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The continuing fight against anti-abortion billboards targeting communities of color.

By SAMHITA | Published: JUNE 20, 2011

In the last few months pro-life groups have shown us their keen ability to manipulate any social ill in the service of their agenda to strip and deny women of their right to medical care and reproductive health technologies. The latest in this trend has of course been wedging communities of color, suggesting that the pro-choice movement is actually racist, and abortion is a strategic form of genocide on behalf of women's rights advocates. This is a rather creative direction to take their racial anxieties, since [evidence suggests that communities of color and low income communities](#) are actually better off when they have access to reproductive health information and services. As the fight continues, [we have a victory against an anti-choice billboard and a loss.](#)

Last week an anti-abortion billboard targeting the Latino community [was removed](#) thanks to the work of [California Latinas for Reproductive Justice.](#)

Unfortunately, in another turn of events and propagated by a different group, the Radiance Foundation, who's handiwork was last seen in Atlanta, Oakland has about 60 new anti-choice billboards up targeting the black community.

[via ABC News.](#)

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-ops 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."

Strategically playing on racist anxieties is not effective in actually reducing how many women need abortions or access to forms of birth control, it just divides communities of color and shames women. And these anxieties aren't coming from



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thin air, but from a long history of public health conspiracies that are spread through communities of color. [Miriam writes at Colorlines.](#)

All of these campaigns also take as their starting point a fact that everybody agrees upon: black women have the highest rates of abortion in the United States. According to [Melissa Gilliam](#), University of Chicago researcher and Guttmacher Institute board member, an African-American woman is four times more likely than a white woman to have an abortion in her lifetime. [According to the Guttmacher Institute](#), 37 percent of all abortions in 2004 were obtained by black women, 34 percent by white women and 22 percent by hispanic women.

*So why are African-American women having so many more abortions than other groups? Most reproductive rights and health advocates say it's because of a much higher rate of unintended pregnancy among black women, a fact that is [supported by data](#): black women have an unintended pregnancy rate three times that of white women, according to Guttmacher. **This imbalance derives from larger health disparities: lack of access to health care, lower rates of contraceptive use, and higher rates of untreated STDs and of preventive disease overall.***

Groups like the Radiance Foundation, in their language about abortion as "genocide" and "holocaust," imply instead a larger conspiracy, perhaps promoted by government, to threaten the black community. And like other public health conspiracy theories that have circulated in black neighborhoods over the years, the assertion is rooted in a very real and troubling history.

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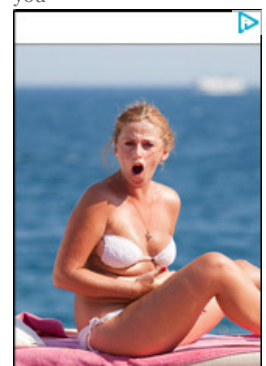
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