

'Black and Beautiful' Pro-Life Billboards Called Offensive

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"Black and Beautiful" billboards designed to spotlight the high abortion rate among African Americans has drawn fire from at least one lawmaker. But the group behind the ads dismisses naysayers, saying opponents are trying to shut down the conversation about the reality of abortion in the black community.

Ryan Scott Bomberger, founder of Radiance Foundation, says he is not fazed by California Congresswoman Barbara Lee's repudiation of their billboards. The black community, he says, is behind their efforts to raise awareness about the growing rate of abortions among African Americans and provide alternatives such as adoption.

"We have gotten tons of positive responses," said Bomberger, especially among post-abortive black men and women.

Bomberger said those speaking out against the ads are pawns of Planned Parenthood who wish to shut down the discussion on whether its services are really helping the community. The billboards are meant to expose Planned Parenthood's "racist and eugenics-cased history."

Lee released a statement to the media last week saying she is "deeply offended" by the billboard which portrays a baby laying on its back under the words "Black and Beautiful." The ads also direct the public to toomanyaborted.com/ca.

Sixty of the billboards have been put up around Oakland, Calif., and were sponsored by Radiance Foundation and Issues4Life Foundations.

Blasting the ads, Lee stated, "These billboards stigmatize women of color and perpetuate myths about parenting skills and the types of women who seek and use abortion services."

Lee also defended Planned Parenthood as "the most trusted provider of health care among women" during a congressional hearing aimed at cutting federal Title 10 funds to abortion providers.

During her testimony, she said, "The law already prohibits federal funding for abortions, though this law really should be repealed."

Bomberger argued, "Planned Parenthood is not the savior of the community."

Instead, Planned Parenthood has "failed" to accomplish its goal of reducing unplanned pregnancies, he noted.

The state currently leads the nation in abortions, with more than 214,000 performed in 2008, according the Guttmacher Institute. Additionally, national statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau suggest pregnant black women are three times as likely to have the procedure.

Planned Parenthood Director of Public Affairs Lupe Rodriguez dismissed the charge, saying,

"The reason why there is a different rate of abortion is because those communities lack access to preventive health care services."

Bomberger responded, "Health care is not abortion."

Planned Parenthood also does not address the underlying problems leading to unplanned pregnancies, he added.

Bomberger set up www.toomanyaborted.com/ca to help inform black men and women about the ills of abortion and to help them find alternatives.

The website has links and phone numbers to advocates such as Issues4Life President Walter Hoye II and abstinence educator La Vern Tolbert.

As the product of adoption, Bomberger's Radiance Foundation also offers a number of resources.

Radiance Foundation is partnered with adoption agencies and pregnancy resource centers to help pregnant women find counseling, prenatal education and financial assistance. The foundation has also partnered with Sally's Lambs to give birth mothers who choose adoption a special gift basket filled with items such as bibles, candles, jewelry and gift cards for food, clothing and hair care.

"Often times, birth mothers don't leave the hospital with a child. They leave often times with a broken heart, a certain amount of emptiness, and of course a certain amount of hope that their child is going to be in a much better situation," he said. "We give these birth moms gifts baskets, [and] we do help with some financial assistance [for] housing and other material resources."

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