

Pastor's crusade aims to halt wave of black abortions

'It's killed more than Ku Klux Klan'

By Julia Duin
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The Rev. Johnny Hunter beams the plight of black Americans who are killing themselves off at an incredible rate.

However, the weapon of choice Mr. Hunter seeks to destroy is not the Saturday night special or the crack pipe, but the surgical scalpel. The killer he is fighting is abortion.

"It's killed more blacks than the Ku Klux Klan ever lynched," says Mr. Hunter, national director of Life, Education and Resource Network (LEARN) in Virginia Beach.

Black women are three times as likely to abort as white women and twice as likely to have abortions as Hispanic women, according to data from the Alan Guttmacher Institute.

Although blacks make up 12 percent of the nation's population, they account for 31 percent of its abortions, the Guttmacher Institute says.

"When you're a minority, you can't take that kind of hit and survive as a race," Mr. Hunter says.

Heading a group that networks with 50 other pro-life outfits in 27 states, Mr. Hunter is trying to buck the trend in the black abortion rate, saying that black inertia and white perceptions are working against him.

He recalls the spring of 1992, when pro-life and pro-choice demonstrators were lining up on both sides of a street near an abortion clinic in Buffalo, N.Y.

When a black woman walked up the street, accompanied by her 10-year-old son, clinic escorts rushed up to protectively surround her and usher her through clinic

doors. Then they discovered that the woman, Barbara Kirk, a pastor's wife, really wanted to join the prayer pickets across the street.

"It was the funniest thing I've ever seen," Mr. Hunter says. "They just whooshed her out of there."

But what wasn't funny to the pastor was the escorts' assumption that because black women have the nation's highest abortion rates of any race, Mrs. Kirk was there for only one purpose.

Guttmacher figures show about 34 million U.S. abortions have taken place since the Supreme Court struck down anti-abortion laws in 1973. One-third of that figure works out to more than 11 million black fetuses aborted.

"I met with some black pastors in Birmingham and they said, 'Brother, blacks don't go to abortion clinics in Birmingham.' I invited them to go to the clinics and some of them went. They were shocked," Mr. Hunter says. "In one hour, we saw 12 women go into a clinic and all of them were black."

Sheila Massey, founder and director of African Americans for Life, based in Charleston, S.C., says pastors in her town think abortion is a white issue. She says that's why when she wrote or called 100 black Charleston pastors about black abortion rates, only six responded.

"It was atrocious," she says. "Most of them felt it was a white, evangelical issue; a Republican issue vs. a Democrat issue. They said they [whites] didn't help us in the civil rights movement, and I said, 'What does the civil rights movement have to do with this? Why should I look back to what may or may not have happened in the past and not do anything now? These babies have civil rights,

too.'"

"If you look at a map of where blacks and whites live, you'd see a higher concentration of clinics more accessible to black areas," says Dr. Haywood Robinson, who once operated a Los Angeles abortion clinic.

Now a family physician in College Station, Texas, Dr. Robinson says "not that many" clinic operators are black. "They are basically white-owned as medicine in general is not a minority business."

Black political groups generally have been pro-choice. In March's vote on partial birth abortions, most black House members voted not to outlaw the practice. Reps. William J. Jefferson, Louisiana Democrat; Floyd H. Flake, New York Democrat; and J.C. Watts, Oklahoma Republican, were the three dissenters.

"When the feminists came in the 1970s, a trade-off was made" between black and female politicians, says Ken Wolfe, spokesman for Rep. Christopher H. Smith, a pro-life New Jersey Republican.

"The women said, 'We'll accept affirmative action if you accept abortion.' This constituency paired in the Democratic Party and voila, there was this coalition that didn't before exist."

"We've whitewashed this issue in the black community just as we have in society," Mr. Watts says in an interview. "Abortion is just a statistic, and because of that, children are sacrificed on the altar of convenience. People who say they're not pro-abortion, they're pro-choice; well, the end results are the same."

"The pro-lifers have been out-communicated and out-educated," he says. "There's been a heck of a sales job in the black community to say abortion is only a statistic; that it's not just a matter of life but of choice."

Akua Furlow, who co-directs LEARN out of Houston, says the publicity problem exists because "the African-American pro-life community has been effectively excluded from the media."

"Johnny Hunter organized the Buffalo demonstrations but [Operation Rescue leader] Randall Terry got all the credit for it," Miss Furlow says. "No one knew there was a black pastor behind it."

Things were different 20 years ago, when the Rev. Jesse Jackson

wrote an article condemning abortion in the January 1977 "National Right to Life News." Abortion, he wrote, was a "personal issue" with him, because his mother was counseled to have an abortion when she was pregnant with him out of wedlock.

Mr. Jackson reversed himself in 1984 to embrace the pro-choice position and was criticized for it in 1988 by Colman McCarthy, a columnist for The Washington Post. The pundit said the old Mr. Jackson, who believed in speaking out prophetically on social issues, would have beaten the new Mr. Jackson in a debate.

Yet Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan "is very pro-life," Mr. Hunter notes.

"When they had the conference on violence [in 1995], Louis Farrakhan said you can't address the violence on the street until you address the violence in the womb. But quite frankly, we've never seen a Muslim in front of an abortion clinic to this day," he adds.

What riles black pro-lifers is Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest abortion provider that for 14 years was headed by a black woman, Faye Wattleton.

Kay Coles James, a Regent University dean, says Mrs. Wattleton has refused to debate black pro-lifers such as herself. Others say Mrs. Wattleton seemed oblivious of how Planned Parenthood's founder, Margaret Sanger, recruited black ministers and physicians to push sterilization or at least birth control for her "Negro Project."

The "Negro Project" could be misinterpreted, Sanger wrote to one backer in December 1939, and "we do not want word to go out that we want to exterminate the Negro population and the minister is the man who can straighten out that idea if it ever occurs to any of their more rebellious members."

A Planned Parenthood spokesman says there has been misinformation about Sanger and that the group enjoys widespread support among blacks. Their ad campaign in several black magazines portraying 11 black male celebrities as "African-American Men for Choice [got] a lot of good response," he says.

Miss Furlow says Planned Parenthood has merely switched its emphasis from black sterilization to black abortion.

Clinton to urge teens to abstain from sex

CHARLOTTE AMALIE, U.S. Virgin Islands (Reuters) — President Clinton yesterday said he was launching a national strategy to combat teen pregnancies, even as he hailed a decline in the teen birth rate in some states.

"The teen-pregnancy rate is still intolerably high in America. Too many children are still having children. So we must do more," Mr. Clinton said in his weekly radio address.

Mr. Clinton taped the address while on vacation on St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Mr. Clinton said a key feature of his plan would be to encourage adolescents to abstain from sex. The White House said his aim was to send a strong message to all teen-agers that postponing sexual activity, staying in school and preparing for work should be top goals.

The president called on Americans to support his strategy by helping get across to young people the idea that, "It's wrong to be pregnant or father a child unless you are married and ready to take on the responsibilities of parenthood."

At the same time, Mr. Clinton cited new state-by-state teen-birth data that showed 37 states had a sustained decline in their teen birth rates between 1991 and 1994.

Twenty-one states had declines of between 5 and 10 percent, and 10 states had declines of more than 10 percent during that period.

Overall, the national birth rate for teens between the ages of 15 and 19 declined for the fourth year in a row, decreasing by 8 percent between 1991 and 1995, the White House said.

"We've made some significant progress in the effort against teen pregnancy in the last few years," Mr. Clinton said.

While Mr. Clinton focused on progress in lowering the number of teen pregnancies, Republicans in their weekly radio response targeted a sharp increase in teen drug use.

"After 11 years of declining marijuana use among children ages 12 to 17, its use has doubled since 1992," said Sen. Paul Coverdell of Georgia. "Among eighth-graders, use of marijuana has tripled since 1991."

He urged greater supervision by parents and less glorification of drug use in movies, music and other entertainment. Mr. Coverdell also suggested giving parents the right to choose the schools their children attend.

In discussing out-of-wedlock births to teen-age mothers, Mr. Clinton was dealing with an issue that has been blamed for burdening the welfare system and contributing to crime.

His new strategy is aimed at carrying out some of the requirements of the new welfare-reform law passed by the Republican-led Congress and signed by Mr. Clinton in August.

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How to Know Whether the 'L' Word Applies to You

You Might Be a Liberal If . . .

BY MICHAEL BAUMAN, PH.D.

Ever since Michael Dukakis suffered a terrible drubbing at the polls for flashing his ACLU card in public and for identifying himself as a liberal without embarrassment, the dreaded "L" word has fallen into wide disfavor, even disrepute. Some liberal politicians, like Bill Clinton, don't like to use it all. Nevertheless, it's still possible to know who's a liberal and who is not.

You might be a liberal if . . .

You think that consenting adults can engage freely in every activity except capitalism.

You named your children Moonglow and Arizona.

You think the really alarming violence takes place *outside* the abortion clinic.

You've ever referred to the "root cause" of something.

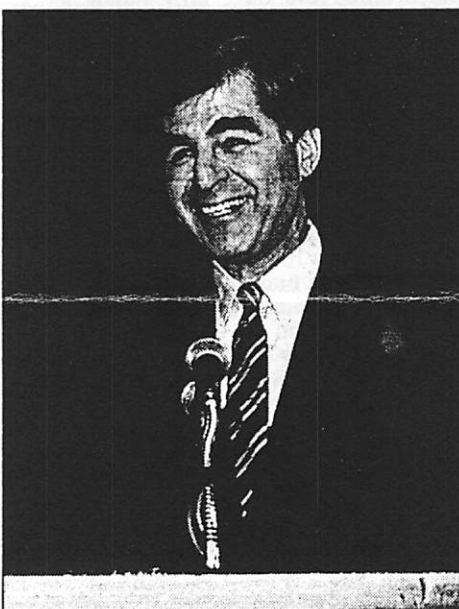
You pray to "The Woman Upstairs."

You think we never gave peace a chance.

You had to be told that "Manhattan," "menopause" and "boycott" were not sexist words.

You begin sentences with the words "I feel."

Your driver's license has a hyphen because for you one last name just isn't enough.



Card-carrying member of the ACLU Michael Dukakis smiles after wrapping up the Democratic nomination for President in June 1988.

You don't think *All in the Family* is a very funny program, but watch it anyway because Meathead makes a lot of sense.

You think OJ is out looking for the real killers.

You think Julia Sugarbaker is an astute social commentator.

You think it takes a village.

You think that the words "to promote the general welfare" in the Constitution mean to promote welfare generally.

You think that, even though more people voted against him than for him in both the 1992 and the 1996 presidential elections, Bill Clinton had a mandate.

You think that conservatives, like preservatives, ought to be federally regulated.

You ever wore earth shoes.

You have ever wondered out loud, "Why can't we all just get along?"

You think the *New York Times* prints all the news that's fit.

You think that Rush Limbaugh is just an entertainer.

You spent Columbus Day reading *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*.

You reach the limits of your talent and then complain that you ran into a glass ceiling.

You wear more ribbons on your lapel than in your hair.

You think that the really dangerous McCarthy was Joe, not Eugene.

You blame the Unabomber's parents.

You fail to see the connection between Lenin and Lennon.

You have ever agreed with Martin Sheen or Barbra Streisand.

Mr. Bauman is a professor of theology and culture at Hillsdale College.