

# THE IMPERATIVE OF EQUITABLE, ACCESSIBLE CHILDBIRTH EDUCATION

## GAP IN EDUCATION:

The abysmal, worsening perinatal morbidity and mortality rates in the US are fueled by large disparities in the treatment of Black and Brown individuals.<sup>5</sup> Structural and systemic racism has resulted in deficit-focused approaches to address disparities and an unmet need for culturally-congruent care.

## NEED FOR EDUCATION

Black and Brown birthing people deserve education about the birth process and preparation with the necessary self-advocacy skills to navigate our birthcare system. However, it is the responsibility of all involved in perinatal care, not birthing people alone, from community members to clinicians to take action to create safer, equitable care environments.

## EDUCATION PLAN

The Imperative program was created to offer childbirth classes to Black and Brown birthing people, led by members of their community funded by the non-profit Your BIRTH Partners.

It has since expanded and reaches birthing people directly through birth classes and provides education about the imperative of equitable, accessible childbirth education to community members and clinicians through presentations and outreach.



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## TARGET AUDIENCE

This educational intervention has been designed to impact Black and Brown birthing people, clinical and non-clinical birthworkers, and all community members with targeted education dependent on role within the perinatal system.

YOU!

## EDUCATION METHOD

The Imperative classes are offered virtually in small cohorts of students to increase accessibility and encourage discussion within community.

Additional education is provided via short video and handouts personalized to each role with reflection questions, additional resources, and actionable steps. Participants are encouraged to increase their awareness of the perinatal health crisis impacting Black and Brown communities and work to connect the birthing person with the equitable care they need.

### RELATED LITERATURE

1 Budin, W. C. (2020). In This Issue-Confronting Racial and Other Health Disparities in Birth. *The Journal of Perinatal Education* (4). <https://doi.org/10.1891/J-PE-D-20-00046>

2 Gluck, O., Pinchas-Cohen, T., Hiaev, Z., Rubinstein, H., Bar, J., Kava, M. (2020). The impact of childbirth education classes on delivery outcome. *International Journal of Gynaecology & Obstetrics* (3). <https://doi.org/10.1002/ijgo.13016>

3 Hoyert, D. L. (2022). Maternal Mortality Rates in the United States, 2020. National Center for Health Statistics. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hestat/maternal-mortality/2020/maternal-mortality-rates-2020.htm>

4 March of Dimes. (2022). Nowhere to Go: Maternity Care Deserts Across the U.S. (2022 Report). March of Dimes. <https://www.marchofdimes.org/research/maternity-care-deserts-report.aspx>

5 Stewart, S. D. (2021). Birthing While Black: Examining America's Black Maternal Health Crisis. March of Dimes. <https://www.marchofdimes.org/news/birthing-while-black-examining-americas-black-maternal-health-crisis.aspx>

6 Taylor, J., Novoa, C., Hamm, K., & Phadke, S. (2019). Eliminating Racial Disparities in Maternal and Infant Mortality: A Comprehensive Policy Blueprint. The Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/eliminating-racial-disparities-maternal-infant-mortality/>

## IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

- Black and Brown families deserve equitable access to childbirth classes that prepare them for the realities of birth while bolstering their community connections.
- Childbirth education must address the racism-driven disparities in birthcare outcomes, and research demonstrates the importance of cultural-congruence between students and instructors of color with lived experience navigating these issues.
- Everyone must take accountability for our individual roles in making this a reality.
- Equity in birth education and care will only be achieved once each of us examine our responsibilities in creating change. This necessitates examining our own biases and championing community-led solutions.

### USE THE QR CODES!

Explore the importance of your role through reflection & resources.

## EQUITABLE, ACCESSIBLE BIRTHCARE MUST BECOME THE STANDARD, RATHER THAN THE EXCEPTION.

## HOW MIGHT YOU HELP CENTER THE INDIVIDUAL NEEDS OF A BIRTHING PERSON?

### BIRTHING PEOPLE

YOU DESERVE TO BE HEARD AND RESPECTED.



for Black and Brown  
Families

YOU ARE IN CHARGE.

YOU HAVE MANY CARE OPTIONS.

### COMMUNITY

- YOU ARE A CHOSEN SUPPORT.
- YOU HAVE A CRITICAL ROLE IN ADVOCACY AND EDUCATION.
- YOU AMPLIFY THE VOICE OF THE BIRTHING PERSON.



### CLINICIANS

- YOU ARE PRIVILEGED TO WITNESS AND SUPPORT BIRTH.
- YOU HAVE SO MANY INSIGHTS TO SHARE.
- YOU ENSURE EACH BIRTHING PERSON'S AUTONOMY IS RESPECTED.



## EVALUATION

Imperative students provide feedback via an online survey measuring amongst other factors the helpfulness of the class content, discussions, instructor's support, community, centering the Black and Brown experience, and grant coverage of the course. This centering was "very helpful" for 94% of participants, and the instructor support, content, and grant coverage was ""very helpful" for 89% of participants. Several students strongly identified with the self-advocacy skills gained throughout the course. They express overcoming lifelong fears of childbirth and feeling confident in navigating the birthcare system.

Presentation attendees have expressed gratitude for tools to check their awareness, acknowledge their roles, and take action.