



Once Upon A Premie, Inc.
The 53rd Annual Legislative Congressional
Black Caucus Conference: Black Maternal
Health and Neonatal Equity Panel

SPEAKER BIO'S

Jenné Johns MPH, President Once Upon A Premie, Inc.



Jenné Johns is a national health equity thought leader, author and advocate for reducing healthcare disparities. While advocating for the needs of her own son, Jenné wrote, “Once Upon a Premie”, the first of its kind children’s book written for parents of preemies while in the NICU. A graduate of the Disparities Leadership Program at Harvard University Medical School, Jenné has over a decade of experience advocating for policy, and community changes to improve health equity and health outcomes for low-income communities. She also led quality improvement and health equity transformation strategies with the nation's largest health insurance companies. Jenné is President of Once Upon A Premie, Inc. and Founder of Once Upon A Premie Academy, the first and only virtual training academy focused on delivering health and racial equity educational programs for perinatal and neonatal healthcare professionals.



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Alexia Doumbouya, Founder and President of Cocolife.Black



Alexia Doumbouya, Founder and President of Cocolife.Black, holds a master's degree in organizational leadership and is certified in Mental Health Awareness and as a postpartum Doula. Alexia has appeared on various domestic and international platforms like iHeart Media; and quoted by CNN and the CDC, to name a few. She is a change-maker and leading voice on social determinants of health. As a collaborator, Alexia communicates effectively across differences. She offers specialized training for birth workers, doulas, midwives, and medical practitioners. She is an unwavering advocate for healthy babies during the critical first months to five years of life. Alexia empowers mothers and plans healthy solutions with them, not for them. She also launched International Coco Mom Day, making her cause global.



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Angelina Spicer, Actress, Activist and Comedian



Angelina Spicer is a renowned stand-up comedian, actress, and accidental activist. Angelina's personal experience with postpartum depression (PPD) led her to become a passionate advocate for maternal mental health. Through The Postpartum Revolution, Angelina aims to educate women about the emotional and physical changes that come with motherhood, using comedy to combat stigma and shame. Angelina's impactful work extends beyond the comedy stage, as she collaborates with lawmakers in the United States to enact laws supporting early motherhood. Recognized by Vice President Kamala Harris for her efforts during Black Maternal Health Week, Angelina has partnered with esteemed institutions like Cedars Sinai Hospital, Mental Health America, and the World Health Organization. Her influential voice has reached millions worldwide, with over 100 million views of her original content in 45 countries. As a health equity fellow of Families USA and Vital Voices, Angelina Spicer continues to drive positive change in maternal mental health and advocate for women's well-being.



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Dr. Joia Crear-Perry, MD, FACOG



Joia A. Crear-Perry, MD, FACOG, is a physician, policy expert, thought leader, and advocate for transformational justice. As the founder and president of the National Birth Equity Collaborative, she identifies and challenges racism as a root cause of health inequities. She is a highly sought-after trainer and speaker who has been featured in national and international publications including *Essence* and *Ms.* magazine. In 2020, Dr. Crear-Perry was honored by *USA Today* in its “Women of the Century” series and featured on ABC Nightline’s “Hear Her Voice.” Dr. Crear-Perry has twice addressed the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to elevate the cause of gender diversity and urge a human rights framework toward addressing maternal mortality. Previously, she served as the executive director of the Birthing Project, director of women’s and children’s services at Jefferson Community Healthcare Center, and as the director of clinical services for the city of New Orleans Health Department. Dr. Crear-Perry currently serves as a principal at Health Equity Cypher and on the Board of Trustees for Black Mamas Matter Alliance, Community Catalyst, National Clinical Training Center for Family Planning, and the University of California, San Francisco Preterm Birth Initiative. She is an adjunct professor at Tulane School of Public Health. After completing undergraduate studies at Princeton University and Xavier University, Dr. Crear-Perry received her MD from Louisiana State University and completed her residency in obstetrics and gynecology at Tulane University’s School of Medicine. She is married to Dr. Andre Perry and has three children: Jade, Carlos, and Robeson. Her love is her family; health equity is her passion; maternal and child health are her callings.



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Kay Matthews, Founder, Shades of Blue Project



As the founder of The Shades of Blue Project, Kay Matthews and her team are on a mission to uplift all birthing individuals with the care, respect, and dignity they deserve – no matter their social status or birth outcome. We focus on the birthing experience, and this is how we bridge the gaps by acknowledging everyone's birth story matters. Through education, advocacy, and support, we are dedicated to helping birthing individuals of color whose lives are impacted by racial disparities that amplify their birthing struggles. It is from my own personal experience of infant loss and postpartum depression, that I've recognized a

critical diversity gap in mental health resources and emotional support for Black and minority birthing individuals which is what we are working to dismantle through our work and advocacy.



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Moderator: Iheoma U. Iruka, Ph.D.



Iheoma U. Iruka, Ph.D., is currently Professor of Maternal and Child Health at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is also a Fellow at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute (FPG) and the Founding Director of the Equity Research Action Coalition at FPG. Dr. Iruka is engaged in projects and initiatives focused on how evidence-informed policies, systems, and practices in early education can support the optimal development and experiences of children from low-income and ethnic minority households. These policies, systems, and practices include family engagement and support, quality rating and improvement systems, and early care and education systems and programs. Newly appointed, Dr. Iruka joins the US Census Bureau, National Advisory Council (NAC). As a council member, this 3-year appointment and the goal of the NAC is to provide strategic perspective and advice to the Census Bureau on the full range of economic, housing, demographic, socioeconomic, linguistic, technological, methodological, geographic, behavioral and operational variables. Dr. Iruka has a B.A. in psychology from Temple University, M.A. in psychology from Boston University, and Ph.D. in applied developmental psychology from the University of Miami, Florida.