

The Scarlet Letter

I was in church one day when a friend in her late 20s slipped me a note that said she wanted to speak with me about something that had been weighing on her heart for months. "It's about the A-word," she wrote. I hadn't a clue what she meant by the "A-word," but I gave her a call later that night. Her story was heartbreaking.

"I had an abortion in February, and I feel guilty and ashamed," she said. "I tried telling my mom and the care-group leader at church, but I was afraid." I listened for an hour as she grieved the death of her unborn baby. When it was over, I prayed with my friend and gave her the number to a ministry that offers post-abortion counseling.

The entire conversation took place barely above a whisper, but I knew why she had refused to raise her voice. Christian women, especially, don't want to talk about abortion. We skirt the issue in church and pretend it doesn't happen to women who love God, but it does. The secrecy is part of the reason so many babies are aborted every year. Abortion on demand comes with a hefty price.

I wrote a cover story about a woman God is using to address the issue of abortion not only in political circles, but also in the church. Alveda King is the niece of slain Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., and she is committed to defending the unborn. She overcame the shame of two abortions, and her message can help you or someone you know in a crisis pregnancy.

Let's not walk around church using the "A-word." Let's call abortion what it is and offer help to our hurting sisters.

To read the article, scroll down.

A Voice for the Voiceless

The niece of Martin Luther King Jr. was an unlikely woman to become a pro-life activist. She had an abortion herself, but the painful experience helped her uncover the lies used by the abortion industry.

Alveda King is an unlikely poster child for pro-life causes. In 1970, when abortion was still illegal in the United States, her doctor gave her an abortion under false pretenses. Then in 1973, the 22-year-old walked into a Planned Parenthood clinic and underwent a second abortion, performed by a doctor who assured her, "It's just a blob of tissue."

The procedures damaged her cervix and forced her to miscarry another baby months later. In addition, the physical toll on her body and the emotional strain of the abortions led to the demise of her first marriage.

She divorced two more times in her life, but she says when she met Jesus in 1983, He opened her eyes to the reality of what she had done and forgave her for destroying her babies.

"God rescued me from a cycle of death, and the only thing that kept me from losing it was knowing I will one day see my babies in heaven," she told Charisma.

The mother of six adult children, King, 59, says her love for the unborn trumps her painful past, and today she is driven by spiritual conviction to defend the most vulnerable of human beings.

In 2004, she joined forces with Priests for Life, which is said to be the nation's largest Catholic, pro-life organization dedicated to ending abortion and euthanasia. As pastoral associate for the organization, King travels the country preaching, rallying support, and among other things, going after lawmakers who are "pro-murder."

But advocating for the rights of others is in her genes-literally. King is the niece of the late Martin Luther King

Jr. and wife Coretta. Her late father, A.D. King, was a high-profile leader in the civil rights movement who marched alongside his famous brother until Martin's assassination in 1968. In 1978, she was elected to the Georgia state legislature and later appointed regional deputy of the U.S. Department of Education for region four by President George H.W. Bush.

Having a famous last name may open doors for her, but King knows the pro-choice industry is giving up no ground in the battle for abortion. She says she is one voice among millions crying out for the unborn.

And today the fulfillment of her uncle's famous "I Have a Dream" speech is coming to fruition in her own life.

"My uncle Martin said he had a dream that Protestants and Catholics, gentiles and Jews would join together to sing that age-old spiritual, 'Free at last / Free at last.' But he also said, 'Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere,' and killing unborn babies is unjust."

Legal Genocide

Since the Supreme Court's historic 1973 ruling in *Roe v. Wade*, which legalized abortion in the U.S., 45-million-plus unborn babies have been aborted. According to the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, about 19 percent of women having abortions in the U.S. are teens; 33 percent are between the ages of 20 and 24; and 48 percent are ages 25 and older.

Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest provider of abortions, made more than \$1 billion last year, according to the agency's 2007-2008 annual report, providing 305,310 abortions to its clients. The not-for-profit agency says it "provides and protects trusted health care services and medically accurate sexuality education," but Jamie Matthews, whose name has been changed to protect her identity, says

Planned Parenthood preys on young women.

"They told me 'the fetus' was not yet a baby and my career would be ruined if I continued with the pregnancy, so I consented to the abortion. When I returned to the clinic a few days later complaining of sharp pains, they gave me a second abortion-and I wasn't even pregnant!" she blurted while weeping over the ordeal.

One woman who asked Charisma not to disclose her identity said the doctor who aborted her baby when she was 14 misled her. "He led me to believe there would be no negative consequences to having an abortion since a 'fetus is nothing.' But he never told me I would be depressed, fearful and suffer from anxiety for years to come. He lied."

King knows all too well the lies the "pro-death" industry tells desperate, unsuspecting women. "I told my doctor I hadn't had a menstrual cycle in three months, and he said, 'You don't need another baby,'" she claims.

King says he dilated her cervix and performed what he called "a menstrual extraction." "I heard a pop, and blood gushed out. I didn't ask for it, but he gave me an illegal abortion with no anesthesia."

Abortionists may use many of the same tactics today, but pro-life groups are initiating new legislation that will stem the tide of abortion in the United States. When voters in South Dakota, Colorado and California went to the polls in November and said no to legislation that would have redefined or restricted abortion-or in the case of Colorado, put it on a par with first-degree murder-pro-life advocacy groups went to work on new legislation.

Observers credit the pro-life surge to President Barack Obama's staunch pro-choice voting record and recent actions that support abortion. In January, he struck down the Mexico City Policy, which would have prohibited U.S. dollars from

being used to fund family-planning clinics in other countries. And his selection of Kathleen Sebelius as Health and Human Services Secretary is a sure sign, say observers, of his commitment to "rescind the abortion conscience clause," which allows doctors and other medical personnel to refuse to participate in abortions for ethical reasons.

The president's decisions have brought strong reactions from conservatives, who believe their views represent those of the majority of Americans. A Gallup Poll released in May confirms that more Americans are pro-life. The data revealed that 51 percent of Americans polled consider themselves "pro-life" compared to 42 percent who identify themselves as "pro-choice."

The research company says "it was the first time a majority of U.S. adults have identified themselves as pro-life since Gallup began asking the question in 1995."

The shooting death of prominent late-term abortionist Dr. George Tiller by a lone gunman in late May brought to light the hailstorm of controversy that continues to drive the abortion fight. Advocacy groups quickly denounced the shooting but said the president would use the shooting as an excuse to restrict pro-life activities protected by law.

"The Obama administration will use this [murder] as a means to try to punish the pro-life movement," Mathew D. Staver, founder of the pro-life legal firm Liberty Counsel, told Charisma News Online.

"We will diligently and aggressively resist the administration's attempt to use this or any other matter that does not represent the pro-life movement to trample on the constitutional rights of pro-lifers."

Americans United for Life (AUL) launched an aggressive campaign to counteract the efforts and influence of pro-choice organizations such as Planned Parenthood. Denise Burke, vice

president of legal affairs, called for “common-sense, medically appropriated regulations of abortion, including informed consent, ultrasound requirements, parental involvement and abortion clinic regulations.”

Christians across the country are using their influence to protect the lives of unborn babies and say believers have a biblical mandate to protect human life. Lou Engle, visionary and co-founder of TheCall solemn assemblies, posted an open letter to the president criticizing his actions concerning the unborn.

“This debate over abortion will only intensify and be inflamed if President Obama, the Congress, and Senate keep pushing the issue of abortion over to the far side of where millions of Americans refuse to go.”

The Church Can Turn the Tide

In 2000, King traveled with Real Women’s Voices to Washington, D.C., to lobby then-Sen. Barack Obama. But she says when the group arrived at his office, the senator walked out the back door.

“I saw him and said, ‘Hello, Sen. Obama.’ He looked down at the floor and walked away.” It’s a response she is used to, but she says it won’t stop her from mounting the steps of Congress to keep the issue of abortion before lawmakers.

In November, King found herself on the opposite side of the political aisle when other members of the King family publicly supported Obama for president. She says her family’s situation is a reflection of a larger issue in the body of Christ.

She knows the struggle some people face because of the overwhelming popularity of the president, especially among African-Americans. But the voices of her babies who died at the hands of abortionists and the millions more who will be

aborted this year force her to put racial issues and politics aside and fight for the cause she's been called to uphold.

She says Christians have a responsibility to protect the next generation of children, and nothing is more important to God than issues of life and spiritual death. "God will deal with the skin-color issue, and yes, there is a problem with racism in America," King says.

In fact, black pro-life advocates say black babies are aborted at a higher rate than babies in any other racial group. According to staunch pro-life advocate, Johnny Hunter, 1,452 African-American babies lose their lives to abortion every day. He says if the numbers continue to rise, the population of black people in America will dwindle.

Hunter resigned a full-time pastoral position to work with LEARN Inc., a pro-life advocacy group created to save black babies from abortion through education and other resources.

"Abortion is racism in its ugliest form. It nullifies every civil rights gain we've ever made," he says. "What good is the Voting Rights Act to a dead baby?"

Like other pro-life, African-American Christians, King is asked the race question, but says the church must move beyond "political machinations" and start a prayer movement that will lead to spiritual reform.

"Morality cannot be legislated. The human heart must be changed by a divine touch, and the church has the key, the responsibility of leading the way. Has the church fallen short? The answer is yes, and yet it is never too late to return to God," says King, who attends Believers' Bible Christian Church, a full gospel congregation in Atlanta.

She says Christians won't deal with issues of life and abortion because of what she calls "mistaken compassion" and "misplaced compassion."

"Pastors will say, 'Oh, we don't want to hurt the woman's feelings.' Or, 'It's such a personal issue.' But the church can stem the tide of abortion in America," she says.

King urges women around the country to go to their pastors and speak out. "Tell them abortion is bad for children; it's destroying families."

Her message to Christians who voted for Obama: Go to Washington on behalf of the babies. She says their voices should be heard first and foremost in Washington.

"They need to tell the president of this land and all of Congress: 'It is not OK to kill the weak. It is not OK to kill the babies in the name of science. It is not OK to kill the youngest,'" she says.

King says she nearly had a nervous breakdown when she accepted Jesus and came to grips with the fact that her unborn babies were not "blobs of tissue" but were in fact human beings.

"I have a dream in my genes," King wrote in a message to pro-life constituents. "Ultimately, what brings us the greatest rewards or the worst scars are the choices that we make concerning things that have spiritual consequences. ... As my uncle Martin Luther King Jr. said, 'The time is always right to do what is right.' "

Valerie G. Lowe is associate editor of *Charisma*. To contact Alveda King, go to