

Exploring the Reproductive Justice Landscape and Maternal and Child Health in New Orleans with Birthmark Doula Collective

Mon, 04/18/2022 - 00:00

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This semester marked my first semester in the Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Health Internship program. The past few months, I have had the privilege of working at Birthmark Doula Collective as well as their cooperative, the New Orleans Breastfeeding Center, alongside Member-Owners Stephanie Visco and

Latona Giwa. Birthmark Doula Collective is a birth justice and advocacy organization that provides a plethora of services such as doula services and lactation support to local New Orleans families. I was drawn to the organization after noticing their commitment to inclusion and supporting minority families throughout the birth process. The work of the organization is essential, as it empowers birthing people, especially those that are low-income and marginalized in their reproductive health choices. My mom has confided in me about her negative birth experiences, so to know that there are organizations and resources available to improve birth experiences and outcomes for people like me, is amazing.

The first large project I worked on was updating their Birth Violence Resource Kit, which was a document filled with resources, education, and words of support for birthing people compiled by the organization. Working on this project taught me so much about disparities within maternal and child health. While I was familiar with disparities in obstetrics and maternal and child health prior to my internship, working on this document shed a new light on the topic for me. I enjoyed learning about the topic so much that I ended up making obstetric violence among Black women the topic of my semester-long project for one of my public health courses.

The knowledge that I have gained throughout the course of this internship is invaluable. As a student who is still trying to navigate their specific career aspirations post-graduation, working alongside a wonderful group of individuals whose passions of improving the health and wellbeing of people, and specifically, the health and wellbeing of populations of birthing people who most often face barriers to inclusive, quality healthcare services, has shown me that when your passions align with your career aspirations, no dream is too big. I am beyond grateful for the opportunity I have had to work alongside and learn from doulas, lactation consultants, nurses, and advocates of reproductive health and reproductive justice.