iDREAM
FOR RACIAL HEALTH EQUITY



Vision 2030 Manifesto

Black mamas and babies are sacred work.

i.D.R.E.A.M. Vision 2030 Manifesto

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As i.D.R.E.A.M. for Racial Health Equity, a project of Community Partners®, holds steadfast in its 32nd year - a year of maturation - it is essential to consider what has been built, what is to be preserved, and honor the wisdom that ushered in our storied-mission to uplift, hold, and nurture the sacred stories of Black birth. For i.D.R.E.A.M., this pivotal inflection point is about reflection, continuity, recovery, and Black permanence[1]. If you'd like to know more about our work, read our 2025 Manifesto, here.

For more than three decades, our work has lived at the intersection of Black birth, Black memory, Black womanhood, public health, leadership, and survival which we have more recently shifted to thriving. What began in 1994 as advocacy around Black infant mortality — then the emphasis was saving the lives of Black babies beyond the first 365 days of life — evolved into something far greater than a maternal health initiative. i.D.R.E.A.M. has become a living archive of Black life throughout the life course. i.D.R.E.A.M. is the space where Black women can tell the truth about their bodies, their pregnancies, their grief, their exhaustion, their resilience, and their joy without being silenced, pathologized, or reduced to data points.

Long before healthcare systems began using language like "equity," "cultural humility," or "birth justice," Black women in our communities were already describing what it meant to move through medical systems unseen and unheard. They knew what it felt like for pain to be dismissed, for symptoms to be minimized, for psychological stress to be normalized, and for survival to be treated as success. The stories told inside living rooms, hospital rooms, churches, classrooms, support groups, and Sister Friend circles revealed truths the research world was only beginning to quantify. Education and income do not protect Black women and birthing people.

Those stories became the foundation of our work.

What we have come to understand over time is that Black maternal health was never only about birth outcomes. It is also about the cumulative burden carried in Black women's bodies across generations. It is about stress and silence, overwork and under-protection, and the impossible expectation that Black women should save everyone while abandoning themselves in the

[1] The Arc of Black Permanency ®, The Black Equity Collective, 5th Annual Equity and Justice Symposium

process. It is about navigating education and health systems that demanded excellence while withholding grace.

And yet, even within those realities, Black women continue to create life, community, beauty, strategy, faith, and movements.

That is why Sacred Black Storytelling© became central to our mission. In 2013, we launched community theater "Real Talk. Real Stories." showcasing performance storytelling during National Minority Health Month. In 2024, we collaborated with Black Girl Saturday School® – Live in LA! during the national observance of Black Maternal Health Week where we learned about and shared stories of reproductive intelligence and the brilliance of Black girls that shape our adulthood. All of our offerings included storytelling to ensure that the audience received not only current information, trends, research, and community informed best practices and strategies but also examples that bring the learning to life. At i.D.R.E.A.M. we understand that lived experience carries its own scholarship and authority. Not as performance, but as preservation. A mother speaking about postpartum depression. A father naming the children he lost through miscarriage and stillbirth. A mentor recounting the cost of leadership. A young physician describing racial bias inside hospital systems. These stories were never secondary to the work. They *were* the work.

Since 2011, i.D.R.E.A.M., rebranded from the Pasadena Birthing Project (1994-2011), has evolved from direct service and volunteer Sister Friend mentorship into leadership development, public health advocacy, cultural humility, interprofessional education, and hospital quality improvement. In this time, we have grown and nurtured our own pipeline of advocates and champions for Black birthing families. Yet, beneath every pivot remained the same essential belief: Black communities possess wisdom worthy of documentation, investment, and preservation.

The Harlem Renaissance, a creative ecosystem of liberation, offered an important blueprint for understanding this responsibility. Black artists, scholars, organizers, and cultural brokers understood that movements disappear when their stories are not documented. They understood that memory itself is a form of resistance. They curated archives because they knew future generations would need evidence that Black people dreamed, organized, created, challenged systems, and imagined futures larger than the constraints of their time.

That same responsibility lives within i.D.R.E.A.M. today… And for 100 years into the future.

This Black-led community-based organization continues to uphold and carry a storied-mission. Not just because of our numerous programs or partnerships, but because of the people who cultivate it - the mothers, fathers, grandmothers, students, scholars, physicians, pastors, artists, board members, allies, mentees, and community leaders who collectively usher this work forward. The fathers who showed up mattered. The men who grieved their children mattered. The Black women who protected psychological safety long before the term existed mattered. The emerging leaders in healthcare now stepping into their own authority matter.

This is why our leadership transition cannot and will not be framed as organizational decline. A movement rooted in Sacred Black Storytelling© must be sustained even as one role changes. Executive leadership is only one expression of stewardship. There comes a season when the assignment expands from building infrastructure to preserving wisdom, mentoring successors, documenting history, and strengthening the foundation beneath the next generation of leadership.

The transition from executive director to strategic advisor is not retreat. It is maturation.

Too often, Black women leaders are expected to sacrifice themselves entirely for the institutions they build. They are praised for endurance while privately enduring exhaustion, financial instability, chronic stress, and emotional isolation. The mythology of the endlessly self-sacrificing Black woman has damaged generations of leaders who believed rest was weakness and that survival was enough.

We reject that inheritance.

There is wisdom in learning to stop overcommitting, overworking, and overexplaining. There is wisdom in understanding that excellence does not require perfection or self-destruction. There is wisdom in creating room to breathe between assignments, to release what no longer serves, and to enter new seasons without apology.

Growth has clarified this truth.

This stage of our work now requires its own rites of passage. Permission to slow down. Permission to tell the truth about toxic work environments and harmful experiences. Permission to say, "I do not know." Permission to stop waiting for closure from people unwilling to change. Permission to live beyond the definitions imposed by earlier chapters.

The younger generations are watching closely. They are listening not only to accomplishments, but to honesty. They are learning from stories about conflict, betrayal, courage, discernment, reinvention, persistence, and survival. Impactful and vision-forward leadership requires deeper transparency about what it costs to sustain a mission over thirty years while navigating racism, economic uncertainty, institutional disrespect, and the complicated realities of nonprofit survival.

The future of Black-led organizations depends upon these conversations.

Black permanence[2] requires more than inspiration. It requires sustainable economics, thriving wages, strategic partnerships, leadership pipelines, and communities willing to invest in the long game. It requires rejecting the idea that Black organizations should survive indefinitely on sacrifice alone. It requires recognizing that community-building is highly skilled and necessary labor, not invisible labor.

[2] The Arc of Black Permanency®, The Black Equity Collective, 5th Annual Equity and Justice Symposium

And despite all the advances in technology, data systems, and artificial intelligence, one truth remains unchanged: AI is not a replacement for community.

It does not replace discernment and memory, and it does not mentor through lived experience. It cannot hold sacred conversations around birth, grief, trauma, transition, and healing. It cannot replace the wisdom exemplified by elders or the trust cultivated through decades of presence.

Community remains sacred work.

That is why the next chapter of i.D.R.E.A.M. is centered on preservation, documentation, strategic advising, leadership cultivation, and movement continuity and not solely on maternal health. The mission is still unfolding. The stories are still emerging. The archives are still being gathered. The next generation of leaders are still coming into view.

And somewhere in the future, long after this executive director's transition has passed, there will be people standing on the shoulders of this work who will understand that what was created here was never simply an organization.

It was a continuum.

A continuum of Black women refusing silence.
A continuum of families choosing healing.
A continuum of leaders learning courage.
A continuum of storytellers preserving truth.
A continuum of communities insisting that Black life, Black memory, and Black futures deserve permanence.

That is the legacy.

Not merely that i.D.R.E.A.M. survived, but that it helped create conditions where future generations could imagine themselves worthy of thriving, belonging, leadership, healing, and rest.

And that work will continue.

Vision 2030 Call to Action: Rise Up, Sister! Ambassadors© https://idreamnow.org/

Rise up and fund our future. Designate your donation to i.D.R.E.A.M. for Racial Health Equity and click the link at https://donatenow.networkforgood.org/communitypartners/

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