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Additional Organizations That Address Health Inequities Within the African American Community

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The increase in breastfeeding rates in the African American community is largely due to the efforts of several grassroots organizations. This article briefly describes some of these organizations, highlighting their objectives, mission, founders, and beginnings.

Keywords: breastfeeding, African Americans, Black mothers, community organizations

The Black Mothers' Breastfeeding Association (BMBFA) is based in Detroit, Michigan. Kiddada Green is the founding executive director (Figure 1). Their vision is to make positive cultural sentiments about breastfeeding and multigenerational breastfeeding support within African American families and communities.

The mission of the BMBFA is to “reduce racial inequities in breastfeeding support for African Americans by building foundational networks of support, and strengthening systems to overcome historical, societal, and social barriers to breastfeeding success.” Their goal is to reduce national rates of racial disparities in lower rates of breastfeeding in African Americans. They want to accomplish their goal by providing education and support to African Americans and the agencies that serve them.

Explore the website here <http://blackmothersbreastfeeding.org/> or contact them at BlackMothersBreastfeeding@gmail.com.

Figure 1. Kiddada Green, Founding Executive Director of Black Mothers' Breastfeeding Association



Black Mothers' Breastfeeding Summit



<http://youtube/b8MXkKkO1a4>

Reaching Our Sisters Everywhere

Reaching Our Sisters Everywhere (ROSE), Inc., <http://www.breastfeedingrose.org/>, was founded in July 2011 by three Atlanta-based women who have worked in the field of maternal and child health for the past 25 years. Kimarie Bugg, MSN, FNP-BC, MPH, CLC, observed how the prenatal healthcare system not only failed to teach and encourage breastfeeding but also often impeded it. ROSE's initiatives include (a) improving access to breastfeeding in the African American community, (b) reclaiming their breastfeeding experience, and (c) reforming healthcare through breastfeeding.

Since its founding, ROSE has grown to a network that includes physicians, nurses, nutritionists, social workers, peer counselors, and parents (Figure 2). ROSE seeks to enhance, encourage, support, promote, and protect breastfeeding throughout the U.S. by working to reduce the breastfeeding disparities among African American women and to strengthen the health of their babies and families through mentoring, training, breastfeeding support groups, social support, outreach, education, legislation, health policies, and social marketing. ROSE's primary goal is to increase the percentage of African American women who breastfeed and thereby reach the target breastfeeding goal outlined in *Healthy People 2020*. To achieve the 81% increase of African American women who breastfeed by 2020, there will need to be nationally focused programs that involve a range of stakeholders: breastfeeding women, individuals, family, healthcare providers, and community and public policymakers.

Figure 2. Founders of Reaching Our Sisters Everywhere



A More Excellent Way

Monique Sims-Harper, DrPH, MPH, RD, CLE (Figure 3), is the chief executive officer and founder of A More Excellent Way Health Improvement Organization (MEW). This project came about as part of Dr. Sims's dissertation project at the University of California at Berkeley. Her dissertation title was, "Engaging the Faith Community to Improve the Breastfeeding Rates of African American Women." MEW was formed in 2005 and incorporated in December of 2007. Dr. Sims partnered with her church, Revival Center Ministries, in pioneering the MEW Breastfeeding Project, which consisted of conducting focus groups that informed a church-placed infant feeding and parenting training and intervention.

The first MEW peer counselor training and baby shower was successful in training 14 breastfeeding peer counselors in the art and practice of breastfeeding support and ministering to more than 100 men and women. The training and baby shower have been repeated at several churches in Solano County, including True Love Baptist Church and Tabernacle of David Missionary Baptist Church. The plan is to continue to train leaders in the community to improve Solano County's breastfeeding rates, particularly among African Americans. This project intends to improve the health and survival of African American infants.

The organization aims to promote wellness and reduce health disparities. MEW engages the community, and particularly churches, to provide health education, information, and resources.

Figure 3. Monique Sims-Harper, Founder and CEO of A More Excellent Way



Since our organization began, the rates of African American breastfeeding have increased significantly. However, the African American and White gap in breastfeeding rates still persists. Our goal is to eliminate this disparity in breastfeeding and that 75% of African American women in Solano County & Contra Costa County breastfeed their babies for at least one year.

Dr. Sims is the proud mother of two breastfed sons and one foster daughter and is guardian to her three nephews. Dr. Sims is also a registered dietitian who has a passion for improving the nutrition and health of her family and community. You can contact Monique at monique@mewpeers.org or <http://www.mewpeers.org/>.

Blacktating

Elita Kalma, CLC, is the founder of the popular blog, Blacktating (Figure 4). She started her blog to get answers to her questions about breastfeeding. She was hoping to find another mother out there at four in the morning who was also breastfeeding and perhaps had questions of her own. But she noticed that she was never hearing back from other mothers of color, even when she specifically looked for them. She wanted to know where the other Black breastfeeding moms were and how could she connect with them. When her son was 4 months old, she decided to start Blacktating. The blog

Figure 4. Elita Kalma, Founder of Blacktating



has given her a way to reach other mothers of color, and it has caught the eye of the professional community who wants to know more about the breastfeeding experiences of African American women.

My goal used to be to just get people outside of my family to read my blog, but now my dream is to become an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant and write a parenting book for moms of color who are interested in natural and attachment parenting.

Elita's blog can be found at <http://blacktating.blogspot.com/>.

New Report on Payer Coverage of Breastfeeding Support

A second edition has been released of the *Model Policy: Payer Coverage of Breastfeeding Support and Counseling Services, Pumps and Supplies*, a joint publication of the United States Breastfeeding Committee and the National Breastfeeding Center. The second edition includes a revision to the definition of "approved lactation care providers" as well as a new table of the most frequent Place of Service Codes for lactation counseling services.

Small Businesses Support Family Medical Leave

A scientific opinion poll by *Small Business Majority* found that more small business owners support (45%) than oppose (41%) creating publicly administered family and medical leave insurance pools paid with payroll contributions by employees and employers, and that the majority of small firms already have formal or informal family and medical leave policies in place. The vast majority (80%) of respondents support the Family and Medical Leave Act, which allows eligible employees of covered employers to take a limited amount of unpaid, job-protected leave for specified family and medical reasons like a serious personal illness, the birth or adoption of a child, or to care for a seriously ill family member.

Source: US Breastfeeding Committee