How to Prepare for the 2018 CPM Symposium

We are delighted you have decided to join us for this important gathering to learn, think and plan together for our shared future. We are excited to learn from you and need your experience, voice and heart to shape a future that can truly meet the needs of all childbearing people. We are excited as well to share what we’ve been learning and invite others to be part of this learning, growing journey at the 2018 CPM Symposium.

This document will provide you with information to help you prepare to participate fully and get the most from our time together. In it, we will share some of the history behind the symposium themes and areas of inquiry. We will also address why we will be talking about race, the impact of racism on birth outcomes, and why it matters to all of us. The information here, and resources at the end of this document, in addition to the symposium program, are designed to help us hear differently, think differently and act differently as we create a future that serves all childbearing people and families. We ask you to bring your compassion and empathic listening to help make this possible.

History

The Convening Partners of the 2018 CPM Symposium have different experiences and have taken different paths to get to the place where we are gathering to look at our profession and how we can meet the needs of all childbearing people and families. Understanding what birth justice means for all people has taken different routes for each of us. We’d like to share about our paths and learning, in order to help everyone coming together understand what has led us to our time together May 11-13th.

National Association of Certified Professional Midwives (NACPM)
Calling Partner for 2018 CPM Symposium

NACPM’s journey to awareness and commitment to social justice in birth began in 2012, when we convened 150 CPMs and stakeholders for the 2012 CPM Symposium, “CPMs and Midwifery Educators: Contributing to a New Era in Maternity Care” (http://cpmsymposium.com/). During this facilitated three-day convening, NACPM did its best to ensure that the participants would represent, to the extent possible, the demographics of the childbearing population. We invited numerous speakers of color and provided scholarships and/or travel stipends to approximately 20 people from historically under-represented communities. Looking back on how the first day of the Symposium unfolded, it is not surprising that, when we asked the question, “What most
needs our shared attention?” the personal stories of racism that midwives, students, and consumers of color experience daily came forward in such a powerful way. For many of us who are white, what was shared at the 2012 CPM Symposium was shocking and dismaying. For the people of color in the room, reactions to their lived experience—surprise, tears, defensiveness, shame, anger—caused further trauma.

With the guidance and tenacity of certain Board members at the time and at the urging of some of our staunchest supporters, NACPM’s leadership team came to understand that we were being asked for a concrete response to the issues that had been raised. In the months afterwards, we realized that coming to terms with our own racism and the racism that exists within the midwifery community would not just be a one-time occurrence, but would become a defining moment in the history of the organization and the CPM profession that set us on a daily journey to work on ourselves, our organization and the CPM profession.

Having immersed ourselves in anti-racism work over the past 6 years, the NACPM leadership team has begun to develop a greater understanding of intersectionality, a framework that, we now recognize, must be applied to all social justice work. Because “there are multiple aspects of identity that enrich our lives and experiences and that compound and complicate oppressions and marginalizations,” (Jarune Uwujaren and Jamie Utt, “Why Our Feminism Must Be Intersectional and 3 Ways to Practice It”) we are awakening to the need to broaden both our perspective and our commitment to undoing every harmful form of oppression that gets in the way of midwives taking the best possible care of all childbearing families. Growing a more representative midwifery workforce able to provide care that is culturally relevant, appropriate, and safe means that we all have work to do, within ourselves and in our organizations.

When we center on or focus on the needs of childbearing people then several things become obvious. First, a profession that only understands how to care for white people is not and will not be relevant in the United States. Second, we immediately see that culturally-aligned, socially-just care must be a priority for us as a profession. The unconscionable effect of racism in birth outcomes is that Black babies are dying at twice the rate of white babies. And Black mothers are 3-4 times more likely to die of pregnancy-related complications than white mothers. To change this, we know that we have to look directly at racism and how individuals, organizations and structures unconsciously or consciously reinforce racism. We have invited speakers and facilitators, and designed our time together at the 2018 CPM Symposium to do just that.

Race is not a separate topic on the event agenda. Rather, it is sewn throughout every aspect of care, every conversation we have together, every policy, structure and decision we make as a profession. It is not separate. It is not optional. It is not a workshop. It is who WE are. There is no more WE in the CPM profession that only means or implies white.
Racism plays a fundamental role in birth experiences and outcomes. However, we know that oppression and marginalization occur on the basis of many differences of the childbearing population including but not limited to those below:

We stand for dismantling all oppression. We know all forms of oppression impact us as a profession and the childbearing people and families we serve. Even as we focus on racism due to the devastating impacts it has, we need to be learning and increasing our awareness and competence about all forms of oppression. We have invited speakers to specifically address how racism impacts our work, and to help us understand the experiences of indigenous and native people, people of color, LGBTQIA+/2-spirited people. In our dialogue and conversations with
each other we will seek sharing and learning about all experiences of privilege, oppression and domination.

Our journey led us to seek partnership with AME, CFM, and NAABB (formerly ICTC) in convening the 2018 CPM Symposium. We know we have to work together and have to bring all our experiences and skills to the table if we are going to make progress as a profession. We are thrilled about this collaboration and grateful that their own journeys have meant they too see the importance of coming together and addressing social justice in our profession.

**Association of Midwifery Educators (AME)
Convening Partner**

*Our Journey:* The Association of Midwifery Educators (AME) has long been committed to the work of excellence in midwifery education. Our journey into equity, access and social justice in midwifery stems from the fundamental recognition that racism and oppression continue to fuel health inequities in childbearing as well as deep seated barriers to midwifery education and, ultimately, a racially, culturally and socially representative workforce. AME’s journey spans many years and includes many facets, both internal to the work of the organization and external to the educators and students we serve. We engage in anti-racism training for all board members and staff; we assist midwifery educators in integrating and teaching the histories and current issues facing midwives from many cultures and communities; we support student midwife education around health inequities and the social determinants of health; we strive to promote learning environments that are gender inclusive; we engage ongoing examination of our organizational practices, policies and procedures to redress inequities; and we seek to remain accountable to non-dominant communities. Our mission is to support the people, systems and processes that provide midwifery education, and we do this within a social justice framework.

*Our Statement:* Individuals, families and communities experience discrimination and systemic oppression based on race, ethnicity, economic status, formal education, ability, religion, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, language, citizenship status and many additional identities. The Association of Midwifery Educators (AME) recognizes that these forms of oppression and systemic inequities result in poor pregnancy and birth outcomes, including higher rates of preterm birth, low birth weight, and deaths of gestational parents and babies, in addition to many other adverse health outcomes and experiences. We recognize that the communities that are currently shouldering the greatest burden of these health outcomes are African American and Indigenous communities, and we acknowledge the historical and contemporary injustices that have created and sustain these inequities.

We also recognize that midwives have always been an integral part of the fabric of the human community. Regrettably, the midwifery profession, as it stands in the U.S. today, does not adequately serve the whole human community. We believe in the strength of community
midwifery and believe that midwives *from* the community are most often the best maternity care providers *for* the community.

To that end, the Association of Midwifery Educators affirms our responsibility to midwifery educators, students, and families to participate and lead in the ongoing work of creating inclusive learning environments where student midwives feel welcomed, represented, supported and safe; where students learn to care for all families in a way that is culturally affirming and respectful; and where a commitment to social justice is woven into every facet of midwifery education.

AME is excited to be a convening partner for the 2018 Symposium, as we believe this gathering will support our aims and responsibilities around equity, access, and justice in midwifery education.

**Citizens for Midwifery (CFM) Convening Partner**

For the past 20 years, CfM has worked to bring consumer perspectives to the national conversations around midwifery; but at the same time are aware that consumers’ perspectives are as varied and diverse as our childbearing population and we know we are but one voice in the chorus. It is always our wish to amplify the voices of childbearing families that need to be heard. It has been our hope and continued commitment to try to diversify the leaders serving in our organization and the organizations with whom we collaborate. We support the anti-racism, equity, and social justice work we have all been doing for more than 6 years, but we also see there is much still to do. There is still work on ourselves and our organization needed. We would love to engage deeper with consumers and advocates from various communities to elevate their needs, efforts, and voices. We also welcome and invite leaders from diverse backgrounds and experiences to be part of CfM and our work.

To improve outcomes and care for everyone, we need CNMs and CMs to be autonomous providers without physician restrictions; and licensing, access, and availability of CPMs in all 50 states and territories. CPMs need to be accessible through 3rd party payers and Medicaid (at an equitable rate) to increase their reach to more consumers who need them. We need to diversify the midwives available to clients, and make concordant care possible. CPMs need to be part of a system of care, but also need to influence the larger maternity care system to provide better care and outcomes for all. We have much to share that could make a difference. CfM is built around advocating for care that is respectful, individualized, with shared decision-making and informed consent at its heart. We believe every family is unique and deserves a pregnancy and childbirth experience that is as safe, healthy, and as empowering as possible. We believe this is where we are heading in the 2018 Symposium, we believe this is part of social justice work, and we look forward to the work ahead.
National Association to Advance Black Birth
Convening Partner

Recently we are seeing more attention, finally, in the media about the impact of racial stress on Black women, and in particular how this impacts the birth process, and the health and well-being of Black women and persons, and their babies. A number of national reports and articles, including recent ones in The New York Times and ProPublica, are raising awareness of the physical, emotional and other impacts of racism and the disproportionate care of women throughout the birthing process – regardless of income, education, religion or geography. These disparities produce statistics such as: Black infant mortality rates being double the rate of white babies; and that college educated Black women die (or almost die) from childbirth related causes at twice the rate of white women who never graduated from high school.

For almost 30 years, the National Association to Advance Black Birth (NAABB), formerly known as the International Center for Traditional Childbearing (ICTC), has been working to address issues of disparity and equity within the midwifery community. We recently rebranded our organization to be more intentionally unapologetic in our focus to address inequities in the care and treatment of Black women and persons throughout the birth process, and were squarely in the middle of this rebranding process when we were approached by NACPM to be convening partners for the 2018 CPM Symposium. Meeting with the NACPM leadership provided a deeper understanding of what such a partnership could bring about, and more details of NACPM’s journey and commitment to anti-racism work within their organizational ranks. NAABB believes that highlighting the impact of inequities in care, and sharing background knowledge/education on the effect of racial stress on Black women and families to all who intersect with Black pregnant women and persons – doctors, nurses, midwives, partners, employers, institutions, community members, and more – is critical to the work of improving these statistics. As such, we find it imperative for us to partner with organizations that are committed to prioritizing these conversations and solutions.

We are excited to be working in solidarity with healthcare institutions, organizations and associations to authentically challenge the status quo treatment of Black women, persons and babies in the United States. The shocking statistics and realities of the dangerous care they receive in various healthcare settings must be addressed in systemic ways that go far beyond diversity trainings that simply checks a box. These issues that seem to be ignored and/or dismissed by U.S. medical establishments, despite increasing fatalities across the country, is the loudest silence impacting the U.S. maternity care system today. As such, NAABB demands a revolution in the care of treatment of Black women, persons and babies.
How to prepare for the 2018 CPM Symposium!

So! Here are a few things YOU can do to prepare for the symposium:

- Read this document and be informed about the journey of the convening partners and vision and purpose informing the symposium
- Think about your individual journey regarding equity and justice, specifically with regards to your race and racism
- Identify 1-2 resources and then listen to, watch or read them before coming to the symposium. You can draw on the resources listed below or you may have others you want to dive into. Find a nugget of learning from each one you review to bring with you to the Symposium.
- Plan to bring your compassion and empathic listening.

Resources:

1. Video: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Discussing Race Jay Smooth
2. Article: Calling In: A Less Disposable Way of Holding Each Other Accountable
3. Website: Gender Spectrum: Understanding Gender
4. Article: Transgender Men Who Become Pregnant Face Social, Health Challenges
5. Article: Healthy People: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health
6. Video: The myth of race, debunked in 3 minutes
7. Podcast: Seeing White – 14-episode podcast series
9. Video: The Urgency of Intersectionality, Ted Talk, Kimberlee Crenshaw
10. Article: White Supremacy Culture by Tema Okun
11. Article: Why America’s Black Mothers and Babies Are in a Life-or-Death Crisis by Linda Villarosa
12. Article: The American Dream with Jennie Joseph, by Paolo Patruno
13. Article: I Know Why Black Women are Wary of Reproductive Activism by A. Rochaun Meadows-Fernandez

14. Article: Black Mothers Aren’t to Blame for High Infant Mortality by Rochaun Meadows-Fernandez