

CBS Behind Anti-Choice Billboards in Atlanta



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Editor's note: Read all of RH Reality Check's coverage of this [racist anti-choice campaign](#) ^[4].

What, exactly, is happening with CBS? Has it suddenly merged with the Christian Right and become the "Christian (Right) Broadcasting System?"

It would seem so.

For the past month, reproductive justice groups in Atlanta, Georgia have been fighting against an anti-choice campaign by Georgia Right to Life and a group called the Radiance Foundation. The two groups have collaborated to buy billboard space throughout the city calling black children "an endangered species," and advocating for laws to limit the reproductive choices of women of color, as well as to push for laws banning abortion based on "the race or the sex of the child."

Now it turns out that the billboards are the property of [CBS Outdoors](#) ^[10], a subsidiary of the multi-media CBS corporation. This is not the CBS of my childhood (I Love Lucy, the Ed Sullivan Show) or of the once venerated show, 60 Minutes.

This is instead the CBS that "suddenly changed its advocacy policy" to air a Super Bowl advertisement earlier this month from Focus on the Family, the ultra-right conservative organization that seeks to limit the rights of women, homosexuals, and people of color generally. Meanwhile, they denied ad space to several organizations representing gay rights and gay advertising interests.

It is the CBS that then pushed for inclusion of Focus on the Family ads on the website of the NCAA.com, and for airing ads by the same during the March Madness college basketball tournament, until the latter pulled those ads in response to protests from the LGBT community and likely after someone, somewhere in the NCAA finally (re)read their own guidelines against ads coming from messengers that, for example, denigrate gay people.

That CBS.

There are currently 65 billboards throughout the Atlanta area, and Georgia Right to Life told the *New York Times* ^[11] that it intends to soon have 80 such signs.

These are owned by and rented from CBS Outdoors, which is now the target of a campaign by women's rights groups in Georgia seeking to remove the Georgia Right to Life signs.

One of the groups leading the campaign is SPARK Reproductive Justice Now ^[12], an organization that works to address the complexities of the lives of women and girls.

"SPARK Reproductive Justice NOW respects and defends Black women," says a statement from the group, "and all people's, reproductive health decisions including the right to abortion."

"Black women know what is best for our lives, our families, and our communities and are capable of making these decisions without a coordinated assault by organizations that are not genuinely committed to addressing the host of social issues confronted by the black community. We strongly reject and denounce these billboards and the sponsoring organizations, Georgia Right to Life, the Radiance Foundation, and Operation Outrage for speaking about us, demonizing our decisions, and assuming they know what is best for our lives."

The suggestion by these billboards that "black women somehow are perpetrators of a coordinated and intentional effort to "execute" black babies is harmful, deplorable and counterproductive," states SPARK. "Black communities and our allies will not stand by while black women's character and moral agency are persecuted, demonized and intimidated by these ads and their supporters."

"We urge people interested in the lives of black children to look at black communities more holistically and commit themselves to issues such as poverty, food insecurity, unemployment and underemployment, the school to prison pipeline and the broader prison industrial complex, environmental degradation and affordable housing."

Yet rather than working on these issues, the "pro-life" community in Georgia is focused on passing House Bill 1155, the Prenatal Nondiscrimination Bill, which asserts that abortion providers in the state of Georgia solicit women of color to have abortions based on the race or sex of the fetus.

"While such allegations are unfounded and inflammatory," states SisterSong ^[13], another group leading the opposition to both the legislation and the billboard campaign, "the bill has sparked much interest. This bill also proposes a ban on sex-selective abortions, furthering the criminalization of women of color without any regard to the broader ubiquitous issues of gender discrimination that are deeply embedded in the fabrics of our lived experiences."

A statement opposing the bill ^[14] has been signed by more than 40 national leaders from communities of color committed to reproductive justice and other leaders in the reproductive justice movement.

According to SisterSong, HB 1155 was heard and voted on in the Non-civil Judiciary Sub-Committee last week. It passed and was then presented in the full Judiciary Committee on Wednesday, February 17, and Republicans in Georgia are attempting to fast-track the legislation.

"This bill seeks to ban the solicitation and targeting of women of color by abortion providers throughout the state," says Sistersong in another statement.

"This misleading issue of abortions for sex- and race-selection in Georgia means that we have to use facts and science to stand up for women of color without undermining our support for abortion rights or without enforcing racial stereotypes about women of color. Intent on driving a wedge between reproductive justice and racial justice organizations, and pro-choice advocates, the bill reflects the false assumption that abortion providers throughout the state "solicit" women of color."

If implemented, this bill will adversely impact abortion providers by requiring them to prove that they are not targeting women of a certain race or ethnicity. This burden could result in delayed medical services, particularly for women of color. Creating such delays are a common tactic of the anti-choice movement, creating additional burdens on women facing unintended pregnancy.

Additionally, this legislation would alter the racketeering laws of the Georgia Code to include abortion providers. This is unacceptable as abortion is legal in the State of Georgia, and the alleged abuses of this medical procedure are unfounded. Such a bill would have a terrible effect on women's ability to access reproductive health care services throughout the state.

"This bill comes on the heels of a controversial billboard campaign that targets Black women in Georgia," said SisterSong.

The blatantly sexist and racist billboards declare Black children as an endangered species and prey on the conscience of Black women. The mere association between the born and unborn with endangered animals provides a disempowering and dehumanizing message to the Black community, which is completely unacceptable.

Why CBS is allowing itself to become so deeply enmeshed with the anti-choice, anti-science, anti-rights community is a mystery, but given the confluence of recent events, it clearly underscores the need for a greater degree than ever of coordination among reproductive justice and pro-choice advocates with the LGBT community in the United States.

Meanwhile, in response to the billboards, SPARK has launched a campaign asking CBS Outdoors to remove the ads. [Information on the campaign can be found here.](#) [15]

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