

# This is only the Beginning...

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Hello all! My name is Darreille L. Ellis; a current junior at Tulane University, studying public health and Spanish while being on the pre-med track. For the 2021 Spring Semester, I have had the pleasure of working with Birthmark Doula Collective and the New Orleans Breastfeeding Center; two separate organizations who have recently been conjoined into one. The best of both worlds!

Upon being granted this internship, I was ecstatic and eager to be able to expand my knowledge regarding reproductive health and justice as these topics are a great

passion of mine. Being able to shift my focus on issues that affect a woman's ability to direct her own life, whether it be abortion, contraception, assisted reproduction, maternal health, breastfeeding, etc. has been very rewarding to my morals and what I stand by and support in life.

It may come as no surprise to you, but my dream career is to become an obstetrician-gynecologist. However, I want to be an obstetrician-gynecologist whose knowledge extends far beyond that of medical comprehension but equally extends into the realm of reproductive justice. Additionally — coming from a public health perspective — the world and the United States are in grave need for more medical doctors, with this specialty, to possess an extensive background on this topic, and put their patient's rights on the forefront. In doing this, many public health issues will be adequately addressed as rates of maternal mortality, lack of patient autonomy, low birth weights, and a host of other factors that are contributing to this public health crisis, will dramatically decrease.

However, until this change within the healthcare system is seen, that is what doulas, midwives, and lactation specialists are here for. It was not until shortly before being granted this internship that I found out what a doula was and the capacities in which they practice. Throughout my internship, I've had projects in which I had to speak to several doulas, midwives, and lactation specialists. In doing this, I was able to retrieve insight into things like what their philosophy of birth is, their most memorable moments as a doula or midwife, the change they have witnessed within the domain of reproductive health and justice during their time period of being a doula or midwife, the changes they see forthcoming for the future, etc. Being surrounded by and retrieving knowledge from so many individuals who share the same passion and drive as me—relating to this topic—has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life! With that being said, my journey doesn't end here. I intend to continue my journey with Birthmark Doula Collective and the New Orleans Breastfeeding Center through Summer 2021 and beyond! The most exciting news of all...I am soon starting the process to become a nationally certified doula myself! This is something that would not have been made possible without my team at the Collective, and I am beyond grateful to join a network of birthing advocates. To end this, I would like to extend my greatest thanks to Newcomb Institute for believing in me and my work ethic, enough to extend me this opportunity and I would like to thank all of those at Birthmark Doula Collective and the New Orleans Breastfeeding Center who have aided me tremendously throughout this journey.

Peace, Darreille L. Ellis