Decolonizing Midwifery, Disrupting Gender, and Taking Extraordinary Measures to Reify Body Sovereignty

Sunday, June 19 - Thursday, June 23, 2022
11518 Webster Hill Road, Ava, NY 13309
Rarely do midwives, abolitionists, trans, and intersex healers get the chance to convene and to take extraordinary measures to decolonize the landscape and the broader ecosystem of birth justice. The most prominent recollection and story of such an alliance was told by folklorist Zora Neale Hurston, of ancient healers and birth workers that gathered in a soft place between the trees, in a cave around a birthing mother on a bed of pine and fallen leaves, to help bring about the birth of a child marked for death.

Black Women’s Blueprint will convene an inter-tribal and global gathering of anti-racist midwives, birth workers, healers, and funders yearning for 1) a radical alliance and a de-siloing of our dreams, 2) abolishing patriarchy and racism, 3) mapping cartographies of struggle and land stewardship, and 4) reifying body sovereignty.

There has been an active dismantling of midwifery in its most ancient form and a condemnation of the traditions of indigenous, Two-Spirit, and granny midwives. It is time to rebuild alliances between feminist, traditional, and holistic midwives in order to hold space for the midwives that are caught in the patriarchal medical-industrial complex. The maternal deaths caused by unchecked racism, homophobia, transphobia, capitalism, and inequity are the damages we pay as a consequence when our alliances fall apart.
On behalf of our Black Women’s Blueprint (BWB) and the North American Indigenous Center of New York (NAIC), it is our distinct privilege to extend a formal invitation to an inter-tribal and global gathering of anti-racist midwives, birth workers, healers, and funders yearning for a radical alliance and a de-siloing of our dreams. The convening Decolonizing Midwifery, Disrupting Gender, and Creating Movement to Reify Body Sovereignty will take place on almost 300 acres of land in upstate NY, as a disruptor of current systems from June 19, 2022 - June 23, 2022. Black Women’s Blueprint is honored to be working in partnership with various midwifery organizers and multidisciplinary birth justice leaders to convene multidisciplinary stakeholders yearning for 1) a radical alliance and a de-siloing of our dreams, 2) abolishing internalized patriarchy and racism, 3) mapping cartographies of struggle and land stewardship, and 4) reifying body sovereignty. The convening consists of four parts and culminates with a Summer Solstice festival. We have set aside four days in Ava, NY to be heard, felt, and held in such a way that builds community, coalition, and action to change the course of the birth justice landscape towards concrete outcomes.

Why You Were Selected As a Participant: We are strategically inviting birth justice leaders with a focused body of work in reproductive and racial justice advocacy, cultural, and academic production. We are inviting individuals that move beyond conversations and initiatives which center the medical-industrial complex, and instead seek to present fuller examinations, public debate, and actions about medicalized violence that also include land-based solutions towards maternal health and vitality. Your body of work in integrative health has been invaluable to the community of revolutionary wellness workers. Your transformational work on integrative holistic health and healing for women, girls, and people of all gender identities underpin our call to decolonize current and existing paradigms of health and wellbeing.

We are inviting you to engage more deeply with us about the paradigms you shift in your work, how your work, including your collaborations, are shifting the traditional practices and chosen lifeways, and what you dream about happening in the future.

Desired Outcome: The desired outcome of this place we are making for you seeks to create a landscape analysis through a multiple disciplinary lens of what our imaginations, ideas, and strategies can behold at the critical intersection of land and birth justice. We invite you to join in for this inaugural convening. Please click here to provide us with your RSVP.
We hope you will honor us by joining this groundbreaking endeavor as a participant. As a participant, we ask that you set aside this time for you to care for yourself and be in radical connection with people and land. As a collaborator, we invite you to share your thoughts and ideas for what you might like to contribute. More so, we are deeply grateful for the contribution your work has already made to the human rights community. In our view, your voice, input and/or participation in this endeavor is not only needed, but it is also necessary.

We are planning and pouring into this convening, a place with you in mind. Please note that this invitation is a placeholder for you to be in attendance. If you have other commitments that conflict with your ability to attend, we trust that you mindfully consider recommending someone who holds shared practices on your behalf. We do not intend for this gathering to be a one-off, but to build an ongoing intervention to redirect the ways in which birth justice is addressed. You have been, are, and will continue to be integral to that work.

CLOSING: The attached information outlines the tentative program for the four-day event as well as the goals of the women’s health and healing village.

Once again, we hope you will accept this invitation and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely
Sevonna Brown and Farah Tanis
Co-Executive Directors
Black Women’s Blueprint
TRAVEL & ACCOMMODATIONS

Airports

Syracuse (SYR) is approx. 1 hour to Utica and a 1.5 hour drive to Boonville and Ava.

Albany (ALB) is approx. a 1.5 hour drive to Utica and a 2 hour drive to Boonville and Ava.

Train

Nearest Amtrak train station is Utica (UCA). It is approx. a 30 minute drive from Utica Station to Boonville and Ava.

*Ava is approx. a 4 ½ hour drive from midtown Manhattan.

HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS

We have blocked off rooms for you at:
The Lodge At Headwaters
13524 NY-12,
Boonville, NY 13309
(315) 942-2027
CHILDCARE OPTIONS AVAILABLE

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES ON SITE
TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Every time we step onto the land, we are reminded that our healing is entangled with the healing of the earth and with each other across identities.

We are continuously astounded by the awesome beauty of the area. This vast land holds the resistance and testimonies of our ancestors as well as the endless canvases for us to paint our dreams onto - in the rolling rivers, lush greenery and beautiful sun-drenched skies.

As founding partners and allies, we are excited to have you join us to engage with the land from sunrise to sunset with sacred celebration and festivities, including drumming circles, fish on the grill, night fires, sunrise ceremonies and more.

SOCIALLY DISTANT, SPIRITUALLY CONNECTED

As a number of COVID variants still remain we ask that you follow COVID-19 protocols in enclosed spaces. If you are unvaccinated, we ask that you wear a mask in all spaces.

- We will have PPE on site for your use, but feel free to bring what makes you comfortable in terms of masks or hand sanitizers.

CLOTHING RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Bring light-colored, breathable and comfortable clothing options. We recommend layering with long sleeves and high socks for excursions.
- Carry water or a canteen with you for foraging and journeys.
- Wear comfortable, close-toed shoes (Crocs are a really good choice.)
- We pray for sunny weather. Enjoy the sun and the wind on tug-hill. But protect yourselves - bring your hat and sunscreen.
TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

ENGAGING WITH THE EARTH AND INSECTS:
The lands at Restore Forward and at our neighbors’ property, Fish Creek, are alive. There are natural habitats and animal sanctuaries surrounding the creek and the land. We encourage natural oils such as citronella, tea tree oil, and peppermint for your use.

WELLNESS AND WHOLENESS WHILE ON THE LAND:

- Hydrate.
- Stretch before going on walks and journeys.
- Ask our on-site herbalist for the best wild foliage to sample while there.
- Stay hydrated and bring snacks on long days. BWB will have snacks, just in case.
- Let BWB staff or guides know if you have any allergies or specific needs.
- We have a cadre of healers, health practitioners and medicine-makers who will be with us every step of the way.

PREPARE FOR JOY:

Bring your noisemakers, tambourines, brightest smile, comfortable shoes for walking and dancing, collective voice and open heart to the Restore Forward convening and celebration.

You are welcome to bring seeds, medicine, music, gifts, candles, flowers, or simply your best, brightest self. We welcome each of you with love, liberation, and healing.
DAY ONE

RADICAL ALLIANCE AND A DESILOING OF OUR DREAMS

This day can begin at the Freedom House in order to allow what was gained in the 4 months of pre-work to crystalize. Then, participants can caravan to the land. This day will create context and establish the historical record for those too young to remember. We can curate sessions that lay bare the ancient archives of women’s ways, their magic, science and ecologies. On the land we will invite participants to a return to the roots of the earth—the primordial mother.
DAY TWO

ABOLISHING PATRIARCHY AND RACISM

This day happens at the Freedom House. We can curate safe and brave spaces for our encounter, the descent and the dissent. This is where we can display and use all the tools gained in the pre-work, where we test our alliances and issue a call to action for abolishing patriarchy and racism in midwifery and in philanthropy.
This day begins on the land and caravan to the Freedom House. On the land, our partners The North American Indigenous Center of NY will lead medicine walks, and accessible hikes. We will continue experiencing the Chevruta method, focusing our energies and movement on how bringing land back creates the space for evidence-based approaches related to food and wellbeing that intervene on maternal mortality, and broader wholeness and healing.
On this day we will close out on the land. This day of restoration is about restoring and reaffirming the body back to itself. We will curate and design an intentional sequence of movement and body practices that center body sovereignty including the creation of herbal tonic, tinctures and medicine making to take home.
PHOTO CONSENT FORM

By attending this event, I hereby grant permission to Black Women’s Blueprint and its affiliates and associates to photograph and video me and my guests and then use, reproduce, and publish the following images of me and my guests for commercial purposes. These images may be used for social media, brochures, fundraising materials, marketing materials, website usage and other promotional materials.

Attendee Name:

Attendee Signature:

Date:

Black Women's Blueprint
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