



THANK YOU TO OUR  
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**IMPACT  
REPORT**  
JUNE 2022  
**SISTA  
MIDWIFE  
PRODUCTIONS**



*Sista & Midwife*  
PRODUCTIONS

# A YEAR OF GROWTH

In 2021, We Saw Major Growth & Greater Impact

The year 2021 was an outstanding one of increased growth and visibility for Sista Midwife Productions, and our founder and CEO, Nicole Deggins. The year started off with a bang as Nicole was named “The Midwife Shifting the Narrative” by ESSENCE Magazine and soon after was awarded the Distinguished 400 Award by the 400 Years of African American History Commission which acknowledges and highlights individuals as trailblazers in their work for African Americans across the diaspora. The awards continued as Sista Midwife Productions was recognized by the Association of Community Affiliated Plans with a Supporting The Safety Net Award.

Programming partnerships with the New Orleans Public Library’s African American Resource Collection were expanded and SMP solidified new partnerships speaking as a part of the One Diaspora Coalition’s Reproductive Justice is Black Liberation series, and The Amandla Group’s Black Mama Joy series. She was also a featured speaker for an ESSENCE Magazine Wellness Check series!

One of the most exciting partnerships of 2021 was the one developed with The University of

Texas at Austin’s School of Pharmacy, School of Nursing, and Dell Medical School. Through this partnership, Nicole led a three-part lecture series: “Analyzing Perinatal Disparities Through an Examination of the Historic Devaluing of Black Midwifery”. With lectures in November 2021, March 2022, and April 2022, Nicole covered the history of gynecology, the history of Black midwifery and how it all connects to the current state of Black maternal health. Nicole looks forward to bringing this lecture series to other universities in the near future.

The 2021 Art of Birthing was phenomenal and broke new records. Our Healthy Birth Louisiana Initiative continues to grow and The Birth Story Project is back! We are well into the second quarter of 2022 and the impact of Nicole and the Sista Midwife Productions team continues to grow. Visit @sistamidwife on instagram, and keep reading to find out more!

All in all, we could not do this work and continue to grow without YOU.

Thank you for all of your continued support!



BIRTH IS THE  
REVOLUTION

# MAKING THE C.A.S.E

## Healthy Birth Louisiana : Making the Case for Better Birth

The Healthy Birth Louisiana (HBL) initiative began in 2019 with support from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation (BCBSLAF). Sista Midwife Productions had been training doulas for over five years and was on a mission to create more impact. We created a plan to train perinatal community health workers that would come to be called Healthy Birth Ambassadors. Our vision, to increase the numbers of community birth workers across the state, came to fruition in April 2020 with the training of the first cohort of Perinatal Community Health Workers.

Throughout 2021 we continued to work closely with this cohort providing continuing education and guidance as they supported families in northern Louisiana. Additionally, in 2021, in partnership with Birthmark Doula Collective, we trained a second cohort of perinatal community health workers who are serving families in the greater New Orleans area.

We are currently training our third Healthy Birth Louisiana (HBL) cohort and thanks in large part to the W. K. Kellogg Foundation each student in this 2021 - 2022 cohort is receiving a full scholarship for the training as well as tangible teaching aides needed to begin serving families. In October of 2021, we received over 60 applicants and selected thirty students who began their training with an orientation in December 2021. Additional support from Healthy Blue allowed us to expand our reach and we now have HBL students in seven of the state's nine LDH regions. With your continued support, Healthy Birth Louisiana will be a lasting, community based, innovative intervention to reduce poor birth outcomes in the state of Louisiana.



## SISTA MIDWIFE IN THE COMMUNITY



Throughout 2021 and early 2022, our Founder and CEO, Nicole Deggins, CNM, MSN, MPH, individually, and as a representative of our organization, served on a wide array of advisory committees and panels and supported a variety of maternal and infant health initiatives at the local, state, and national level.

In addition to consulting with state legislators on reproductive health bills in Louisiana, Nicole had an opportunity to raise awareness about black infant and maternal health disparities and solutions for improvement through various speaking engagements including the Black Alumni Summit at Georgetown University, The Ohio Collaborative to Prevent Infant Mortality and multiple engagements during Black Maternal Health Week in both 2021 and 2022. Most recently Nicole spoke as a part of the Healthy Blue/LPHI 2nd Annual Symposium on Racial and Health Equity in Louisiana. Sista Midwife and Nicole also had many media features including ESSENCE Magazine, What to Expect, and a cover feature with The UK Doula Magazine.

The Birth Story Project, which started in 2018 was on a hiatus during the COVID-19 pandemic. In December 2021, we were excited to re-launch The Birth Story Project and since then we have hosted three in-person circles with more to come as we move through 2022. We have also relaunched a new version of our online survey and we look forward to the impact The Birth Story Project will have on our advocacy efforts.

Sista Midwife's community reach goes far beyond what can be summarized in this report. In fact, between SMP and Nicole, we have participated in, or have been honored at over 40 events throughout the year! You can learn more about the various ways in which Sista Midwife reaches our community by visiting @sistamidwife or @Thebirthstoryproject on Instagram.



# THE ART OF BIRTHING

## SEP 20 - OCT 16

#ArtAsAdvocacy from National to International

The Art of Birthing is A Holistic Conference & Experience, presented by Sista Midwife Productions. This annual edutainment event celebrates pregnancy, black women, birth, motherhood, and family. Using various forms of artistic expression, the goals of The Art of Birthing include: Raising funds to continue training Healthy Birth Ambassadors; Providing a unique space for dialogue and healing for birth professionals and families; Increasing awareness about perinatal outcomes, disparities and birth options; and Inspiring others to see birth as a COMMUNITY experience rather than simply an individual one.

Hurricane Ida hit during the final preparations for the 2021 weeklong conference, forcing us to pivot. In spite of this challenge, we still accomplished our goals, and built on the success from our 2020 virtual conference. We leveraged new partnerships with the Tulane University Center of Excellence in Maternal and Child Health and the Diboll Gallery located inside the Tulane University School of Public Health's Tidewater Building to host a series of successful hybrid events. Our event grew from a National to an International event, hosting 200 registered attendees from around the WORLD! The Art of Birthing went live in 92 cities, 31 states, and in 3 different countries.





# THE ART OF BIRTHING

## SEP 20 - OCT 16

#ArtAsAdvocacy from National to International

In 2021, The Art of Birthing featured: Our signature Birth Justice Film Festival™ which included the showing of Tutwiler, Belly of the Beast, and Legacy, Power, Voice; Panel Discussions and expert interviews, and an art exhibit and auction where we partnered with 25 artists from around the country and three international artists.

Nicole, along with SMP Marketing Director Heather Gonzales, and TAOB were featured during the 2021 Black Maternal Health Conference as they shared strategies for using #ArtAsAdvocacy in maternal health advocacy work.

For the second year in a row, we were honored by the New Orleans chapter of the Public Relations Society of America with an Award of Excellence. The growth and success of TAOB continues to be integral to the growth of our Healthy Birth Louisiana initiative and increasing statewide and national partnerships. We thank you for your continued support and cannot wait for what's next for The Art of Birthing.

**Virtually Virgin Happy Hours**  
Mommy, Me, & Mocktails  
Nicole Diggins & Heather Gonzales  
International Kick-Off from Belize  
Thursday | August 12, 2021  
6 PM - 7 PM CST

**Birth Justice FILM FESTIVAL**  
A Historic Conference & Experience  
Presented by *Birth Justice*

**BELLY OF THE BEAST** | OCTOBER 9, 2021 @ 12:40 PM CST  
"THRILLING LEGAL DRAMA"  
"INCREDIBLY INSPIRING"

**TUTWILER** | October 9, 2021 @ 12 noon CST

**THE ART OF Birthing**  
ONLINE ART AUCTION  
October 1, 2021 - October 31, 2021  
VISIT THE LINK IN OUR BIO TO BID ON PIECES!  
#TAOB2021 #ArtAsAdvocacy #BirthIsTheRevolution

**Virtually Virgin Happy Hours**  
Salute to Black Breastfeeding  
Join us for #TheBigPause  
Black Breastfeeding Week & The Official Launch of the Melanated Mammary Atlas  
Thursday | August 26, 2021  
6 PM - 7 PM CST  
Nekisha Killings MPH, IBCLC  
#CollectiveRest #CollectivePower



**BIRTH SISTER  
DOULA TRAININGS:  
OUR NATIONAL  
IMPACT**

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In 2021, We continued to increase the number of doula trainees through virtual access, greatly increasing our impact at the national level.

At Sista Midwife Productions, it is our mission to eliminate perinatal disparities by increasing the number of black birth workers. One of the most important ways we do this is through our Doula training. Pre-COVID, we usually held 4-6 training sessions with 8-12 people per class. After 2020, we made the shift to all-virtual doula trainings, which allowed us to respond to the increase in demand for individuals wanting to serve and advocate for families.

Our class is taught by our founder and CEO Nicole Deggs, a Certified Nurse Midwife and experienced labor nurse with over 25 years of experience working with birthing families. Our training is based on the model of the community health worker. It takes a multicultural approach and puts the experiences of black women at the forefront.

Our high energy virtual Community Birth Sister/Doula Training takes place over 10 consecutive weeks with 4 hours of live interactive virtual training each week. Our Birth Sister training prepares members of the community to work as prenatal, birth, and postpartum doulas. In 2021, we trained 142 doulas from 19 states in our Spring and Fall 2021 virtual trainings. Thanks to your help and support, we were able to award 66 scholarships worth \$23,750!

We are so excited for our next doula training scheduled to begin August 2022, where we will usher in even more people into this field of essential birth work. Thanks to your help, we will continue to do our part to train birth workers throughout the country.

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# A MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDER

We Cannot Do The Work Without You!

Today I sit in gratitude, as I acknowledge that we are celebrating TEN years of service! When I started Sista Midwife Productions I had one goal in mind: to provide information and support to families so they could experience better birth outcomes. Time has flown by, and the climate of maternal and infant health continues to shift.

From decreasing abortion access, to the recent formula shortage, to the continued rising maternal mortality rate, we are in the midst of significant attacks on black women and families. As the world around us shifts, here at Sista Midwife Productions we are working to remain flexible, relevant, and impactful. We remain committed to our work to train and elevate the voices of black birth workers, black women and black families. We will continue to tell the world that “Birth is The Revolution” and will continue to train and support soldiers who are ready to fight against the racial disparities and inequities that Black women and families face before, during, and after childbirth. We know that we are not in this alone and we thank you for your donations and your support as we continue the fight.



Nicole Deggins, CNM, MSN, MPH  
Founder & CEO

# THANK YOU!