



# SISTA MIDWIFE PRODUCTIONS

THANK YOU  
TO OUR  
DONORS &  
SUPPORTERS

2020 IMPACT REPORT

*Sista & Midwife*  
PRODUCTIONS

# A YEAR OF TRANSITION

In Spite of the Transitions, we still made A LOT happen.

It goes without saying that 2020 was an unprecedented year full of transition, change, and realignment for all of us individually and collectively. Here at Sista Midwife Productions, we definitely felt the shift!

In spite of the challenges, the changes, and the uncertainty, we are proud to say that we continued forward. We continued to support, train, inspire, elevate and spread the word about solutions for improving Black maternal health outcomes.

Some of the changes we implemented are becoming a permanent part of our service model. For others we are continuing to contemplate how we will re-create them inside the current landscape of life. We made the difficult decision to put our popular Birth Story

Project initiative on hold. We canceled our in-person doula training and moved to an online platform and we revamped The Art of Birthing and created a National Virtually Vibin' Experience.

Thanks to a grant from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation we created community-based perinatal community health worker training initiative. And we continue to serve as advisor and mentor to countless new and experienced birth workers and organizations.

In spite of it all, 2020 ended on a high note. We connected to and strengthened relationships with new partners who are also working to shift the paradigm around the birthing experiences of black families. We are proud of the work we have been able to do and this report celebrates our wins!



BIRTH IS THE  
REVOLUTION

# A NEW ENDEAVOR

## Healthy Birth Louisiana : Making the Case for Better Birth

One of the most significant accomplishments of 2020 was the launch of our Healthy Birth Louisiana Initiative. Through this initiative, our goal is to train a cohort of Healthy Birth Ambassadors for all nine of the Louisiana Department of Health's public health regions.

Across the country, there are models that demonstrate the effectiveness of using perinatal community health workers (PCHWs) to improve outcomes and eliminate disparities. We believe that by providing Louisiana's communities access to PCHWs we can offer a high impact intervention that targets the health indicators that drive disparities.

Healthy Birth Ambassadors (HBA) are PCHWs who live and work in the same community. HBAs have a desire to make birth better for the families in their communities and they understand that how we give birth directly impacts how we parent and how we show up in life and in society.

We believe through community connections, advocacy, service, and education our Healthy Birth Ambassadors can improve birth outcomes for our state.



### OUR CURRICULUM PROVIDES THE TRAINING, INFORMATION, AND SUPPORT FOR EACH HBA TO BECOME:

**CHILD  
BIRTH  
EDUCATORS**

**PREGNANCY  
&  
INFANT LOSS  
ADVOCATES**

**CERTIFIED  
DOULAS**

**CERTIFIED  
BREAST-  
FEEDING  
SPECIALISTS**

**COMMUNITY  
HEALTH  
WORKERS**



# A NEW ENDEAVOR

---

## Healthy Birth Louisiana : Making the Case for Better Birth

In April of 2020, we trained our first cohort of Healthy Birth Ambassadors. This group of 13 individuals resides in Louisiana Health Department Regions 7 and 8.

Thanks to the support of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation, all thirteen of the individuals received full scholarships for the training. They were also provided with tangible teaching aides needed to begin serving families. We are continuing to work with this initial cohort providing ongoing support and professional development.

After wrapping up our first HBA training in October, we expanded the Healthy Birth Louisiana Initiative to Region 1 training an additional 12 individuals in partnership with Birthmark Doula Collective. With your continued support, Healthy Birth Louisiana will become a lasting innovative, culturally-specific intervention to reduce poor birth outcomes in the state of Louisiana.



HEALTHY BIRTH  
— LOUISIANA —  
MAKING THE C.A.S.E. FOR BETTER BIRTH

**The training and mentorship have been invaluable. My time spent in this cohort has reinforced my foundation. I'm better equipped to provide encouragement, a strong voice, a listening ear, and sound guidance to individuals, groups, and community stakeholders. Thanks for all you do and continue to strive for excellence. I'm so glad to be affiliated with Sista Midwife Productions.**

---

**- LaRhonda, HBA Cohort 2020**



## SISTA MIDWIFE IN THE COMMUNITY

### Impact at the Local and National level

Throughout 2020, our Founder and CEO, Nicole Deggs, CNM, MSN, MPH, individually, and as a representative of our organization, served on a wide array of advisory committees and panels and supported a variety of maternal health initiatives at the local, state, and national levels.

At the federal level, Sista Midwife Productions supported, and provided recommendations for the sweeping **Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act of 2020**, a multifaceted bill that outlines ways to address maternal health outcomes among minority populations.

To support efforts in Louisiana, we worked directly with Louisiana House Representative Matthew Willard, providing feedback on three bills that aim to provide families with health insurance coverage for midwifery and doula services. We look forward to continuing to work with Representative Willard in the 2021 legislative session.

In addition to the legislative work, Nicole had an opportunity to raise awareness about black infant and maternal health disparities and solutions for improvement through

various speaking engagements. Two of the most critical statewide presentations included a webinar for Women on the Hill, hosted by LIFT Louisiana, and “More Power: Women at the Polls and in Policy” organized by the Louisiana Center for Health Equity.

Nicole served as a member of the Louisiana Pregnancy Associated Mortality Review Committee (PAMR) and the Healthy Moms Healthy Babies Counsel. As a member of each, she provided recommendations, and insight with a specific goal to elevate the voices and the needs of black and brown families.

Nicole was able to share the mission of Sista Midwife Productions and broadened our reach as a part of a Collective Impact panel during the United Way of Acadiana’s Annual Meeting and as a keynote speaker for the Pregnancy Support International annual conference.

In addition to these engagements Nicole and the work of Sista Midwife Productions were featured and highlighted in multiple publications and speaking engagement with a variety of local and national public health and community-based organizations.



Our Birth Justice Film Festival and panel discussions included **Bringin' In Da Spirit** followed by a discussion on the legacy of African American Midwifery; **These Are My Hours** and a discussion on the option of home birth; **Chocolate Milk** and an expert panel on breastfeeding in the African American community; and **Eggs Over Easy** and a discussion on black women and fertility. The panel discussions featured nearly **20 panelists** comprised of industry experts, and the directors and producers of the featured documentaries.







# THE ART OF BIRTHING

Our Annual #ArtAsAdvocacy Event went Virtual!

The Art of Birthing expanded its national reach in 2020 hosting over 150 registrants across 35 cities and 20 states. Our 2020 efforts also included new and expanded partnerships, sponsorships, and exciting collaboration with organizations like Laissez Faire Production Group, The Irth App, Evidence Based Birth, Tulane University Newcomb Institute, The Mary Amelia Center for Women's Health Equity Research, Healthy Blue, Seven Three Distilling, Sovereign Brands, Cocktails by POP, Spanish Moss Studios and others. During Black Breastfeeding Week we were excited to partner with the New Orleans Public Library as they launched their new Black Wellness Matters Series. We wrapped our 2020 events with our fundraising art auction featuring national and international visual artists.

The ultimate goal of The Art of Birthing is to provide a safe space to engage in a robust dialogue about improving healthy birth outcomes for Black families. We believe we accomplished that goal in 2020. We could not have pulled off such a successful virtual vibe without your help and support. We thank you for your continued support and cannot wait for what 2021 has in store for The Art of Birthing.







## **VIRTUAL DOULA TRAINING: GREATER REACH, GREATER IMPACT**

---

In 2020, Virtual Access to Doula Training  
Greatly Increased the Number of Trainees,  
Therefore Greatly Increasing our Impact

2020 posed challenges for every aspect of Sista Midwife Productions, including our Doula training. At Sista Midwife Productions, it is our mission to eliminate perinatal disparities by increasing the number of black birth workers. One of the most important ways we do this is through our Doula training. In a normal year, we usually do 4-6 training sessions with 8-12 people per class. Because we like to create an intimate learning environment, we knew that the risks of COVID-19 meant we had to cancel our in person classes.

The challenges that we faced as birth advocates in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic shined a light on our organization's continued need to provide needed training for birth support. As we heard of the extra daily changes doulas faced in advocating for families, we saw an increase in the numbers of individuals wanting to serve.

We began to realize we had no choice but to move our doula training online and with that decision, our course became more accessible to people across the country and interest and registration soared past 100 students. Our students remained greatly engaged throughout the 10 weeks of training and we have ushered over 90 new people into birth work. We have our next online class scheduled for April 2021.

The challenges that pregnant women and families face in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to shine a light on the need for more individuals trained to support families in pregnancy and birth!

We will continue to do our part to train birth workers and are happy to say that because of your donations we were able to offer twenty scholarships to our fall training.

---

# A MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDER

---

## Where Do We Go From Here? Looking Forward to 2021 & Beyond

When I started Sista Midwife Productions I had one goal in mind, to provide information and support to families so they could experience better birth outcomes. While our work to date has been successful we still need your support because the work and the fight are not over!!!

We are committed to continuing our work to train and elevate the voices of black birth workers, and black families. We know that we are not in this alone and we thank you for your donations and your support as we continue to advocate for families in Louisiana and across the country.

It is through your gracious support that we can continue to combat the racial disparities and inequities that Black women and families face before, during, and after childbirth.

On behalf of the entire Sista Midwife Productions' Team I want to say

# THANK YOU!



Nicole Deggins, CNM, MSN, MPH  
Founder & CEO

---