year time period on the statute of limitations when it comes to the issue of abuse. It is critical that the church take full responsibility for their actions, and allow this piece of legislation to pass. The church cannot confess God's love and not be willing to do all that it can to ease the pain that has been caused by some of its members.

While it is painful for NBCI to oppose others in the church, we cannot hold our moral voice on this critical issue, at this critical time in the life of the church. We must do all that we can to ease the suffering of those who have been victimized. It is not easy, nor should it become a practice, to oppose either the Roman Catholic Church or our Jewish brothers and sisters on this sensitive matter, but we must do this, as the Prophet Amos said, until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

The Rev. Anthony Evans, President of NBCI, states, "We have, for over ten years, been fighting against neglect and abuse of babies through the NBCI Baby Fund. In no way can we not hear the cries of those who have been abused by the hand of the church. We do not believe that you can preach mercy, forgiveness against violence and grace, and not be willing to do all that you can to make sure that those who have been abused have their opportunity to begin the healing process in their lives by holding those who have abused

them accountable. We cannot, as a church, be a walking contradiction. We cannot speak west, but walk east. We must represent Christ consistently, both in our words (preaching) and our deeds, even though it will be painful. We must understand the suffering of Christ like the suffering of those who have been victimized. We must do all that we can to end this type of abuse, for babies as well as adults. The church is in the business of healing.”

According to the John Jay College of Law there have been well over 13,000 children abused by Catholic priests since 1950. This is why we have decided to urge our churches in New York State to support this legislation and to work for its passage. We must be the type of people that God has called us to be: peculiar - and peculiar people do not run behind laws to justify their actions. Nor do religious or holy people deny victims their right to address their grievances in a court of law. The Rev. Paul Sowell, leader of NBCI Southern Faith Command, states, “We will continue our tradition here at the National Black Church Initiative of protecting those who are the most vulnerable. Our support of this legislation is consistent to our mission to be a place of healing, and not a barrier to God’s love or his justice. This is simply the right thing to do.”

About NBCI

The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI), a coalition of 16,000 African-American and Latino member churches works to eradicate racial disparities in healthcare. In addition to our member churches, we have 18,000 sister churches. NBCI is a faith-based health organization dedicated to providing critical wellness information and preventive health screening to all of its members. The African-American community ranks first in eleven different health risk categories. NBCI’s purpose is to partner with national health officials to provide health education, reduce racial health disparities, and increase access to quality healthcare.