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## Statement of Solidarity with African American Women

We who trust women stand in solidarity with and support of SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective; SPARK Reproductive Justice NOW!, SisterLove, Inc.; Planned Parenthood of Georgia; and Feminist Women's Health Center to affirm our belief that every woman has the human right to decide if and when she will have a baby, and the right to parent the children she already has with the social supports necessary. In our struggle for reproductive justice, African American women have a unique history that we must remember in order to ensure bodily sovereignty, dignity, and collective uplift of our community. The choices that women of color make are based on their lived experiences in this country and reflect multiple oppressions, including race, class, and gender, and their efforts to resist them. It is unacceptable to speak to the needs of any woman, or her children without taking into consideration the realities that exist in her home and local community.

We affirm that an African American woman's ability to determine if and when she will have children demands that she control the conditions under which she will give birth and have the power to decide the spacing of her children. These freedoms speak to the power and necessity of the preventive care of women *before* they become pregnant and the importance of comprehensive sex education for all of our children to understand their human right to sexuality in an empowering and responsible way. It means fully funding public education, protecting the environment in all communities, and eliminating sexual violence for all women.

We affirm that an African American woman's ability to determine if and when she does not have children must include a full range of options including the right to have an abortion. For women of color the privilege to exercise this right all too often hinges on other factors in her home and community. Abortion must be approached in the context of the individual woman and the circumstances surrounding her, such as poverty, sexual abuse, or the lack of health care. To extract a woman from the context of her life dishonors her lived experiences and the plight of a broader community of people.

We affirm that African American women have the human right to parent the children they already have. To ensure the full enjoyment of this right, they must also have access to the social supports necessary to raise their children in safe environments and healthy communities, without fear of violence from individuals or intervention by the government. A continuum of care is essential to protect the lives of women and children. And we must prioritize the needs of children *after* birth. This includes funding education, investing in health care reform for all, ensuring food security and prioritizing the unification of our families through the provision of social supports to protect the most vulnerable.

Protecting women and children requires a commitment to these principles. It is a matter of reproductive health, reproductive rights, and ultimately Reproductive Justice.

February 2010

**Signed February 2010 by the following:**

Eleanor Hinton Hoytt, Black Women's Health Imperative  
Jewell Jackson McCabe, President Emeritus of National Coalition of 100 Black Women  
Dorothy Roberts, Law Professor of Northwestern University, author of *Killing the Black Body*  
Toni Bond Leonard, Black Women for Reproductive Justice  
Rev. Carlton Veazey, President/CEO, Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice  
Faye Wattleton, Center for the Advancement of Women  
Janice Mathis, Rainbow PUSH  
Rev. Penny Willis, Black Church Initiative, Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice  
Gloria Steinem, Activist  
Alice Walker, Pulitzer Prize Winner and Activist  
Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Women's Research and Resource Center, Spelman College  
Women's Media Center  
Julian Bond, Board Chair, NAACP  
The Honorable Barbara Smith, Albany, New York  
Dazon Dixon Diallo, SisterLove, Inc.  
Rev. Susan Newman, Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice  
Paris Hatcher, SPARK Reproductive Justice NOW!  
Reverend Antionette Kemp, Associate Minister, United Ghana Christian Church, Atlanta, Georgia  
Rev. Margaret E. Howland, Presbytery of Hudson River, Yonkers, New York  
Paul D. Simmons, PhD, Th.M., Louisville, Kentucky  
Rev. Laura Loving  
Colleen Bowers, Presbyterians Affirming Reproductive Options, PCUSA  
Rev. Elizabeth Griswold  
Rabbi Andrew Bossov, Cherry Hill, New Jersey  
Rev. Dottie Mathews, Associate Minister, Fox Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Appleton, Wisconsin  
Rabbi Steven B. Jacobs, Founder Progressive Faith Foundation  
Rev. Cynthia S. Bumb, Pastor, Pilgrim Congregational United Church of Christ, St. Louis, Missouri  
Rev. Jack Zylman, Birmingham, Alabama  
Rabbi Shelley Kovar Becker  
Rev. Thomas A. Haller  
Janet A. Holden, Unity Temple Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Oak Park, Illinois  
The Rev. Dr. Jean Rodenbough, Greensboro, North Carolina  
Rev. Brenda Fletchall, Oklahoma  
Patricia Relf Hanavan, Richland, Michigan  
Barbara Harrison Condon, Idaho  
Rev. Janet Schlenker, Aurora, Colorado  
Rev. Steve Clapp, Christian Community, Inc.  
Rev. Karen Lipinczyk, Pastor, St. Peter's UCC, Wadesville, Indiana

Loretta Ross, Heidi Williamson, Serena Garcia, and Laura Jimenez,  
SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective