



# SAMUEL DEWITT PROCTOR CONFERENCE, INC.

*With Vision...By Faith...Through Action  
Strengthening Churches...Empowering Leaders... Transforming Communities*

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July 2, 2014

*There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe,  
nor politic, nor popular, but he must take it because conscience tells him it is right.*

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

## **Let Freedom Ring: A Day of Prayer & Protest July 13, 2014**

The streets on which African American civil rights activists and leaders marched, died and shed blood to advance the cause of justice, cried out in angst this week after the Supreme Court Hobby Lobby 5-4 ruling allowed businesses to opt-out of federal requirements to pay for workers' contraceptives. What an insult to the legacy of the late Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall. What a call to the question asked by Frederick Douglas, "What is the 4<sup>th</sup> of July to Me?" As an alliance of intergenerational pastors of the Gospel, interfaith American leaders, and people of a great and abiding faith committed to tangible and transparent progress to those whose sacred memories made freedom possible, we vehemently denounce the court's decision and call for a national day of protest and prayer on **Sunday, July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014**.

We the people—the workers, the disenfranchised, those who have played by the rules and have been ignored—in order to form a more perfect society must not let our historic legacy of civil rights and social justice be co-opted by the religious right to fit into their particular brand of Christianity and their particular variety of democracy. In a recent panel at the Southern Baptist Convention involving Rick Warren of Saddleback Church and Samuel Rodriguez, a fundamentalist mega church pastor, gave their support to the Hobby Lobby legislation, which destroys basic constitutional rights of self-determination and equal protection. In doing so, they compared their views to Dr. Martin Luther King's fight against racism, a most insulting likening to those who peacefully gave their lives for liberty and access to the pursuit of happiness.

We the people are people and not corporations. We think, feel and have the capacity to reason. Corporate entities don't have the ability and shouldn't have the right to use sectarian beliefs to violate the rights of the individual. We would remind those who have similar views, that it was our 3<sup>rd</sup> President, Thomas Jefferson, a Deist, who put a firewall between church and state by saying that government is a democracy and not a theocracy. The right to one's religious belief is just that, a right, and a constitutional one. Religious leaders have the right to practice convictions and impose them on their followers, but it is a leap of incredible faith and stretching the imagination to support the Hobby Lobby ruling, giving corporations the right to discriminate against persons in the corporate and secular world in the name of religious freedom.

As civil rights activists, who fought 50 years for the African Americans vote, we have a duty as prophetic leaders to call for a day of prayer and protest. We have a duty to stand up for justice and civil public policies to ensure freedom, justice, equality and equal opportunity for basic health care for all who are in need. It is disturbing that the Supreme Court and those from the religious right have not understood the basic concept of religious freedom, something even comedian George Carlin got right when he said, "Religion is like a pair of shoes...find one that fits you, but don't make me wear your shoes."

There are people who know the real mind of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., what he would support and for what he stood. It would not be pastors Warren and Rodriguez, but those who have been on the frontlines of history such as: Rev. Samuel "Billy" Kyles, Dr. Dorothy Cotton, Dr. Julius C. Hope, Rev. Willie Barrow, Rev. C. T. Vivian, Rev. Dr. Samuel B. McKinney and Rev. Dr. Otis Moss Jr., who also went to jail, former Ambassador Andrew Young, who was Dr. King's lead executive assistant; Dr. Amos C. Brown another leader who went to jail with Dr. King and one of the only eight students he taught in his lifetime and, Rev. Dr. Joseph Lowery, a veteran iconic civil rights leader and many other men and women, whose names we may never know.

Standing in their legacy, the men and women of the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference Board of Trustees invite all other clergy and lay leaders to join us in your place of worship on July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014 and make your voice heard. Bow your heads in prayer, then vow to fight, for the struggle continues.

With Hope,

Dr. Iva E. Carruthers

General Secretary, Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference

Rev. Dr. Frederick D. Haynes III

Pastor of Friendship West Baptist Church & Board Chair of Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Inc.

Dr. Amos Brown, Chair of Civil and Human Rights Commission, National Baptist Convention

Dr. Julius R. Scruggs, President, National Baptist Convention

Dr. Carroll A. Baltimore, President, Progressive National Baptist Convention

Dr. Stephen J. Thurston, President, National Black Convention of America

Dr. Samuel Berry McKinney, Pastor Emeritus, Mount Zion Baptist Church, Seattle, WA

Dr. Otis Moss, III, Pastor, Trinity United Church of Christ, Chicago, IL

Dr. Raphael Warnock, Pastor, Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta, GA

Dr. Gina Stewart, Pastor, Christ Missionary Baptist Church, Memphis, TN