PANDEMIC PIVOT

BLACK WOMEN FOR WELLNESS

Year of Service 2020
Highlights
About Us

Black Women for Wellness is committed to the health and well-being of Black women and girls through health education, empowerment and advocacy.

Black Women for Wellness started as a group of women who – concerned with the health and well-being of black babies – teamed up with the Birthing Project to implement the Shangazi Program. This grass roots program matched pregnant women to mentors who coached parents from pregnancy until the child was at least one year old. Within 4 years of implementation, BWW began moving upstream to address systems and political policy by becoming a California 501 (c) (3) non profit in 1997.

Our Theory of Change

Black Women for Wellness believes in the strength and wisdom of our community and allies. We believe that we have the solutions, resources and responsibility to create the shifts and change needed to impact our health status. Each of us must develop our personal power, hold accountable and support acknowledged leadership, and most importantly, contribute to our survival and growth as a community.
When the coronavirus pandemic struck America, Black women faced extreme difficulties accessing healthcare, economic setbacks, and dwindling finances. Not without challenges, Black Women for Wellness and our donors/community partners united to get through many unknowns that surfaced with this new virus - Covid-19. Through the support of generous partners, collaborations, and our stellar team of volunteers and staff, we’ve regrouped to maintain our over 22 year track record of serving your needs with our flagship and new education, outreach, and engagement programs, such as Black Maternal and Infant Health and Census 2020, to spotlight a few.
We've done so much because of you!

Thank you to our funders for your contribution and support:

- THE DAVID AND LUCILLE PACKARD FOUNDATION
- VEGAN OUTREACH
- THE U.S. CENSUS
Black Women for Wellness works to address health disparities in order to improve the overall health status and wellbeing of Black mothers and babies.

Our Black Maternal and Infant Health program utilizes policy and program development to call attention to the staggering rate of Black maternal and infant mortality in Los Angeles County.

"We were confident we would continue the vital work despite the challenges of 2020 but how was a key question. "We definitely had to scrap all the old ideas about how we would have events and how we would engage as far as you know, word of mouth knocking on doors, canvassing, and things of that nature. But what we really started to do was engage more with our social media, using Facebook and Instagram, to let people know that we have events."

Ellen Branch
BWW Program Coordinator
Policy & Maternal Health
ENGAGING WITH THE PEOPLE WHO ALREADY IN THE BWW NETWORK AS A MEMBER OR PARTNER IN OUR WORK TO ADVANCE BLACK BIRTH AND REDUCE THE RATE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN INFANTS AND MOM’S DYING.

BWW raised awareness about our events on Facebook Twitter and Instagram and provided recorded sessions through social media and our website. A key event was made a huge success by our Community Action Team comprised of nearly 80 community-based and local government-based organizations, which informed clients about services, including Baby Basics.

Diapers, wipes and other supplies provided by Baby to Baby in Los Angeles helped us to support moms through the pregnancy and postpartum. Not only were Doula's present to support mothers emotionally spiritually and physically as well as having diapers on hand when they delivered. Baby Basics Baby basics generated a partnership with Black-owned businesses in Leimert Park businesses to provide self care items for postpartum care. Nappily Naturals provided tea and body butters as one of the businesses willing to donate and support moms.

"We've got two more years to make this work happen! With this Community Action Team, we're able to bridge some of those gaps in our communities, specifically, the Black community, being able to receive services, like home visitation, like lactation support, like culturally relevant support groups that don't talk about breast is best, or you must do this, and really engaging with our community in a way that makes us feel like we're being heard but also puts us at a table where we can have our voice be heard by others that are making those decisions."

ELLEN BRANCH

www.bwwla.org
Who we served in 2020

570-600 persons have been linked to BWW through email and virtual meetings via work done by the South Los Angeles South Bay African American Infant & Maternal Mortality Community Action Team

40 birthing persons and their families consistently served during COVID-19 with resources funneled into the community by BWW, with the help of our community partner organizations Westside Infant-Family Network and Baby 2 Baby

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BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH

values that matter

*THROUGH THE REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE LENS*

**EQUITY**

Ensure Black bodies have equal access as compared to their non-Black counterparts to a full spectrum of culturally appropriate comprehensive family planning services, which includes but is not limited to, health education and promotion, human sexuality counseling, safe perinatal care, doula/midwife services, and treatment of sexually transmitted infections for themselves and their partner(s).

**DIGNITY**

Ensure all Black women who are pregnant, possibly pregnant, or capable of becoming pregnant are granted access to a full spectrum of comprehensive, equitable, and quality family planning services in a timely manner; even if they are serving time in jail or prison.

**ADVOCACY**

Identify the toxins used in the manufacturing of cleaning, personal care, and beauty products. Collect quantitative data on the harmful reproductive effect of these toxins in order to integrate environmental justice laws, regulations, and policies to protect those who come in contact with these toxins on a frequent basis.

**EMPOWER**

Focus on systematic changes that remove barriers and guarantee Black women/guys especially those experiencing homelessness are provided with comprehensive health education, sexual/reproductive health care services, and understand their rights to access such services.

**TRANSCEND**

Promote a large scale culture shift that grants the Black family unit the opportunity to thrive over survive: secure housing, safe communities, financial literacy/wealth building, and culturally accurate representation in history.

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GET MORE INFO

https://www.bwwla.org/black-maternal-and-infant-health/

email info@bwwla.org
BMIH 2020 Highlights

SLA/SB AAIMM CAT Programming

Join Us!

**SLASB AAIMM CAT VIRTUAL TEA**

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2020

10:30 AM - 12:00 PM

Featuring a discussion on women's reproductive rights and a preview of *Belly of the Beast*, a film exposing modern-day eugenics and reproductive injustice in California prisons.

Speakers:

Kelly Collins
Vice President
Empowerment Congress
Southeast Neighborhood Council, Recentry/Gang Intervention Advocate

Felicia Jones
Executive Director
Healthy African American Families

For more information please contact
Elite Branch at elite@bwwla.com

... Promote emotional and mental well-being throughout perinatal experience ... and address the impact of racism on health outcomes in the Black community.

www.bwwla.org
"Our grass roots org comes from being rooted in the Black Panther Party and people's breakfast and being able to give back those survival programs. This is what it is nowadays. We need people that are going to give mamas diapers, and we need people that are going to donate the PPE (personal protective equipment) and the food and engaging with all these community organizations like Vegan Outreach, to provide ready to eat meals, as well as the produce from other orgs and then just being able to get the word out and let people know that we have this service."

Ellen Branch
Census Day 2020 came April 1. The global coronavirus pandemic was worsening. It had already forced social and economic shutdowns across America. Since then, all the major African-American community-based organizations, political leaders and other advocates in California — concerned that there may be an undercount of Black Californians during the 2020 census count — have found themselves grappling. Read on to find out how under a statewide shelter in place order, those groups have been working overtime, rejiggering outreach strategies from a boots-on-the-ground game to expanding online get-the-word-out campaigns — most of their social media content identifiable by the hashtag #MakeBlackCount.
Making Black Count Census 2020

The Census Count may be completed but the work continues! Carmen Taylor Jones, 2020 Census Program Manager for Black Women for Wellness, highlights our community work plan and speaks candidly about how important the Census is, why people participate, why people do not, the benefits and ramifications.

"On February 1 (when the pandemic hit), the immediate work plan was to work with our faith based community. It is, without a doubt, common knowledge that the pulpit is still the trusted messenger of the community, so we started there," states Taylor Jones.

She said the work involved direct community outreach and in-person presentations, despite some physical limitations.

Even with the pivot things worked out well because she was a team of one, so her option was to reach out to pastors and national organizing bodies of denominations and communicate from the top down via the written word.

Thus, the Preach It! Teach It! Campaign!, which launched on February 23.

It featured a tool kit compiled by the Census Bureau, which gave church bodies or congregations a plethora of ideas of opportunities to incorporate the Census in worship.

"Our conversations were internal, so we were able to reach through the national partners that are partners of the Census Bureau, that our partners at the table, every Decennial operation, about 11 national bodies, and in those national bodies, we were able to connect with about 35,000 different congregations," Taylor Jones adds.
BWW followed up the Preach It! Teach It! Campaign with 23 events, utilizing 15 different strategies. For every hard to count community, BWW utilized education and worked with still-opened preschools as Covid progressed. The team created a Census song and conducted a virtual sing-a-long. BWW conducted an online tutorial on how to complete the Census questionnaire. And, it's 200 Grand Campaign challenged the City of L.A. to provide at least 192,000 individuals to engage as a match of the $192,000 population grant BWW received to ensure the community was counted.

"In all, we know that our outreach touched at least almost half a million people. We're at about 500,000. And that's just with the work that started in February, because there was some work before I got there. They had done some beautiful brochures and some videos and what have you ... I would say that undoubtedly, undoubtedly, if we had one of those little balls, that we could see into the future, who would know, right now that we would be facing this Covid thing. And so where we really benefited from for BWW was really having to search out to go deeper, and find where Black people really are."

Carmen Taylor Jones
African American stakeholders are ramping up their outreach to undercounted census tracts where Black Californians live after the U.S. Census Bureau announced this week that it will stop the national count at the end of September. The state too is intensifying its last-ditch initiatives to achieve an accurate count of all Californians as enumeration goes into its final stretches. Federal legislation that would have extended it through October has stalled in the U.S. Senate.

Black Lives Matter is shouted, printed, painted and posted everywhere in today’s racial-and-social-justice-aware political climate, but those lives may be threatened by low participation in the U.S. 2020 Census. At risk for Black families in California, who live in the hardest-to-count census tracts of the state in disproportionate numbers, are federal resources for schools, housing, health care, employment, transportation and public policy initiatives that target them.
The ability to maintain or lose political representation in Congress is also at stake. According to the consulting group Election Data Services (EDS), California could lose a congressional district representing 300,000 people for the first time in its 160-year history. Part of the problem, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's interactive 2020 Census response map, approximately 25% of California's current population (9,879,459) live in hard-to-count neighborhoods and are at risk of being missed in the 2020 Census.

Carmen Taylor Jones, 2020 Census Director at the Los Angeles-based Black Women for Wellness advocacy group, said it is more than being simply counted, but it's a call to action.

"It (the census) is the keeper of houses, and they are the holder of genealogy records," said Jones, former 2010 Census Bureau Southern California Area Regional Manager. She said her new slogan for the 2020 Census is “document your existence,” by completing the decennial census.

This week, the California Complete Count Census 2020 office has organized several public awareness activities under the banner of “Get Out the Count Week.” The events, which include a press briefing, a “Virtual Day of Action” and an online pep rally of “Social Media Ambassadors,” are geared toward reaching Californians who have still not completed their forms.

The threat of losing a seat in Congress is heard often, but it has never happened in California, since population losses are typically tempered by nearly as many people moving to the state or relocating within it.

As of July 13, California’s response rate was 63.2%, according to the Census Bureau’s interactive response map. Per the California Complete Count Committee, an estimated 850,644 households have not responded, which equates to an estimated population of over 4.2 million.

Further, the California Complete Count Committee indicated, the average Self-Response Rate as of June 4 was 61.6% for Black/African American, 59.1% for Hispanic/Latino, and 61.4% for American Indian and Alaska Native.
The National Urban League indicated in its State of 2020 Census Report, however, that favorable state response rates that meet or surpass the national 2020 Census rate provide little indication of how well or poorly predominantly or heavily populated Black communities are responding to the 2020 Census. It recommends closer analysis to ensure targeted outreach lifts participation in low-response-rate Black communities.

“If we are not counted, then we amplify our problems as opposed to solving our problems,” said Janette Robinson Flint, executive director of Black Women for Wellness.

Organizations like Black Women for Wellness knew the COVID-19 pandemic made areas considered hard-to-count only harder to reach. This organization and others in California are part of a group called “The Black Hub” that worked with vulnerable communities across the state.

The State of California gave $187 million for the Census campaign to push outreach efforts to educate of the importance of being counted this year. These efforts included support to The Black Hub along with other institutions.

Flint told California Black Media that outreach on low voting turnouts for her organization began in 2000 with constant voter education campaigns. Later in 2012, it developed VREAM (Voting Rules Everything Around Me) to address voter suppression in California. The decision to participate in the 2010 and 2020 censuses to increase Black counts was an obvious next step, she continued.

The group's outreach tactic, tagged the 200 Grand Campaign, trained 15 student interns to phone bank for five-and-a-half weeks. Jones requested 200,000 contact phone numbers in 45 hard-to-count tracts from the California Community Foundation.

Seventy-five percent of the 200,000 phone calls affirmed a commitment to participate in the 2020 Census, according to Jones.

“That is the single largest outreach to date in L.A. County,” she said. “In addition, the students’ text campaign reached 35,000 contacts with a response rate close to 90 percent.”

Student interns like Deshawn Moore worked from home and used their own phones due to Black Women for Wellness' COVID-19 protocols to keep everyone safe. “I learned a lot in training about voting and the census. One time when I was on the bus, I asked someone if they have taken the census. They said no. I told them about it and how to do it,” Moore said.

When asked if he would volunteer again with Black Women for Wellness, he responded, “Yes I would.”
Black Women For Wellness

PROGRAMS

COVID-19
GET SMART B4 U GET SEXY
VOTING RULES EVERYTHING AROUND ME
BLACK MATERNAL AND INFANT HEALTH
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE
KITCHEN DIVAS
DIABETES PREVENTION PROGRAM (DPP)
REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE
SISTERS @ EIGHT
DAUGHTERS & SONS OF TECHNOLOGY

www.bwwla.org