

Empowering and Educating: The Importance of Midwifery

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I joined the Reproductive Rights and Health Internship program as a freshman this semester with the hope that I would be able to learn from professionals in the field of reproductive healthcare, feel like I was making an impact, and be able to connect with peers that were equally passionate. The semester has lived up to all of those dreams and more.

I am working with Steph Smith, the director and producer of the documentary *Give Light: Stories from Indigenous Midwives*. Having grown up listening to my mother talk about how much her doula helped with the birth of my brother, how much she wished she had one for me, and that she wished she had known that a midwife was an option when she gave birth, I felt especially drawn to this film and work. It has also been fascinating coming at the work from the angle of my career aspirations - I want to be an OB/GYN, and OB/GYNs as a field are not known for enthusiastic cooperation with midwives.

But that, I believe, only highlights the importance of this film and internship program. I have learned about the health benefits of midwifery, the statistics on often unnecessary medical interventions in birth, and the huge emotional impact that having access to a midwife who can guide and empower somebody through birth can have. Not everyone has access to a midwife, though, and that has been another important part of my work and research. Local and federal legislation, hospital policy, social stigma, lack of information, and misinformation are all large players in the growing barriers that midwives are facing, especially in the United States.

With *Give Light*, I have had the opportunity to work on the development of an educational toolkit to accompany the film in the hopes that we can make an impact in the world of birthing people. I walk into my future armed with the information, empathy, encouragement, and hope that I have received from everyone whom I have been able to work with and learn from this semester. It has been more fulfilling than I could have imagined and I look forward to continuing the work that I am doing.