



ALAMEDA COUNTY COVID-19 HEALTH EMERGENCY

COUNTY OF ALAMEDA ★ CALIFORNIA

Office of Emergency Services
4985 Broder Blvd, Dublin, CA 94568

Alameda County Health Care Services Agency

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Alameda County’s #DeliverBirthJustice Campaign Spotlights the Intersection of Mental Health and Black Motherhood with a Screening of the Film “From the Ashes”

May is Mental Health Awareness Month: One in five women in the United States will face postpartum depression or anxiety; for Black and Latinx women, the rate is twice as high.

ALAMEDA COUNTY – On Saturday, May 7, the Alameda County Public Health Department’s #DeliverBirthJustice campaign will celebrate Mental Health Awareness Month and Black motherhood with a local, public screening of “From the Ashes,” a multidisciplinary documentary by filmmaker Theresa Fortune, a Black mother from Oakland. The film uses photography, video sequences, sound design, and dance to explore a Black woman’s struggle with postpartum depression in the context of racial inequity in the health care system.

Black women are twice as likely to experience maternal mental health conditions, but half as likely to receive treatment. The event will include a discussion about contributing factors and resources for support.

“Documenting my mental health journey has proven to me that there are generations of trauma that I am actively unpacking but have also proven to myself that I have access to boundless wealth within that is tethered to ancestral wisdom,” said filmmaker Theresa Fortune. “‘From the Ashes’ is more than a film to me, it is a revolutionary act to take a stand for all black women who are suffering in silence. We deserve support. We deserve to be seen. We deserve access to the bare necessities to give birth to beautiful babies.”

The screening is part of the local #DeliverBirthJustice campaign, a five-county effort, including Alameda County, to place birth justice front and center in the fight for racial justice in the Bay Area. The campaign itself is part of the Perinatal Equity Initiative, a statewide effort to address the causes of persistent inequity and health disparities that threaten Black maternal and infant health.

Almost half of African Americans in California report that they have experienced unfair treatment when getting medical care due to their race.

“Black women and birthing people in Alameda County face mental health challenges during the postpartum period that are rooted in structural racism,” said Daphina Melbourne, Perinatal Equity Initiative

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Coordinator, Alameda County Public Health Department. “Hardships resulting from poverty, like homelessness, food insecurity, and losing a loved one, impact Black mothers at rates twice as high as compared to other residents. Add to that the cumulative racialized stress they experience, and the cause of higher rates of postpartum depression among Black women and birthing people becomes clearer.”

The screening will take place on Saturday, May 7, 2022, from 4:00- 6:30 pm at Oakstop, 1740 Telegraph Avenue, Oakland. The event will uplift Black motherhood and create space for an authentic conversation about Black maternal mental health and the need for ongoing postpartum care and support. This event is co-sponsored by Alameda County Public Health Department's Starting Out Strong Programs, [BElovedBIRTH Black Centering](#), a prenatal service within Alameda County Public Health Department’s [EmbraceHer](#) program and operated in partnership with Alameda Health System, and [Communion with the Community](#).

“I may have a blueprint that was and continues to be effective for me and many other black women, but this does not mean we have equitable access to resources within our health care system that we deserve,” said Fortune. “On May 7, we will come together as a community to openly discuss the maternal mental health crisis and highlight our joy, which is also a revolutionary act.”

The screening will be followed by a panel discussion about the ongoing needs for Black maternal mental health support and resources for ongoing postpartum care. [Register online](#).

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Alameda County Health Care Services Agency (HCSA) is the local health jurisdiction (LHJ) for the County, holding responsibility for various state and federal health mandates. HCSA employs over 1,600 staff across four departments, each of which operates multiple divisions, units, and programs: Office of the Agency Director, Public Health, Behavioral Health, and Environmental Health. HCSA manages a broad range of services and programs that promote the health and wellbeing of Alameda County residents. The Agency centers equity in its work and is committed to reducing health disparities and improving outcomes for under-resourced communities.

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