

Controversial abortion billboards go up in Oakland

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 by Tomas Roman

OAKLAND, Calif. (KGO) -- Some say new billboards erected in Oakland are racist, while the organization who paid for them say it's the opposite. The battle lines have been drawn in Oakland over billboards that deal with the hot-button topic of abortion.

The organization that paid for the pro-life billboards say they're trying to save hundreds of thousands of black babies from being aborted every year in the United States, but pro-choice advocates say their campaign is evil, designed to divide the black community and shame women for making a difficult choice.

The billboards are funded by the pro-life group "Issues for Life Foundation," and are placed in areas of high African-American populations around the country. Now, the billboards are making an appearance in Oakland.

The billboard uses the phrase "Black is beautiful," which some say co-opts a positive phrase.

"The fact that this has been co-opted is something that is obviously only meant to divide us," Alicia Walters with Trust Black Women California told ABC7. "I think our community can see right through it."

The Issue for Life Foundation, a branch of the Radiance Foundation, has launched this "TooManyAborted.com" pro-adoption and abortion awareness campaign. The group claims that black women are disproportionately having abortions.

At a news conference in Oakland on Saturday, the group pointed the finger at Planned Parenthood, calling them racist for providing abortions and denying children their right to life.

"I had an appointment with death," a woman said at the news conference on Saturday. "My mother's name was in a book. There was an appointment time for me to have died, and if God hadn't broken that appointment, I wouldn't be here today."

Planned Parenthood denies the charges of racism and says that the reason black women are disproportionately represented is due to the lack of accessible health care.

"The reason why there's a different rate of abortion is because those communities lack access to preventative health services," said Lupe Rodriguez with Planned Parenthood.

A prominent California lawmaker is weighing in on the billboard debate as well. Rep. Barbara Lee, a Democratic lawmaker who serves Oakland, released a statement that said, "these billboards stigmatize women of color and perpetuate myths about parenting skills and the types of women who seek and use abortion services."

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