



The African American Ministers in Action (AAMIA) network is passionate about protecting the civil rights of all Americans, especially the protection of people who are discriminated against because of who they are. Victims of violent hate crimes often come to our churches in search of a safe haven from enduring assaults, and they are in need of federal protections. Thus from our houses of worship to your house of policy, we call on the Senate to protect American citizens from violent hate crimes. AAMIA strongly supports the Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009 (S. 909), and its addition to the FY10 Defense Authorization bill (S. 1391) as the Leahy/Collins/Kennedy/Snowe amendment – without weakening amendments.

On June 25, 2009, the Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing on S. 909. Below are quotes and biographical information from a selection of ministers involved in that hearing. If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact Terri Schroeder, Public Policy Senior Consultant, at (202) 577-9952.

Ministers on the Matthew Shepard Act

Rev. Dr. Kenneth Lee Samuel, “The hallmark of my Christian faith is not in how many people we can set ourselves against, nor in how many people we can exclude based upon our particular notions of theology or church dogma. What distinguishes us as people of God is our ability and willingness to love one another – no matter what. When the world sees how we treat the gay and lesbian members of our congregations and communities, will they know us by our love? Will they see Christ reflected in our actions?”

Dr. Samuel is pastor and founder of Victory for the World Church in Stone Mountain, Ga. Rev. Samuel is vice-chair of PFAW Foundation’s African American Ministers Leadership Council, a Senior Fellow at People For the American Way, Dr. Samuel is an outspoken advocate for Human Rights issues, and is the immediate past president of the DeKalb County Branch of the NAACP. In addition, in his individual capacity, Dr. Samuel has been elected as a Georgia delegate to the last four Democratic National Conventions. Dr. Samuel’s comments on equal justice for all people, especially LGBT brothers and sisters, have appeared in national and local publications including a recent *New York Times* story on reactions to the Jeremiah Wright controversy, as well as *The Washington Post*, and *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. Dr. Samuel's book entitled, *Solomon's Success: Four Essential Keys to Leadership*, has recently appeared as the #1 best seller under Pilgrim Press in the Christian Century.

Rev. Timothy McDonald, “As people of color, we are well aware of the hideous nature of race-based violence, and understand the importance of legislation that protects Americans who are victims of hate crimes. We also are not blind to the fact that violent hate crimes are motivated not just by racism. Knowing this, as clergy members and pastors who affirm

the humanity of every person, we fully understand and embrace the call to advocate for an inclusive federal law that will extend protection to victims of hate crimes based on disability, sexual orientation, gender, or gender identity.”

Rev. McDonald is Senior Pastor of First Iconium Baptist Church in Atlanta, GA. He is also the President of Concerned Black Clergy, an ecumenical organization of Black and White clergy and lay persons working on behalf of the poor and is chair of PFAW’s African American Ministers in Action. He’s been a guest on the O’Reilly Factor discussing the Jeremiah Wright controversy, and has been quoted in the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *USA Today*, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, the Associated Press, National Public Radio, and other major national and local media outlets on his work with Hurricane Katrina victims, homophobia in the Black church, immigration, voting rights, poverty, and more.

Rev. Dr. Rolan Lewis Womack, Jr., “As a pastor and community activist in the city of Milwaukee I always stand for justice. Hateful violence has brought this country too much bloodshed and pain throughout our history. I support S. 909 because I have zero tolerance for acts of violence against a class of people because of who they are. Our opposition will flood you with lies and scare tactics to prevent the passage of this bill that just are not true.”

Dr. Womack is the founding pastor of Milwaukee, WI’s Progressive Baptist Church and is chair of our affiliate People For the American Way Foundation’s African American Ministers Leadership Council. Dr. Womack has worked to define the ministry at Progressive Baptist Church in terms of social justice activism and community advocacy. His model for ministry is rooted in a strong liberation theology context, and features an Afrocentric frame of reference. Rev. Womack has been featured in several publications including his local paper, the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, on several issues including the Jeremiah Wright controversy.

Rev. Byron Williams, “Equality for all should mean equality for *all*. Laws should protect everyone against discrimination: black or white, straight or gay. None of our brothers and sisters should be forced to live in fear of retribution because of their race, religion, sexual orientation, gender or gender identity, or disability. But the reality is each year thousands of innocent Americans are victims of violent crimes merely because of who they are. In this regard, I feel the church must fill the role of speaking out for those that others have turned their backs on.”

Rev. Williams has been pastor of the Resurrection Community Church in Oakland, CA since 2002 and is an active member of the African American Ministers in Action. Additionally, Williams writes twice weekly syndicated social and political column for the Oakland Tribune, and is the host of radio-blog talk show entitled “*The Public Morality*.” In 2005, he was voted by CityFlight magazine as one of the “30 Most Influential African Americans in the San Francisco Bay Area.” Princeton professor Cornel West considers Byron’s work “groundbreaking and historic.” The Rev. Dr. J. Alfred Smith, Sr. of Allen Temple Baptist Church calls Byron “the Reinhold Niebuhr of his day.” Williams has spoken throughout the country, including

presenting the 2006 keynote address at the University of California African American graduation ceremony. He has appeared on numerous television and radio news programs, including CNN, ABC Radio, Fox News, and National Public Radio. He is also a featured writer on The Huffington Post.

Rev. Dr. Robert P. Shine, “As a pastor and community leader in the city of Philadelphia I stand firmly against violence of any kind. I support S. 909 because the Lord has called for us to love our neighbor and to set at liberty them that are bruised. The religious right has dug up some dark and ugly tactics to prevent the passage of this bill, much of which are bold faced lies.”

Dr. Shine is the Pastor and Founder of Berachah Baptist Church in the West Oak Lane section of Philadelphia, PA, where he has been the Pastor for seventeen years. Dr. Shine is a very well respected, visible church and community leader throughout the Philadelphia area. He is the President of the Black Clergy of Philadelphia and Vicinity and President of the Pennsylvania State Wide Coalition of Black Clergy. He is the chairman of the African American Association for Corporate Responsibility, (AAACR) and chairman and Charter member of the World Communications Charter School. Dr. Shine is the Chairman of the Board of Manna bible Institute. Dr. Shine is a member of the Philadelphia Police Advisory Commission, (PAC), a member of the Board of the Campus Boulevard Corporation, (CBC), he's a member of the Advisory Board of the Barrister's Association of Philadelphia. He is also a member of the Philadelphia Association of Catholic Religious Investors, (PACRI). U.S. Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX) appointed Dr. Shine as Congressional Black Caucus Chaplain and the National Association of Black State Legislators appointed him to head their Church.