



*A Black Maternal Health Event:*  
**Black wombs are crying but,  
no one is listening**

*Tanaya Muslim*  
December 3rd 2025



**The Leadership Scholars Certificate Program is a two-year, selective, interdisciplinary certificate program that prepares Rutgers undergraduate women to be informed, innovative, and socially responsible leaders.**

**Leadership Scholars design and implement social action projects to expand their understanding of issues and programs to develop leadership skills.**

**This project gives Scholars the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge they have gained about leadership, advocacy, and social change with the practical and experiential knowledge they have developed about a particular policy issue or problem through the field site placement. It also further develops leadership skills by giving undergraduates the opportunity to practice leadership through actions.**

**To find out more, please visit the Institute for Women's Leadership website at <http://iwl.rutgers.edu>**

**RUTGERS**

Institute for Women's Leadership

# Mission Statement

**“Black Wombs Are Crying, But No One Is Listening”** is a Social Action Project dedicated to addressing the alarming disparities in maternal health outcomes for Black women, who are 3 to 4 times more likely to die during childbirth than any other race in the United States. With over 80% of these deaths deemed preventable by the CDC, this project seeks to confront the systemic racism, implicit bias, and lack of access to quality care that continue to put Black mothers at risk.

Our mission is to create a safe, empowering space for Black women to share their childbirth and childbearing experiences without fear, shame, or dismissal. Through education, storytelling, and community-building, we aim to equip Black women with the tools, knowledge, and confidence needed to advocate for themselves in medical settings. We believe that every Black mother deserves to be heard, respected, and cared for — and that their stories have the power to drive transformative change.

By amplifying Black women’s voices, raising awareness about maternal health disparities, and fostering partnerships with healthcare professionals, policymakers, and community leaders, **“Black Wombs Are Crying, But No One Is Listening”** seeks to build a future where Black maternal health is prioritized, protected, and uplifted. Together, we can rewrite the narrative — from survival to thriving motherhood.



**BLACK WOMBS ARE CRYING**  
**BUT NO ONE IS LISTENING**



Tanaya Muslim



Douglass Black Student's Congress

# Introducing the Host



# Intellectual Foundation

Black women in the United States are 3–4 times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than women of other races, underscoring the urgent need to address systemic healthcare inequities.

Approximately 30% of Black women report experiencing mistreatment or having their concerns dismissed by doctors during pregnancy or childbirth, and nearly 45% of all women report holding back from asking questions or discussing concerns because they didn't want to come across as difficult.

Black women have the highest maternal mortality rate in America, and over 80% of these pregnancy-related deaths are considered preventable by the CDC.



# Event Goal

## Video

To raise awareness about Black maternal mortality by sharing real-life stories of women affected by systemic failures in healthcare, giving mothers a platform to share their experiences, and fostering understanding and action among the audience.

## Panel+Q&A

To provide the audience with expert guidance on self-advocacy, navigating the healthcare system, and strategies for improving maternal outcomes, while sharing professional insights and practical resources specifically for Black women.

## Resource Tabling

To provide attendees with tangible resources from various organizations, offering direct connections, support, and information so they can access the help, services, and knowledge they need after the event.



# Logistics

## Event run of show

# BLACK WOMBS ARE CRYING BUT NO ONE IS LISTENING

*The Black Maternal Health Event*

November 16, 2025- Busch MPR, Busch Student Center

12-12:30PM

### TABLE SETUP & SPEAKER ARRIVAL

- Participating organizations, vendors, and volunteers arrive to set up tables. (Tables labeled and assigned in advance.)

12:30-1PM

### GUEST ARRIVAL & CHECKIN

- Doors open to attendees.
- Guests are welcomed and invited to briefly explore the resource tables before the program begins

1-1:10 PM

### WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS

- Brief introduction and Welcome by the host
- Recognition of participating organizations and community partners.

1:10-1:20 PM

### VIDEO PRESENTATION

- Screening of the "Black Wombs Are Crying But No One Is Listening" short film or visual presentation.

1:20-1:40 PM

### INTRODUCTION OF THE PANELIST

- Reading the short bio they have provided

1:40-2:30 PM

### PANEL DISCUSSION

- Moderated conversation featuring healthcare professionals, community advocates, and mothers with lived experience.

2:30-3 PM

### AUDIENCE Q&A

- Open floor for attendees to ask questions to panelists
- Discussion focused on actionable steps, resources, and shared learning

3-3:30 PM

### COMMUNITY WALKTHROUGH & TABLING SESSION

- Guests visit organization tables featuring local maternal health advocates, doulas, community resources, and support groups.
- Food and refreshments are available throughout this portion of the event.

3:30 PM

### CLOSING REMARKS & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- Thank attendees, panelists, and participating organizations.
- Encourage continued involvement and advocacy.
- Invitation to connect via social media or upcoming events.

# Meet the Panelist



**Barbara Neal**  
Therapist



**Tyra Gravesande**  
Researcher/  
Writer



**Madison Starr**  
Artist/Performer

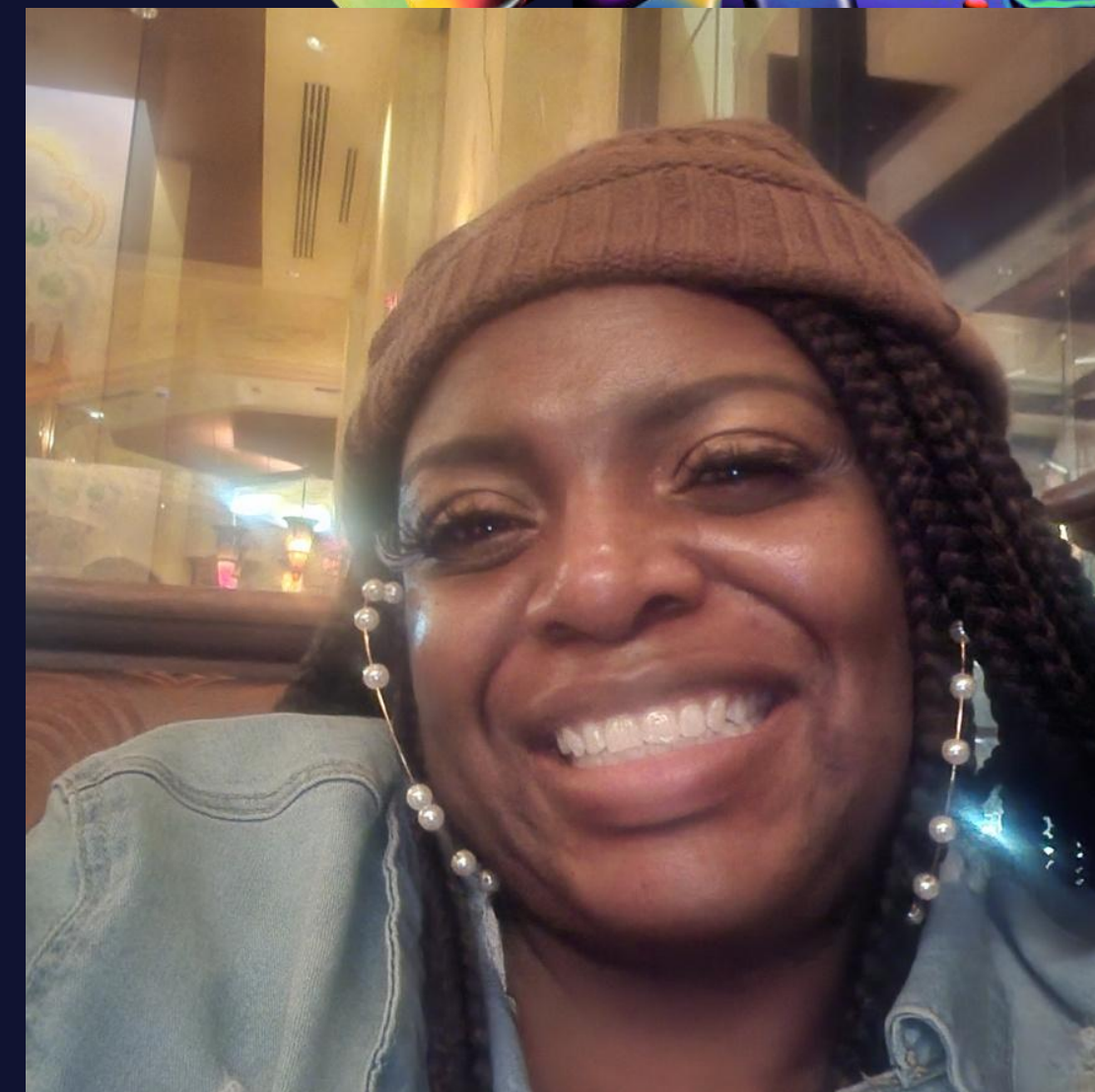
# Featured Advocate



**Mavis Stephens**  
Patient Family  
Partner



**Event  
Video**



**Sherwanda**  
Patient Family  
Partner

**Knight**  
Partner

# Promotion of Event

## Social Media

## Email Blasts

**BLACK WOMBS ARE CRYING BUT NO ONE IS LISTENING!**

### A BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH EVENT

Hosted By: Douglass Black Students' Congress

**SUNDAY | NOVEMBER 16**

**1:00 PM - 3:30 PM**

**BUSCH MPR,  
BUSCH STUDENT CENTER-  
RUTGERS NB**

**EVENT HIGHLIGHTS**

- PANEL DISCUSSION
- TABLING ORGANIZATIONS
- LIGHT REFRESHMENTS

**REGISTER NOW !**

## PANELIST INTRODUCTION

Tyra Gravesande is a visionary scholar and multidisciplinary researcher at the forefront of reproductive justice, bioethics, and maternal health equity. A PhD candidate at Meharry Medical College in Global Health Equity, with additional master's degrees in Public Health and Healthcare Systems Engineering, Tyra specializes in perinatal equity, birth justice, and trauma-informed reproductive care. Her research spans critical issues such as maternal mental health policy, food insecurity during pregnancy, and systemic inequities in healthcare, and she has presented at national conferences, including APHA and Harvard Medical School.

As a recognized leader in advocacy and community engagement, Tyra serves in leadership roles with the National Women's Health Network, Ancient Song's Birth Justice Task Force, Momma's Voices, and several other maternal health initiatives. She has led statewide campaigns to expand postpartum Medicaid coverage, launched maternal health equity summits, and worked across policy, innovation, and grassroots platforms to transform research into actionable solutions. Tyra's work bridges scholarship, advocacy, and mentorship, and she is committed to building a future where Black women and birthing people not only survive but thrive.

**Tyra Gravesande**

Tyra Gravesande is a prolific researcher whose work has been published in leading journals and platforms focused on maternal and reproductive health equity. Her research explores critical issues such as the racialized legacies of gynecology, food insecurity during pregnancy, and perinatal health disparities. She has co-authored peer-reviewed articles in the Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities, Scholars Strategy Network, and forthcoming pieces in the Maternal and Child Health Journal, contributing valuable insights that bridge scholarship, policy, and advocacy.

Black Wombs Are Crying- DBSC/IWL Event Inbox ☆

Steven Miller Oct 31  
to journalis@m

The Douglass Black Student Congress and Institute for Women's Leadership will be holding an event entitled "*Black Wombs Are Crying But No One Is Listening*", on Sunday, November 16th, from 1:00 PM to 3:30 PM at the Busch MPR, Busch Student Center, Rutgers New Brunswick. The important event addresses the serious disparities in maternal health outcomes among Black women and features panelists, tabling organizations, light refreshments, and an opportunity for education, storytelling, and community engagement.

To register, please go to:  
[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScy6ouQKI\\_YstUGxjiJPTWjBTPZ1fBxjbVTYwiWx5hX4iKByQ/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScy6ouQKI_YstUGxjiJPTWjBTPZ1fBxjbVTYwiWx5hX4iKByQ/viewform)



# Feminist Leadership

It elevates the lived experiences of Black mothers whose concerns are often ignored, creating a safe and empowering space for them to share their stories and transform personal narratives into collective power.

**Centering Marginalized  
Voices**

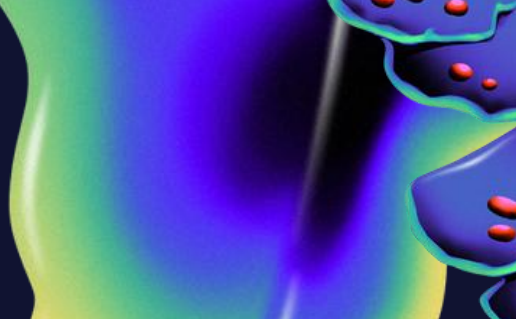
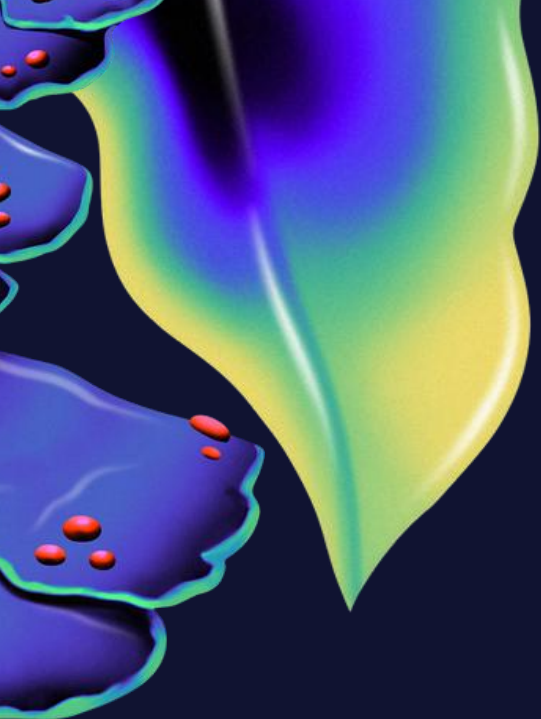
Provides education and tools that help black women advocate for themselves in medical settings. Focuses on healing, justice, and creating a future where we are prioritized and protected. Builds partnerships with community leaders to drive change

**Empowerment,  
Collaboration  
& Community  
Building**

Directly confronts systemic racism and implicit bias in the health care systems, highlights Critical statistics, It uses these realities to advocate for equitable maternal care and demand accountability from healthcare institutions.

**Challenging systems  
oppression**

# THE EVENT





MADISON STAR



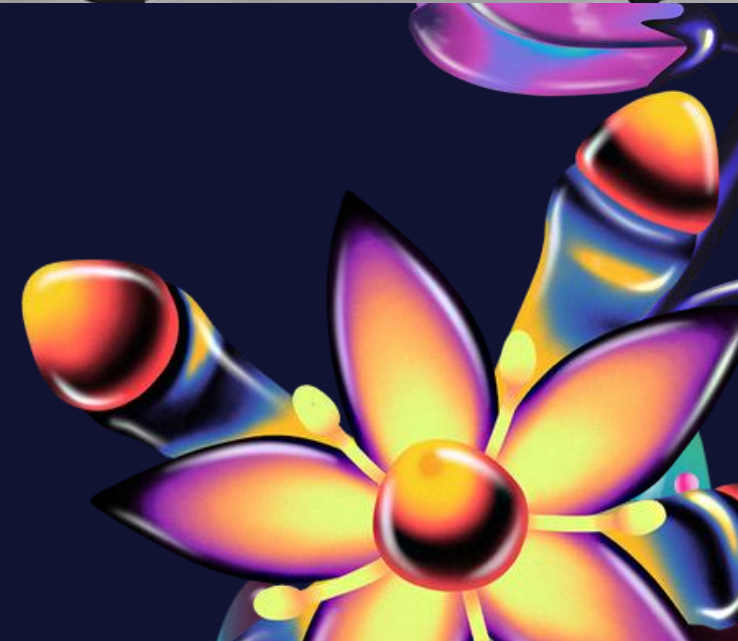
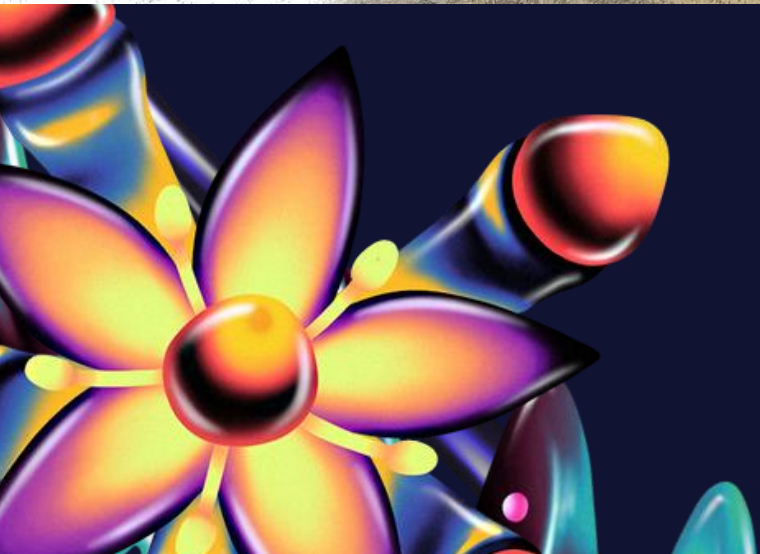
# THE EVENT



# THE EVENT



# THE EVENT



# THE EVENT





# SAP Impact

As president of my organization, this event has set a foundation for a lasting tradition. It can now serve as an annual program—whether held during Black Maternal Health Month or any other time of the year—with this first event becoming a model and reference point for future planning. Moving forward, future scholars can partner with my organization and the many groups I connected with to create their own versions of the event or continue building on what has already been established. They can also sustain the impact by continuing to engage Black mothers, inviting them to share their stories, and providing a space where they can speak openly about their childbirth experiences within today's healthcare system. This ensures that the voices at the heart of the issue remain heard, honored, and amplified year after year.

## Demographic Reached:

- Black women ages 18–40
- Predominantly college students, young professionals, and community members
- Individuals within New Jersey and the broader Rutgers University network
- Anyone with an interest in maternal health, reproductive justice, or community advocacy

## Professionals Engaged:

- Medical students
- Doulas and midwives
- Nurses
- Maternal health advocates
- Reproductive justice organizers
- Researchers and public health professionals

## Engagement Numbers:

- 37 people registered
- 64 people attended, demonstrating strong community interest and turnout beyond anticipated registration

- Always have a backup plan. Unexpected changes, cancellations, or setbacks can happen at any time, and having alternatives prepared helps protect the quality and success of your event.
- Networking is powerful. Connecting with people, having others to talk to, and building a supportive network make planning easier and open doors to new opportunities.
- Relationships matter. Building genuine relationships with advocates, organizations, and community leaders strengthens collaboration and expands the impact of the work.
- Consistency is key. Showing up, staying committed, and maintaining steady effort make a significant difference in how smoothly the planning process goes and how impactful the event becomes.
- I can create change using all of my skills. This experience showed me that my unique talents, passion, and creativity can come together to make a meaningful difference.

# Lesson Learned



# Budget

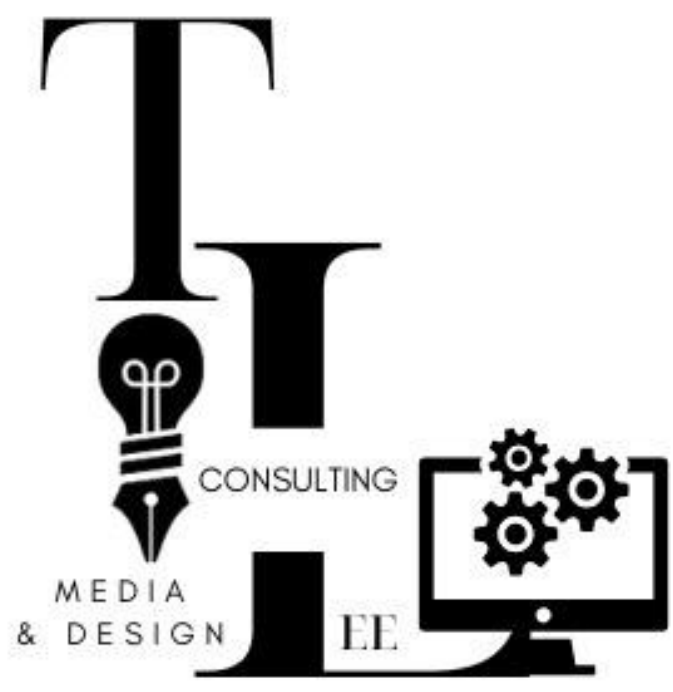
Item	Cost
Food & Drinks	\$900
Decorations	\$1,000
Venue (Busch MPR)	\$455
Gift Bags / Swag	\$300
Promotional Materials	\$40
Advocates payment	\$100
Miscellaneous / Extra	\$200
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,000</b>

**\$1,500**  
**sponsored**

# Partners



*Queen  
Decorations & Treats*



Maternal Mortality & Morbidity Advocates



**RUTGERS-NEW BRUNSWICK**  
**Scarlet Arts Rx**



**COCOLIFE.BLACK**



PREGNANCY ■ POSTPARTUM ■ COMPASSION

**RUTGERS**

Institute for Women's Leadership

# Sponsors

**R**

**RUTGERS-NEW BRUNSWICK**  
Innovation, Design, and  
Entrepreneurship Academy  
Office of Undergraduate Education



COLLEGIATE



# Timeline

**August**

Send emails out to potential panelists, advocates, and organizations to table. Also, start looking for sponsors. Create a sponsorship deck.

**September**

Speak with the decorators and caterers to book the room. Start creating the itinerary and run of show to send to partners and participants

**October**

Confirm speaker lineup, organizational vendors, and featured advocates to speak. Launch promotion

**November**

Create gift bags and programs for the event attendees. Set up venue, do sight visits, do tech checks with videos, lights and sounds



# Testimonials

“This event was so powerful and something that I truly needed to hear. I wish my daughter could have come to this important conversation.”

“I wanted to reiterate how proud I am of tanaya and the women of DBSC., that was amazing, and I am so happy to see all the people who came to support this”

“Great job, Tanaya, on a great maternal health seminar at Rutgers Today! You have started a wonderful path towards working around women’s health. And we need more leaders in this field! Tanaya, keep up the amazing work.” -

“Simply so powerful and impactful there is no words to describe how incredible this was”



# Acknowledgement

- **Douglass Black Student's Congress**
- **Institute for Women's Leadership**
- **Madison Griffin**
- **Partners**
- **Sponsors**
- **Karla Jackson Brewer**
- **Professor Kim Butler**
- **Panelist**
- **Featured Advocates**
- **Steven Miller**
- **My Cohort**
- **Friends and Family**

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A decorative border of colorful, stylized flowers and leaves surrounds the central text. The flowers are in shades of purple, blue, green, and yellow, with some having prominent stamens. The leaves are green and yellow. The background is a dark, solid color.

Thank You

Questions?