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# National Black Maternal Health Week 2023 Is Here!



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**“The power is in your hands.  
You do have autonomy over your  
body. You can enter pregnancy, you  
can plan your family how you want  
and how you see fit, according to your  
values and your cultural practices.”**

*- BMMA Co-Founder & Executive Director Angela D. Aina*

*Source: “The Shocking Increase in Maternal Death in America,” The  
Nation, April 3, 2023*

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[WWW.BLACKMAMASMATTER.ORG](http://WWW.BLACKMAMASMATTER.ORG)



Civil rights titan Fannie Lou Hamer called it a “Mississippi appendectomy” — the appalling medical practice for many decades in the 20th century of performing hysterectomies without permission or consent on Black women in the South.

What was it really? Racist paternalism baked into health protocols and systems that guaranteed inequitable care and negative impact on Black women and families.

The casual, confident, and callous disregard for Black female bodies wasn’t confined to policies and practices in the South. It was an American phenomenon with a legacy of ignorance and bias that shows up in today’s disproportionate maternal health and mortality statistics.

Black mothers and babies have the worst childbirth outcomes in the United States; the nation with the worst maternal health statistics among wealthy nations. Black women have pregnancy-related mortality rates that are three times higher than non-Hispanic White women. Rates of pre-term births, low birthweight births, or births after late or no prenatal care are also disproportionately higher.

## It's a crisis.

Black women and families deserve more than what statistics explicitly show they are not getting from the U.S. healthcare system. Consequently, the broader social and economic policies affect the overall well-being of adults and children.

Today marks the start of national Black Maternal Health Week, an annual campaign to raise awareness of the plight of Black women before, during, and after pregnancies. The State of Black Arizona (SBAZ) highlights the Black Mamas Matter Alliance (BMMA) awareness campaign, with the theme this year of “Our Bodies Belong to Us: Restoring Black Autonomy and Joy,” as part of its mission to validate data and educate the community and civic leaders about the Black lived experience in the state.

Throughout this week BMMA will advance much-needed national conversations about maternal mortality, maternal mental health, breastfeeding, reproductive rights and justice (access to contraception), quality of care or birth justice, and Black maternal health policy.

Later this month, in support of National Minority Health Month, SBAZ will launch its 12-month Maternal Infant Health in Arizona awareness campaign providing insights on what is happening on the local health front.

In the meantime, we recommend finding opportunities to view the documentary films “Aftershock” and “Birthing Justice” Both films shed light on what’s happening — and not happening — today in Black maternal health and the birth justice movement advocating for systemic change that provides equitable care. Also be sure to read [an informative article about The Shocking Increase in Maternal Death in America.](#)

[Watch Aftershock](#)

[Watch Birthing Project](#)



Additionally, check out our social platforms during the week to connect to the maternal issues and opportunities that most impact you, family, friends and community.

**BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH WEEK**  
APRIL 11-17, 2023

**OUR BODIES BELONG TO US:**  
RESTORING BLACK  
AUTONOMY &  
JOY

**#BMHW23**

**BMMA**  
BLACK MAMAS MATTER ALLIANCE

LEARN MORE AT [BLACKMAMASMATTER.ORG/BMHW](https://blackmamasmatter.org/bmhw)

SBAZ believes improving health outcomes for Black women and babies is essential to the overall well-being of the community and the state. Historically, Black women have been the backbone of families and large social movements for justice and equality. That was true in the United States during the epic, mid-20th century fight for civil rights. It's true in today's ongoing struggles for inclusion and equity.



Fannie Lou Hamer was among the nation's best champions of equal rights during the tempestuous 1960s. She was fired from her job on a plantation for registering to vote. She was severely beaten in jail and targeted at a home strafed with bullets for working to ensure others gained full citizenship, including the right to vote. She forced the integration of the Mississippi Democratic Party.

But before all of that, in 1961, Fannie Lou Hamer needed medical attention for a woman's health issue. She agreed to the removal of a uterine tumor. Instead, without her consent, the doctor gave her a "Mississippi appendectomy."