

Tammerlin Drummond: Black anti-abortion campaign misses larger crisis

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Posted: 07/19/2011 07:08:48 PM PDT

Updated: 07/19/2011 07:08:48 PM PDT

My birth was not a planned event -- at least not by my parents.

Had my 17-year-old mother decided to terminate her pregnancy, I would not be here today.

(This was before Roe v. Wade, when abortion was illegal. Yet women still found ways -- often life-threatening -- to terminate unwanted pregnancies.)

All of which is to say, abortion is never something that I have taken lightly. Yet I also feel very strongly that no one has the right to force a woman to bear a child against her will. Not to mention that foster care is bursting at the seams with black children whose mothers are unable or unwilling to care for them.

Over the last several months, black anti-abortion activists have been erecting inflammatory billboards all over the country targeting African-American women. Oakland, Atlanta, Los Angeles, New York. Their goal, they say, is to rally opposition to the "genocide" of black people in the U.S.

One provocative billboard features the message: "Every 21 minutes our next possible leader is aborted," next to an image of President Barack Obama and the website address, www.toomanyaborted.com. Another proclaims, "The Thirteenth Amendment freed us, abortion enslaves us." Another screams "Black & Unwanted" above a photograph of an African-American child.

The billboards have sparked a furor nationwide. Abortion rights advocates have denounced them as racist attempts to

demonize African-American women who get abortions.

The signs first appeared in Oakland in late June courtesy of Walter Hoye III, an African-American minister in Berkeley. Hoye, you may remember, was sentenced to 30 days in jail in 2009 for refusing to obey a court order that required him to stay at least 100 yards away from the Family Planning Services clinic at Jack London Square -- as Oakland law stipulates. A panel of Alameda County Superior Court Judges later overturned Hoye's conviction on a technicality.

Now Hoye, president of the Issues 4 Life Foundation, has partnered with a Georgia outfit called the Radiance Foundation, which has been financing the nationwide black anti-abortion campaign.

I share Hoye's concerns about disproportionately high abortion rates among African-American women. Black women make up 13 percent of the U.S. female population yet 30 percent of those who get abortions.

There are clearly many, many women who are using abortion as a means of contraception after the fact.

But the notion that black abortions are a racist conspiracy by Planned Parenthood to wipe out the African-American population is preposterous.

So, too, is Hoye's claim that abortion in the black community is the "Darfur" of America.

I'm sorry, but when it comes to calamities afflicting black America, abortion is going to have to take a number and pull up a chair.



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You want to talk scary statistics?

From Oakland and Richmond to Chicago or Philadelphia, young black men are killing each other in record numbers in what the Centers for Disease Control calls a national epidemic. Homicide is the leading cause of death for black men between the ages of 15 and 34.

Consider this alarming factoid from Chicago Sun Times columnist John W. Fountain: The number of blacks murdered in Chicago alone between 1991 and 2009 -- some 9,500 -- is more than the 3,446 who were lynched in the entire U.S. between 1882 and 1968.

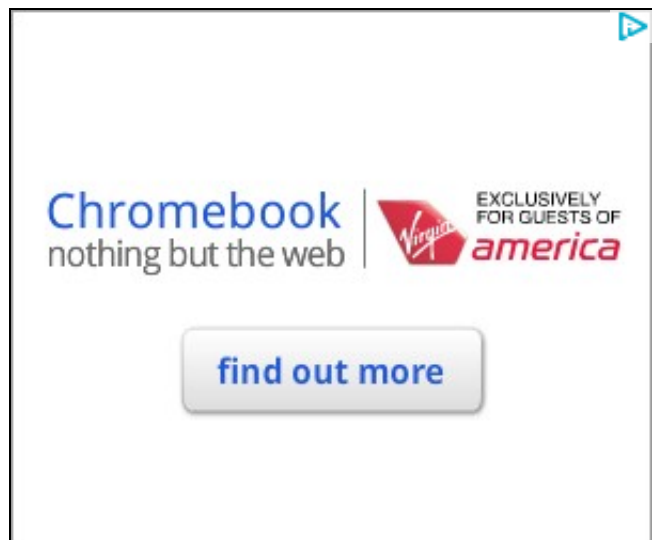
Meanwhile, the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics estimates that black men make up 40.2 percent of all prison and jail inmates. There are 846,000 imprisoned African-American men. Michelle Alexander, author of "The New Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the Age of Color Blindness," puts those lopsided numbers in sobering context.

"More African-American men are in prison or jail, on probation or parole than were enslaved in 1850 before the Civil War began," Alexander said.

More than half of black boys nationwide are dropping out of public schools -- many of them heading straight to prison without passing go.

The question is, how come black anti-abortionists get themselves so worked up over the fate of an unborn African-American child, yet make nary a peep about the crisis outside the womb?

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