

# voice

IN OUR OWN

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

National Black Women's  
Reproductive Justice  
Agenda

March 2020

### Marcela's Voice



Greetings!

I hope that you and your loved ones are keeping healthy and staying safe as we grapple with managing our day-to-day lives in a COVID-19 climate. Every day there are new developments with how the COVID-19 infection is impacting our lives and in an election year, impacting our ability to vote. In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda, along with more than 200 organizations, signed-on to [a letter](#) drafted by The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights' Voting Rights Task Force.

The letter urges Congress and state elections officials to support and fund polices to ensure that voting in America in 2020 remains fair, accessible, and safe.

I am particularly concerned about Black women and other marginalized voters who have historically faced obstacles when trying to exercise their right at the ballot box. It's somewhat fortuitous that I wrote about this issue earlier this month in my op-ed, [Bloody Sunday: Black women have always led the charge for voting rights](#), published by The Hill. I lifted up Amelia Boynton's story. She almost died 55 years ago as she tried to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge in the now infamous march from Selma to Montgomery, known as Bloody Sunday. "That day in Selma, many women who are now nameless and faceless marched and organized to push for voting rights." Thanks to their efforts millions of Black women now have a voice in all elections. And as I've said many times

before when Black women vote, change happens.

During these unprecedented times, where we are literally juggling public safety and protecting people's voting rights, we must insist that election officials make voting safe for everyone. Instead of canceling election days, state officials can implement vote by mail and absentee voting, and open more polling places so that people do not have to stand in long lines in order to vote. We must all be vigilant about protecting our health in the wake of COVID19, but we must not allow election officials to use this disease as an excuse to eliminate our right to vote. We must continue to honor the efforts of heroes like Amelia Boynton. I vow to continue the fight to ensure that our rights are upheld and every vote is counted.

Respectfully,

**Marcela Howell**

Founder & President

In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda

## See What We've Been Up To

### Ensuring that the Supreme Court hears the voices of Black women

Earlier this month staff from In Our Own Voice proudly stood in solidarity with thousands of people on the steps of the Supreme Court of the United States at the

[#MyRightMyDecision](#) rally. We wanted Supreme Court justices to know that the case they were hearing oral arguments for, *June Medical Services v. Russo*, imposes medically unnecessary abortion restrictions on women and could drastically impact access to care for Black communities. Women With A Vision, our partner organization in Louisiana, led the effort to understand the attacks on abortion rights within a [Reproductive Justice frame](#) that addressed the persistent and oppressive barriers for historically marginalized communities, such as Black Women, LGBTQ+ folks, undocumented people, rural residents, and disabled individuals.



Here are a few images that capture our Point-of-View.





## Following Our Fellows

Prior to some colleges and universities closing early due to COVID-19 precautions for students, some of our Next Generation Leadership Institute fellows were able to host events and educate their classmates about reproductive health care, voting, and safe sex.



### Pillow Talk at Spelman College:

Fellows Zhana Bishop and Emily Laureore partnered with the Minority Association for Pre-Medical Students (M.A.P.S.), and our partner organization Sister Love, Inc. on March 5 to host "Pillow Talk." Students grabbed their PJs and sleeping bags for a slumber party event where they received a refresher on safe sex and consent. Nzingha Hall from Sister Love shared useful information including statistics, definitions and fun facts regarding sex while Antoinette Jones provided free HIV testing. "It was great to be able to provide a space where people could learn about their bodies while being inclusive and using

a Reproductive Justice framework,” said Bishop.

### **BLACK Women’s History Month at Dillard University:**

Fellows Kaylan Tanner and LydiaPaige Moffet added a twist to their Women's History Month brunch and mixer events. The conversation lifted up the stark realities that Black women face around the lack of accessible reproductive health care in Louisiana. They also had fruitful discussions about voting and how imperative it is that student exercise their power at the ballot box.

*We are currently recruiting stellar students for the next cohort of In Our Own Voice's Next Generation Leadership Institute. The [2020-2022 application](#) is now open. This paid, two-year fellowship is open to students from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). We have extended the deadline to April 30, 2020. [Apply today!](#)*

*The Next Generation Leadership Institute is designed to provide a leadership pipeline specifically for the Black women’s Reproductive Justice movement. The Institute is a two-year paid fellowship program that serves as a formal pipeline for training activists on Reproductive Justice and the intersectional issues that impact the lives of Black women, femmes, and girls. Fellows are selected from HBCUs and are trained in advocacy, community organizing, and strategic communications to become young leaders in the Reproductive Justice movement.*



### **Intersections of Our Lives**

Whether it is race, gender, income, or immigration status, our struggles are connected. Along with our partner organizations National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health (NLIRH) and National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum (NAPAWF) we released a new video highlighting the intersections of our lives featuring Michelle Williams from our partner organization The Afiya Center. We know we are stronger together!

[WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

## **Our Partners In Action**

*Like many businesses, our partner organizations across the country may have closed their offices to protect their clients and staff from the COVID-19 virus, but they are still open for business and continuing their important work in local communities.*



## Safe Sex During COVID-19

SisterReach is offering **FREE** safe sex kits delivered right to your mailbox. Memphis residents can request curbside pick-up from the SisterReach offices. The organization will fulfill all orders until items are out of stock. Orders from Memphis residents will receive priority.

**GET YOUR FREE KIT**

Join *Black Women for Wellness* in **TAKING STOCK** of the personal care, beauty, and consumer products our community uses and the connections to health. Women of color are also underrepresented as researchers on issues that directly impact us. They are seeking Black women between the ages of 18 and 50 who live in South Los Angeles to take part in the next phase of a study. It will be an assessment of everyday product use including personal care, cleaning, fragranced, and pest control products. Using a mobile app, they will show participants how to track their product use for a week. A \$100 stipend will be available for participants. If you are interested in participating, please email [Megan Chichester](mailto:Megan.Chichester).

### Taking Stock: Personal Care Survey



**TAKING STOCK**  
CONSUMER PRODUCT USE AMONG BLACK WOMEN AND LATINAS

## SisterLove

SisterLove, Inc. is accepting proposals for its annual youth conference, HLYASS! HLYASS, or Healthy Love Youth Advocacy Summer Summit on **August 21-23** in **Savannah, GA**. If you have a topic related to Policy and Advocacy?

Healthy Relationships? Organizing for Power? Submit [here](#).  
Questions? Email [Nzingha Hall](#).

SisterLove's Director of Policy and Advocacy Sequoia Ayala provides an update on the impact of COVID-19 on the Georgia state electoral and democratic processes.

[Check Out the Video!](#)

*Register Now For HLYASS!*

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[Take a look at the report!](#)

## New Impact Report

The Black Women's Health Imperative's Impact Report highlights its quest to positively impact the lives of Black women across this nation by developing and implementing programs, policy positions, and educational resources to address pressing health issues.

## IN THE NEWS

- "11 Pro-Choice Activists Tell Us What's At Stake With This SCOTUS Case," Bustle
- "Black women have always led the charge for voting rights," The Hill
- "Louisiana's Clinic Shutdown Law Will Hurt Black Women. We're Fighting Back," Rewire.News
- "Our Stories: Graduate School Acceptance: Zhana Bishop," Spelman College



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