

June 3, 2020

A message from Nathalie Pambrun, President of CAM and Sage-femme:

The killing of George Floyd and the death of Regis Korchinski-Paquet have united voices from around the world speaking out against the disproportionate violence Black people experience all while carrying grief, anger, and anxiety from these senseless deaths. CAM wants to extend deep sympathy to the families and community of all Black people who have died in police presence or otherwise due to pervasive anti-Black racism. We also want to acknowledge the people who live with the effects of anti-Black racism and how these tragedies are triggering and re-traumatizing. To our Black students, midwives, and clients our hearts are with yours and we are awakened to the need to take serious action as your national association.

I want to apologize, as my letter yesterday really did not specifically address anti-Black racism here in Canada. What does our personal and professional journey require of us to be good allies? What we can do as midwives to ensure Black families do not feel threatened or unsafe? How we will contribute to stopping racial profiling, hate speech, hate crimes, and the overrepresentation in our child protection and criminal justice systems? How are we going to improve Black maternal and infant morbidity and mortality to finally close this unacceptable gap? We know racism is a public health issue and events like these are the alarm bell that alerts us to the arrival at a place of crisis.

At our last CAM conference, racialized midwives organized, stood up, spoke out, and continue to gather to bring their voices to CAM on the issues affecting their communities. This moment marked a time to begin building our midwifery capacity to deliver anti-racist education, healthcare, research, and action to meaningfully confront white supremacy and to stand in solidarity with racialized midwives. The voices and experiences of our racialized midwives and students will be our beacon as we confront anti-Black racism and tackle oppression.

As individual practitioners, we need to increase our knowledge of the history of Black people in Canada, build self-awareness of biases and assumptions, and strengthen our skills to build culturally safe spaces for Black people. We must become aware of the reality of white privilege. We must look at the policies and laws that disproportionately affect Black people and speak up about these injustices. We must create space for Black midwives to fill positions of leadership.

Midwives must be adamant that the voices of Black pregnant and birthing people are heard and given due importance. They will offer urgent yet attainable recommendations to address the marginalization they experience in accessing health and wellbeing services.

Your CAM board has an intensive planned on Friday this week and we will be discussing everything from our governance structure to our commitments to dismantling anti-Black racist structures. We acknowledge a lack of representation and inclusion within our own organization limits understanding of the experiences of Black people living with racism. This needs to change as an organization and as a profession. Let's continue this journey together, to bring recognition to the vital knowledge and experiences of our Black midwives and students and speak out together against racism.

Sincerely,
Nathalie Pambrun
CAM President and Sage-femme

BIPOC meet-up
Monday, June 8, 2020, 3:00-5:00 p.m.

If you are a BIPOC midwife or student and would like to connect to be in community and/or for peer support, the AOM is organizing a Zoom meet-up.

Email Feben Aseffa at feben.aseffa@aom.on.ca to RSVP and receive the link to this drop-in gathering.

Please note that this Zoom meet-up is intended to be a protected space for BIPOC-identified midwives and students.