

FROM PAIN TO POWER 2.0 COMMUNITY CONVENING

PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH STORYTELLING & SYSTEMS CHANGE

WEDNESDAY MAY 20TH | 8:30AM - 2PM
WELLNEST, 3787 S VERMONT AVE, LOS ANGELES



From Pain to Power 2.0: A Community Convening on Perinatal Mental Health Storytelling & Systems Change

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Listed in order of speaking role



Adjoa Jones

Birth Equity Unit Chief / AAIMM Prevention Initiative Programs Director

Adjoa Jones is a public health leader and reproductive justice advocate with 26 years of experience improving maternal and infant health outcomes in Los Angeles County. She currently serves as Birth Equity Unit Chief and African American Infant and Maternal Mortality (AAIMM) Prevention Initiative Director at the LA County Department of Public Health, where she established the AAIMM Community Action Team model to address disparities in Black maternal health. Adjoa holds a BS in Health Science-Health Care Administration from CSU Dominguez Hills and an MBA in Nonprofit Management from the American Jewish University. She is a Certified Lactation Education Specialist and trained Doula. Her career began with LA County's Immunization Program and evolved through pioneering work with Great Beginnings for Black Babies. Her leadership has earned the 2021 Stratiscope Impact Makers to Watch Award, 2021 Sister Circle honor, and 2023 Perinatal Mental Health Champion Award. An alumna of the Beatriz Soliz Policy Institute, she co-developed doula policy to advance birth equity statewide. Her lived experience as a former teen mother informs her commitment to serving vulnerable communities.



Cassie Manjikian, MPH

Founding Director, CA Perinatal Wellness Alliance (CPWA)

Cassie is a postpartum psychosis survivor, certified coach, and consultant with 20 years of experience advancing social and environmental justice. She co-founded and directs the California Perinatal Wellness Alliance, a statewide survivor- and community-led coalition working to transform California's perinatal mental health system, and serves on the Board of Maternal Mental Health NOW. Cassie has supported organizations at local, state, national and international levels including the Liberty Hill Foundation, the California Environmental Justice Alliance, and the Sierra Club. A fluent Spanish speaker, she weaves storytelling and systems change to build power with impacted communities. She holds an MPH from UCLA and BA in Sociology and Women's Studies from UC Davis.



Devorah Herbert

Women's Health Advocate, Documentary Filmmaker

Devorah Herbert is a multiple Emmy Award nominated Hollywood production designer, maternal mental health advocate, author, mother, and first-time documentary filmmaker. She has worked on a wide range of top-rated films and television shows, most recently Netflix's *Grace and Frankie*. After surviving postpartum depression and seeing firsthand the healing power of mothers sharing their stories with other mothers, Devorah decided to devote the next chapter of her career to destigmatizing and reversing the course of postpartum depression in the United States. In October 2024, in partnership with Planned Parenthood, Black Women for Wellness (BWW), Maternal Mental Health Now (MMHN) and the African American Infant and Maternal Mortality initiative (AAIMM), Devorah and her colleague, MMHN board member Cassie Manjikian, will be co-hosting a conference aimed at destigmatizing PPD through storytelling and enacting policy change to guarantee access to treatment for the hundreds of thousands of women who suffer PPD every year in the U.S.



Nicole Blaine

Owner and Artistic Director, The Crow

Nicole Blaine is the owner and artistic director of [The Crow](#), LA's newest mission-driven [comedy club](#). With a 20+ year background in producing live comedy shows in Los Angeles and New York, comedy festivals ([Bergamot Comedy Fest](#)), stand-up specials ([HBO](#)), her self-produced comedy special, [Life's A Bit](#) on Amazon Prime, and her critically acclaimed one-woman show, *Pipe Dreams*, she is thrilled to bring humor to those who need it most. The culmination of Nicole Blaine's life's work is [Storyectomy](#), a mental health initiative she founded to foster healing through storytelling mentorship classes and live shows. Maternal Mental Health Now partnered with Storyectomy in 2024 and is excited for an upcoming 2025 season. Blaine hopes to cultivate a community of survivors, thrivers, and caretakers who will find respite and relief in cathartic storytelling that is used for advocacy and social justice. Blaine holds a liberal arts degree in both theater and education from Loyola Marymount University. She has always been passionate about teaching storytelling and comedy on a stage that is inclusive and empowering for all. Everyone deserves the opportunity to find their voice and share their point of view with the world.



Charlene Dimas-Peinado, LCSW,EML
President & CEO of Wellnest Emotional Health & Wellness

Charlene Dimas-Peinado is a seasoned nonprofit chief executive and licensed psychotherapist with more than two decades of leadership experience advancing behavioral health, housing stability, and community well-being. She currently serves as President & CEO of Wellnest, a nationally recognized trauma-informed behavioral health and supportive housing organization in Los Angeles. Ms. Dimas-Peinado is a transformational leader who aligns mission, strategy, and infrastructure to expand access to care for vulnerable children, youth, and families. Her expertise spans complex government-funded systems, multi-sector partnerships, and large-scale capital development. She has led more than \$100 million in real estate acquisition and development projects designed to strengthen community health infrastructure, integrating behavioral health services with stable housing and wraparound support. A respected voice in policy and advocacy, Ms. Dimas-Peinado works at the intersection of healthcare, housing, and public systems reform. She frequently collaborates with local and state leaders to advance equitable access to quality mental health services and to address the social drivers of health affecting children and young adults.



Dr. Anna King, PhD, LCSW, PMH-C
Director of Perinatal Mental Health, Diversity Uplifts, Inc

Dr. Anna M. King (she/her) is a licensed clinical social worker, certified perinatal mental health specialist, qualitative research psychologist, and educator with 15 years of experience across clinical care and systems-level transformation. She serves as Director of Perinatal Mental Health at Diversity Uplifts, Inc. and Program Manager for the Maternal Health Network of San Bernardino County, advancing cross-sector collaboration to strengthen equitable maternal health systems. In addition to her leadership roles, she maintains a private practice and provides training and consultation to healthcare and community-based providers, with a focus on perinatal mental health, workforce capacity building, and sustainable models of care.



Dr. Teri D. Davis, PhD
Licensed Clinical Psychologist

Teri D. Davis, PhD is a licensed clinical psychologist, researcher, and statistician with over 20 years of treating anxiety, PTSD, depression, postpartum depression as well as sexual trauma. Dr. Davis operates two thriving private practices in Los Angeles and Oklahoma City that specialize in offering evidence-based, quality mental health care to women of color – largely Black Women, couples, LGBTQ, and military populations. Dr. Davis is also the founder and CEO of The California Association for Community Engagement and Wellness, a 501c3 non-profit organization. One of the focal programs of the non-profit is the The Amani Project, which addresses Maternal Mental Health in Black and Brown Women; offering virtual therapy services provided by Black female clinicians. The program is presently serving over 75 expecting and post-partum mothers in LA, San Bernardino, and Riverside counties. Additionally serving Oklahoma City as well. Dr. Davis is a former research associate at UCLA School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences.



Gabrielle Brown
Black Maternal and Infant Health Program Manager
Black Women for Wellness

Gabrielle Brown serves as the Program Manager for the Black Maternal and Infant Health program at Black Women for Wellness, where she leads with passion, purpose, and an unyielding commitment to reproductive justice. A dedicated advocate and emerging policy leader, Gabrielle drives forward transformative change in Black maternal and infant health by holding healthcare systems accountable for addressing racism, discrimination, and implicit bias. She designs and implements strategic programs and policy initiatives aimed at reducing the disproportionately high rates of Black maternal and infant mortality in Los Angeles County and across California. Gabrielle’s work is rooted in community-centered, culturally responsive approaches that prioritize the lived experiences of Black women and birthing people while driving systems-level change. Gabrielle holds a Bachelor’s degree in Health Administration from California State University, Northridge, and a Master’s degree in Public Administration from California State University, Long Beach. Her work is grounded in a mission to uplift and empower women of color through culturally relevant health education, community advocacy, and policy-driven solutions—laying the foundation for a more just and equitable future for Black families.



Kimberly Gray, MA

Director of Perinatal Mental Health Equity, Maternal Mental Health NOW

Kimberly Gray (she/her) serves as the Director of Perinatal Mental Health Equity at Maternal Mental Health NOW, a Los Angeles organization dedicated to improving the mental health and well-being of individuals and families during the perinatal period. MMHN works to ensure that all birthing people, especially those most impacted by systemic inequities, have access to culturally congruent, trauma-informed mental health care. In her role, Kimberly leads community building, strategic partnerships, and policy that advance the well-being of Los Angeles County's most vulnerable birthing populations, with a focus on Black birthing people and perinatal providers. Rooted in her own journey through pregnancy loss and motherhood, she brings two decades of experience in advocacy, nonprofit leadership, and systems change.

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Elyse Springer, MA-CLP, LMFT, PMH-C

Policy and Advocacy Chair, Postpartum Support International- CA Chapter

Elyse is a founding and current board member for PSI-CA and serves as the Policy and Advocacy Chair. She has served in leadership roles with Maternal Mental Health NOW, 2020 Mom, and Return to Zero:HOPE, and is a national trainer in perinatal mental health and loss. Elyse is a licensed marriage and family therapist in Washington state, Oregon and California, certified in perinatal mental health, an EMDRIA-approved Certified Therapist and EMDRIA-approved Consultant, certified in Interpersonal Therapy (IPT) by the IPT Institute and an IPT Supervisor-in-training. She is based in Los Angeles, California.



Dr. Rohit Passi, MD, FAAP

Chief- Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine & Physician Director- Equity, Inclusion, Diversity, Kaiser Permanente South Bay Medical Center

Dr. Rohit Passi is a physician leader dedicated to advancing health equity and improving Maternal Child Health. He currently serves as the Chief of Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine and the Director of Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity at Kaiser Permanente South Bay Medical Center. In these roles, Dr. Passi leads efforts to ensure equitable healthcare delivery and fosters an inclusive environment for both patients and healthcare professionals. Dr. Passi is also a key faculty member in the Department of Clinical Science at the Kaiser Permanente Bernard J. Tyson School of Medicine, where he contributes to the education and mentorship of future healthcare leaders. His commitment to health equity extends to his role as Co-Chair of the California Perinatal Quality Care Collaborative's Ten Point Nine initiative, where he works to improve perinatal outcomes across the state. Dr. Passi's motivation for his work in DEI space is deeply personal. Being an immigrant physician and having served marginalized communities, he has witnessed firsthand the disparities in healthcare access and outcomes. These experiences fueled his passion for ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their background, receive the highest quality of care. This personal connection drives his relentless pursuit of equity, inclusion, and diversity in the medical field. Presently, Dr. Passi has also joined the board at Confluence Rising.



Stanis K. Askew

Board Member, Diversity Uplifts, Inc.

Stanis K. Askew is a strategic, business-focused, metrics and results driven Human Resources professional with over 15 years' experience, certified full spectrum doula, certified yoga instructor along with many other titles. Truly passionate about helping people and dedicated to raising awareness about the maternal health crisis and investing in community-based solutions.



Jess Ford

MFT Trainee and Full-Spectrum Doula

Jess Ford (she/her) is a Marriage and Family Therapist trainee currently pursuing her Master's Degree in Clinical Psychology. Prior to her clinical training, Jess worked as a full-spectrum doula, supporting birthing people and their families through the full range of reproductive health experiences, with specialized training in perinatal mental health. She also serves as the Storytelling and Policy Intern for the California Perinatal Wellness Alliance, working to merge caretaking and clinical training into systems change. Jess centers social justice and advocacy, where her work is rooted in empathy, active listening, and inclusivity. Originally from the Metro Detroit area, Jess earned her bachelor's degree in fine arts from the University of Michigan and continues to use art as a meaningful mode of healing and self-care.



Marie Rivera, *Doctoral Candidate*

Perinatal Mental Health Advocate

Marie Rivera (She/Her/Ella) is a scholar-practitioner and researcher whose work centers on intersectionality, race and ethnic relations, human rights, and reproductive justice. She holds a master's degree and remains actively engaged in research that uplifts reproductive justice and advances equitable care for historically marginalized communities. As an advocate for perinatal mental health, Marie contributed to a documentary project and continues to participate in community and academic dialogues focused on gender justice and maternal wellbeing. Grounded in both scholarship and lived experience as a mother of three, her work reflects a deep commitment to fostering belonging, dignity, and holistic support for families. Marie is currently in the advanced stages of pursuing doctoral study in educational leadership, further expanding her capacity to bridge research, advocacy, and practice in service of transformative change.



Marché Howell-Wright
Partnerships Co-Lead, MotherBoard
Vice President, Mothers of the Mycelium

Marché (she/her) is an actress, new mother, and community advocate based in Los Angeles, CA. Her work lives at the intersection of entertainment, wellness, and the arts. Her professional path spans from creative industries to non-profit administration, with a focus on perinatal wellness and maternal health. She currently serves as Vice President of Mothers of the Mycelium, a maternal wellness non-profit organization cultivating community-rooted support for mothers navigating postpartum experiences, psychological healing, maternal health, and spiritual rebirth. A medicine woman by calling, she is a devoted wellness advocate, committed to making mindfulness and accessible healing pathways available to everyone, *especially* mothers. Marché weaves together creativity, service, and wellness in support of collective healing and liberation.



Somoh Supharukchinda
Strategy Consultant & Advisor

Somoh Supharukchinda is a Strategy Consultant and Advisor. For the last year she has supported CPWA's long-term strategy, fund development, and coalition growth, and in April 2026 she co-facilitated the California Roundtable to Align Systems on Perinatal Mental Health. Somoh's work in perinatal mental health is driven by her own experience as a survivor of postpartum depression and anxiety and a traumatic twin delivery – a hemorrhage, a fractured pelvis, and two newborns she couldn't physically lift. Previously, Somoh served as Vice President of Strategy at Third Plateau, where she oversaw the firm's strategy support to nonprofits, social enterprises, and philanthropists, including strategic planning, program design and operations, and mental health investments. Somoh also brings experience accelerating change for children and families in the education sector. She helped generate more than \$22M annually for educational equity at Teach For All and drove the implementation of data-driven improvement planning at the New York City Department of Education and the Colorado Department of Education. Somoh holds a B.A. in Psychology from Claremont McKenna College and an M.A. in International Education Policy from Harvard University. She lives in Truckee, CA, with her husband, Mike, and identical twin sons, Kyler and Zayden.



Stevi Carter

Partnerships Co-Lead & Administrative Backbone, The MotherBoard

Stevi Carter is a Pasadena, California native, community advocate, and graduate student pursuing her Master's in Marriage and Family Therapy. With a professional background in leadership development, education, and women-centered wellness work, her current focus centers on Black maternal and perinatal mental health advocacy. Through both academic training and community engagement, Stevi is passionate about addressing disparities in maternal wellness while helping create spaces that support healing, education, and culturally responsive care for Black women and families. Her work is also deeply shaped by her own journey through motherhood, which continues to inform her commitment to advocacy, connection, and community care. Stevi is dedicated to bridging conversation, advocacy, and mental health support in ways that empower communities and elevate maternal well-being.