

Minding the Gap: The Lived Experience of BAME Women in Birth & Breastfeeding



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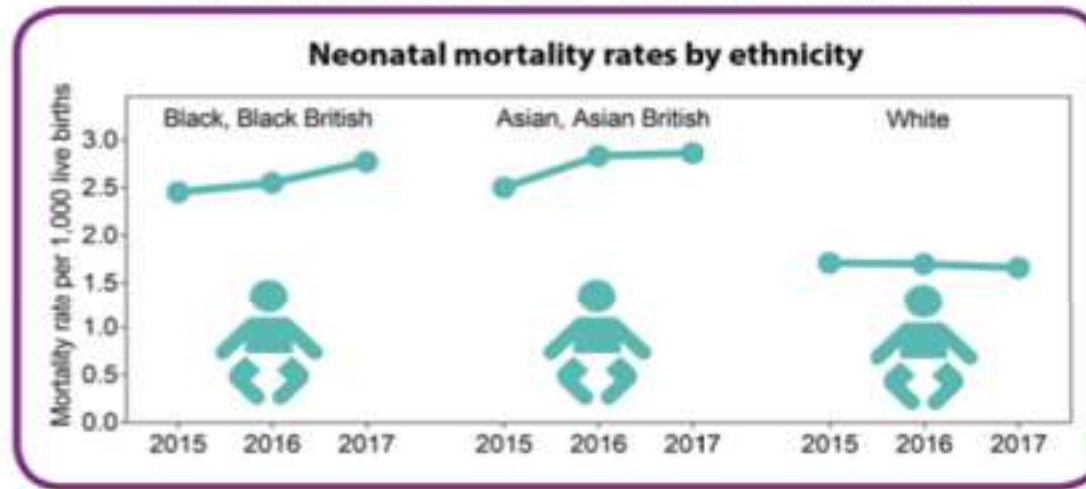
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Author | Speaker | Change Agent
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**BAME = 8 million people living in the UK
= 13% of British population**

Source: 2011 Census

- Black women 5 times more likely to die during pregnancy and childbirth than white women
- Asian women twice as likely to die during pregnancy and childbirth than white women

Neonatal mortality rates remain high for babies of Black and Asian ethnicity



Black Breastfeeding Trends





How do we acknowledge and address the root causes of racial disparities in birth & breastfeeding outcomes?

Stop Problematizing Women!!

Birth & Breastfeeding Outcomes Do Not Occur in a Vacuum!

**Out of all women who died, 96% spoke English and 63% were born in the U.K,
According to MBACE Report Table 2.9**

Context is everything! These public health campaigns falsely suggest that a full term birth or accessing healthy foods is completely within a mother's control!



Let's Talk About Racism + Bias:

Bias in care has been directly linked to black maternal mortality and morbidity crisis, high rates of infant death and other poor health outcomes.





She walked out of the hospital room so her mother wouldn't worry and told the nearest nurse, between gasps, that she needed a CT scan with contrast and IV heparin (a blood thinner) right away. **The nurse thought her pain medicine might be making her confused. But Serena insisted, and soon enough a doctor was performing an ultrasound of her legs. "I was like, a Doppler? I told you, I need a CT scan and a heparin drip," she remembers telling the team.** The ultrasound revealed nothing, so they sent her for the CT, and sure enough, several small blood clots had settled in her lungs. Minutes later she was on the drip. "I was like listen to Dr. Williams!"

Serena's Story: Income, class or education are not protective factors.



I kept saying 'I'm in pain, this isn't a joke' - then everyone looked shocked when my daughter popped out

After a 2018 report found inequalities in maternal deaths, I spoke to BAME women about their birth experiences

Friday, 6th September 2019, 3:22 pm



'Your pain threshold will not be good'

Sarah Paramasivam, 24, is a midwife in London who says she has seen evidence of unconscious bias in the birth room. Ms Paramasivam tells I she has witnessed Caucasian staff automatically believe BAME women lack English speaking skills, "and are therefore unable to make informed choices".

Ms Paramasivam says she has heard medical professionals make statements such as, "because you are Asian your pain threshold will not be good" and, "because of your ethnicity you will most likely develop gestational [diabetes](#)".

"I have heard a lot of these statements, which never seem to be said about Caucasian women," she adds. Ms Paramasivam believes awareness around unconscious bias should be incorporated into annual mandatory training staff receive.

I has heard from women about unconscious bias they say they faced during their pregnancies and births, from not being believed they were in labour to not having their pain taken seriously:



Mars Lord, a [birth activist](#) who has worked as a doula for more than 13 years, says she has heard many accounts where BAME women are ignored during childbirth.

"BAME people are not at risk because they are BAME, but because of the way they are treated for being BAME," she tells I. Ms Lord says there is a need for more birth education classes written for and by BAME people and delivered by BAME people.

"The conversations we need to have are not comfortable ones," she adds. "We know that there are health considerations, but if the health care professional

LISTEN TO BAME WOMEN!

Academic journals have documented bias among healthcare professionals



Controlled experiments found that provider perceptions and treatment recommendations for hypothetical Black patients differed significantly from those made for hypothetical white patients with the same symptoms.



"Examining the Presence, Consequences, and Reduction of Implicit Bias in Health Care: A Narrative Review"



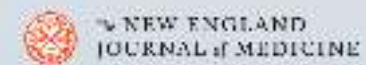
"A decade of studying implicit racial/ethnic bias in healthcare providers using the implicit association test."



"Implicit Racial/Ethnic Bias Among Health Care Professionals and Its Influence on Health Care Outcomes: A Systematic Review."



JAMA Pediatrics



**“It’s Racism, Not Race
That Puts Black
Women At Risk”**

**—Dr. Joia Crear Perry, National Birth Equity Initiative
@DocCrearPerry**

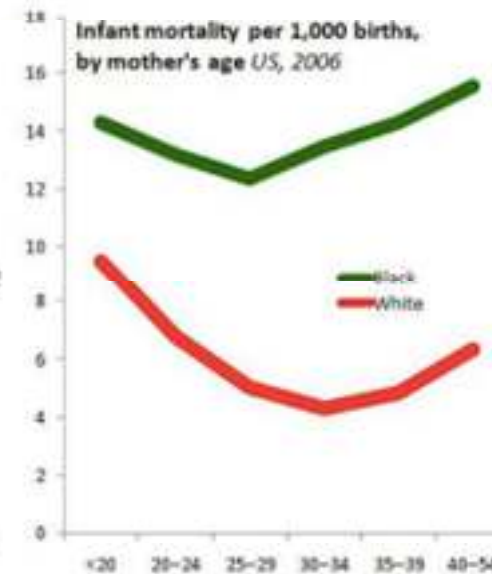
“Racism is a system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks (which we call race).”

—Dr. Camara Jones, past president of the American Public Health Association.

RACISM HAS A PHYSICAL IMPACT:

Weathering Hypothesis

- Health of black women begins to deteriorate in early adulthood as a physical consequence of socioeconomic disadvantage
- 20s – early 30s “lowest risk” age
- However...
 - Infants of Black teen mothers experience a survival advantage relative to older mothers
 - Black-White mortality differential is larger at older ages



Geronimus AT. The weathering hypothesis and the health of African-American women and infants: evidence and speculations." *Ethnicity and Disease*. 1992 Summer;2(3):207-21

THE POWER OF STEREOTYPES



Liability

Evidence-based, Yes.

But, evidence based on whom?

We must challenge and reframe research norms

**Separate the
ACT
from the EXPERIENCE**

“The experience of being interpreted is different from the experience of being understood.”
—Kimberly Seals Allers

**Whatever the question,
the answer is in the community.**

Our most revolutionary & innovative act:



The art and science of asking questions is the source of all **knowledge**

Thomas Berger



DETROIT SURVEYING TEAM



Community-partnered, participatory research projects in 5 U.S. cities



PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL WOODS
DETROIT'S FIRST LACTATION LOUNGE IS OPEN
By Michael Woods | July 13, 2017



For the past three years, lactation in the Detroit community has been lacking in state-to-state support created by the Detroit community. The pilot program was funded by the M.C. Willeg.



Philadelphia

Our Ethos: Communities can save themselves if we capture their experiential knowledge, lived experiences and narrative themes.

Community Orientation & Training Before Surveying



Meeting mothers where they are improves data outcomes



**We asked mothers, what would make
life less stressful for you?**

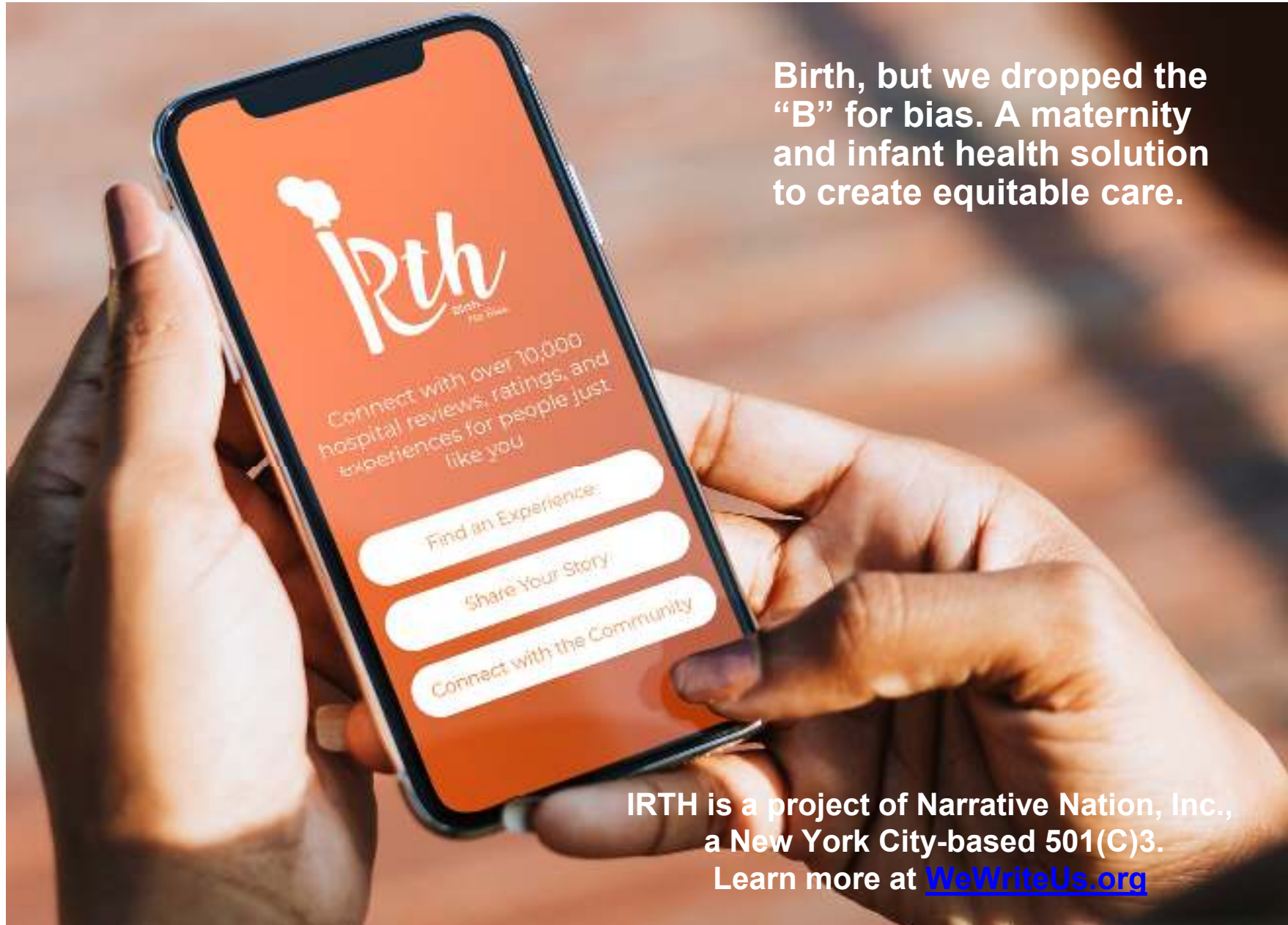


Identify social stressors
Offer a solution

**BAME WOMEN DESERVE
HEALTH EQUITY**

NOT EQUALITY!

**Birth, but we dropped the
“B” for bias. A maternity
and infant health solution
to create equitable care.**



**IRTH is a project of Narrative Nation, Inc.,
a New York City-based 501(C)3.
Learn more at [WeWriteUs.org](https://www.wewriteus.org)**

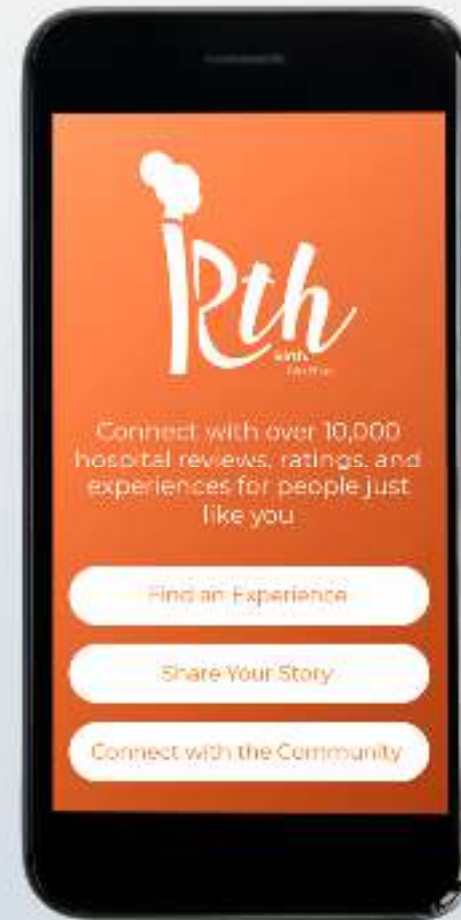
Irth. A digital tool for the health equity movement

- Yelp-like physician and hospital reviews and ratings, filtered by identity. Find a review from someone like you. Share and journal your patient experience.
- Challenges notion that all people experience the same place the same way. Empowers black women and birthing people from marginalized groups with decision-making tools they have never had before.
- Creates accessible, real-time data of patient healthcare experiences.
- Leverages experiential data to work directly with payers, providers, etc. to develop patient-centered quality improvement measures and advance culturally responsive care in practice.
- Identifies trends in experiences of bias, develops data products and custom consulting services to address gaps.

Learn more at: www.BirthWithoutBias.com



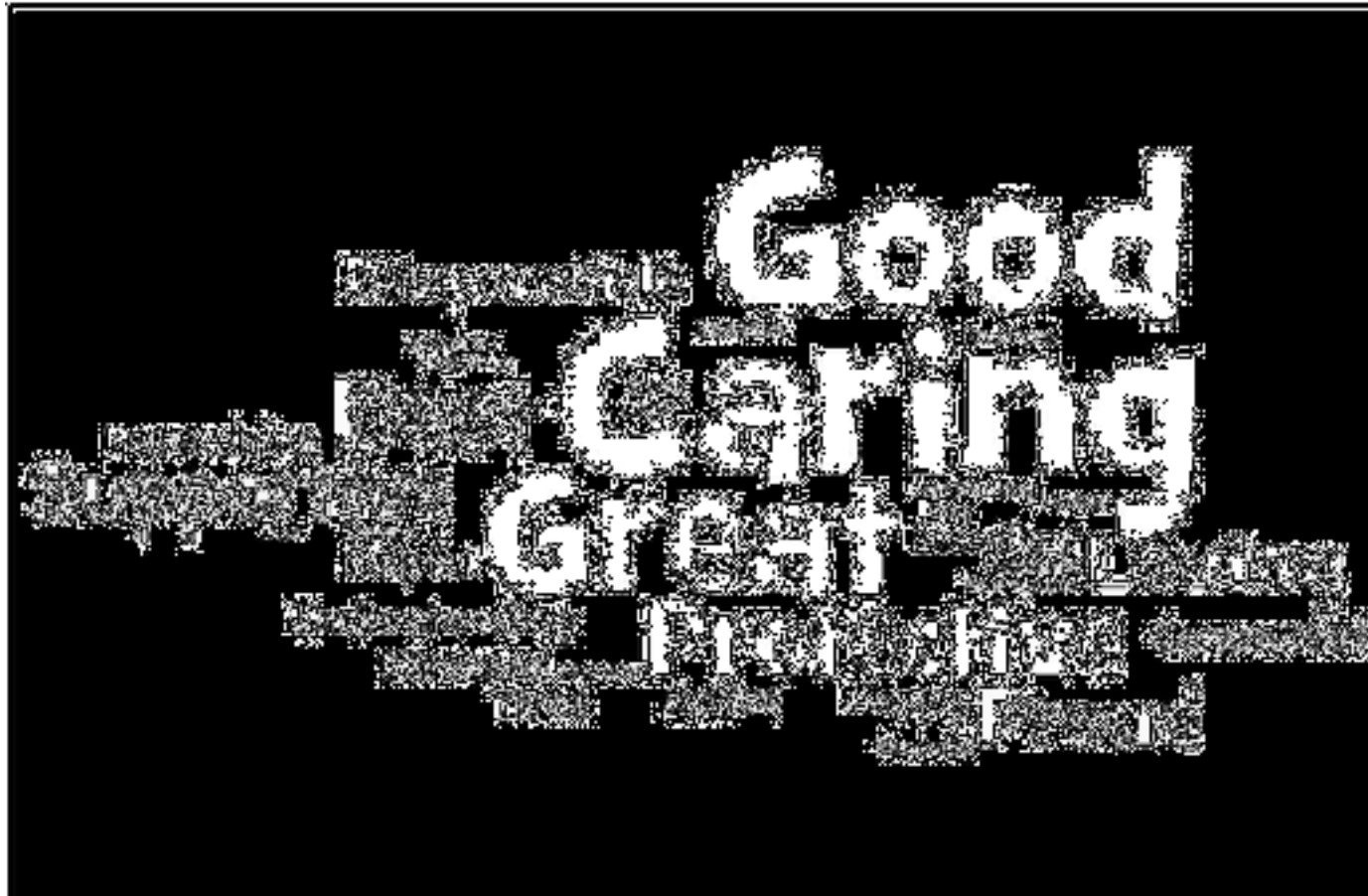
@TheIrthApp



Comm-unity

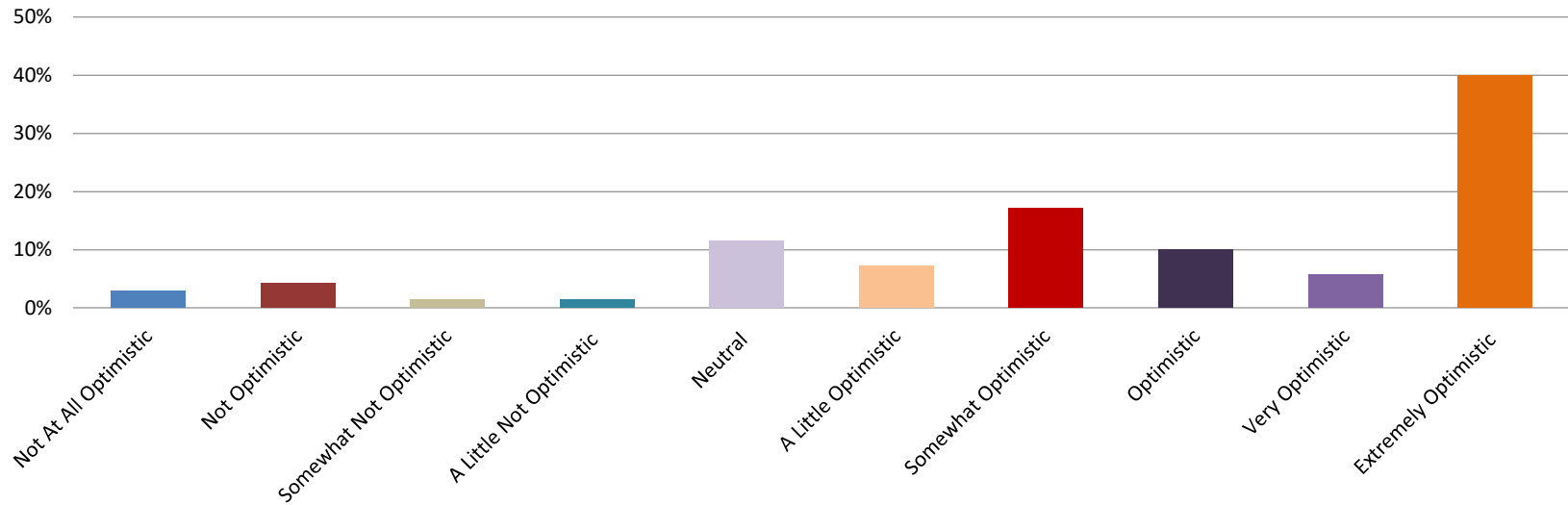
Comm-unicate

3 Words to Describe Yourself as a Father



AVOID THE DEFICIT NARRATIVE ! COMMUNITIES ARE GREATER THAN THEIR “NEEDS”

We asked people on the street in Osborn, Detroit how optimistic they were that their life circumstances would change in the next 3-5 years...







BLACK BREASTFEEDING WEEK

AUGUST 25-31



About Us | Breastfeeding Information | Get Involved | Resources

24 AUG

Guest Blog by Ruth Dennison – Why Black Breastfeeding Week?



Ruth Dennison is a **Deaf** and breastfeeding supporter in London. She has kindly shared this blog with us to celebrate the first ever Black Breastfeeding Week in the UK. The original version of this blog can be found [here](#).

Black Breastfeeding Week starts 25th – 31st August, we will be celebrating **Black Breastfeeding Week** for the first time in the UK.

There has been a look into what has been happening in the breastfeeding community of Black families. It has been documented in the

UK showing that black women have the highest breastfeeding rates of 1-19%. Many are questioning this, as there are many factors within the Black community which cause black

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12



Pregnancy | Labour & Birth | Baby & Toddler | Life as a parent | Courses & workshops | Local activities & meet-ups | Get involved

Is breastfeeding ever black and white?

Read time: 3 minutes

Home | Baby & toddler | Feeding | Contents | Is breastfeeding ever black and white?

Categories

- Breastfeeding and milk free diets
- Deaf & disabled parents
- Family support when the child has special needs
- Local activities & meet-ups
- Local events & breastfeeding support
- Is breastfeeding really ever black and white?
- Life as a parent
- Feeding advice

It's the UK's second Black Breastfeeding Week and Sonjima DeZoysa, NCT's Parent Content Manager, takes a personal look at race and breastfeeding.

This week marks the seventh Black Breastfeeding Week in the US and the second here. I've been following some of the media posts and coverage around the week with interest.

I had a difficult time breastfeeding my daughter eight years on, my memories can't list it up strong feelings. Some of the challenges I faced were certainly down to my heritage. As a first-generation British Asian, I can't deny you're not the fact that breastfeeding and the influence of race, migration, transnational, and social narratives.





Strong.
Empowered.
Breastfed.
Nothing can stop me now.

#BBW15
#LiftEveryBaby





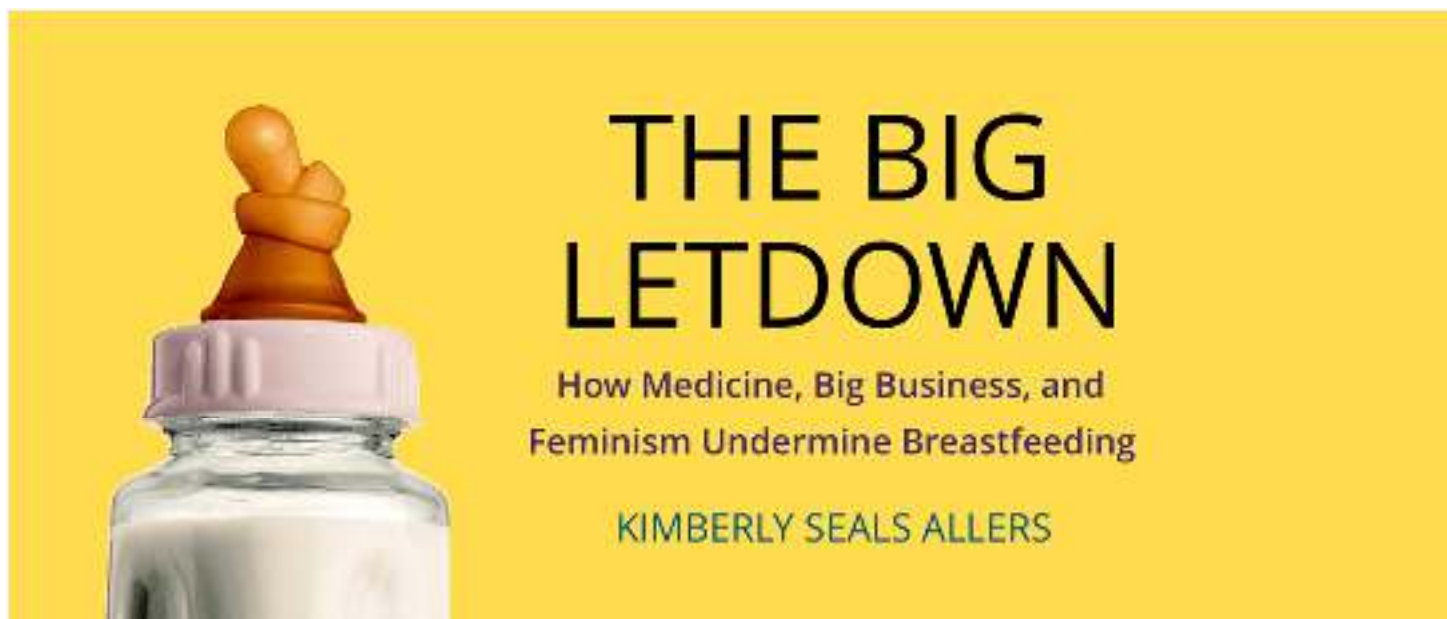
Cultivate True Allyship

KNOW WHEN TO LEAD AND WHEN TO FOLLOW

with People of Color

CO-LIBERATION MODEL

None of us are free until all of us are free!



Learn more at: www.KimberlySealsAllers.com

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Connect: @IamKSealsAllers | twitter, instagram, facebook