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Pro-life billboards spark 'effective' conversation

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Issues4Life and the Radiance Foundation mounted a five-week campaign using 60 billboards.

By Michele Jurich
Staff writer

Sixty billboards raised awareness of the toll of abortion, particularly in the African-American community, for five weeks in Oakland. Walter Hoye, whose Union City-based Issues4Life, which was behind the campaign, said the billboards proved effective in starting a conversation about abortion.

Despite criticism from abortion-rights advocates, the billboards stayed up the length of their contract, which expired July 10, Hoye said. "We met every standard," Hoye said.

"We got a ton of response, from both sides of the debate," Hoye said. "Some thought they were racist and targeting women."

"We're reaching out to the entire community," he said of the billboards, which featured an adorable infant. The website www.toomanyaborted.com was printed beneath the bold-faced words: "Black & Beautiful."

Issues4Life was joined in the campaign by the Radiance Foundation. African-Americans account for 38.5 percent of all abortions, nationwide, even though the racial group comprises only 13.7 percent of the population, according to statistics compiled by the Centers for Disease Control.

"We had eight weeks in Los Angeles, another successful campaign," Hoye said. "The billboards were up for the MLK Walk, Black History Month and into March."

- Issues 4 Life:
www.issues4life.org
- The Radiance Foundation:
www.radiancefoundation.org

Add in the five weeks in Oakland. “We had 13 weeks of our message going out,” Hoye said. He noted the “tremendous success” of the campaign in light of opposition from Rep. Barbara Lee, D-Oakland, the ACLU and the organization Trust Black Women.

Lee’s office released this statement “I have and will continue to believe that women have the fundamental rights to make decisions regarding their reproductive lives, and no woman’s choice should be subjected to scrutiny based on her ethnic background.”

The conversation over “Does anyone have the right to take an innocent life?” is just getting started, Hoye said.

Meanwhile, the National Black Pro-life Coalition has announced a social media video campaign called “Numbers Don’t Lie.” The second installment of the three-part video series entitled: “Number One Killer” was released July 19. It reveals how abortions in the black community outnumber all other causes of death combined. “Pro-abortion groups cry racism and misogyny because they know they can’t speak to the facts,” said Ryan Bomberger of The Radiance Foundation, the organization that created the video series.

Hoye scored a victory in court July 28, when a three-judge panel of the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals unanimously ruled the city of Oakland violated Hoye’s First Amendment rights in the way it enforces a so-called “bubble law” outside abortion clinics.

The way Oakland enforces the “bubble law,” said the appellate court, “is a constitutionally invalid, content-based regulation of speech. By adopting that policy, Oakland has taken sides in a public debate in a manner that . . . the Constitution does not permit.”

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