



SPRING/SUMMER 2022 | ISSUE 4

# THE MIDWIFERY TIMES

THE MIDWIFERY MENTORING & BELONGING PROGRAM'S  
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Co-lead Asmara Gebre blesses the hands of Jordan Smith, UCSF midwifery learner and MMB mentee, at the Blessing of the Hands Ceremony. Photo by: Jonel Seon @jonelseon

## Blessing of the Hands: the Future of Midwifery

An abundance of smiles, hugs, laughs, and tears were shared on June 2, 2022, as the UCSF Class of 2022 gathered for the annual Blessing of the Hands Ceremony, a tradition held by the UCSF Midwifery Education Program. The blessing of the hands is a nondenominational act practiced around the world to recognize and unite healthcare providers who have chosen the shared journey of caring for people. It is a symbolic dedication of hands and heart to the art and science of midwifery.

Held at the serene San Francisco Botanical Garden, family, friends, mentors, clinical preceptors, and faculty joined learners to celebrate this important milestone as they prepare to enter the workforce as nurse-midwives. Guests were invited to add offerings and witness and participate in blessing the hands of those whose journeys they've supported and inspired. Learners added sacred items to the water blessing bowl and were called by Amber Bell, UCSF School of Nursing faculty, to receive their hand blessing.

Following the *blessing of the hands*, the Class of 2022 gathered for an intimate "tying of the hands" ritual, collectively reflecting on their journey to midwifery, highlighting their most memorable moments and the challenges they overcame. The resulting web symbolized their trust and connectedness to the group, their ongoing support of one another, and the hard work they accomplished together.

For more information about the program, please visit our website at: [midwifementoring.ucsf.edu](https://midwifementoring.ucsf.edu)!







# MMB PRESENTS AT THE 67th ACNM ANNUAL MEETING

After a long, two years of mainly virtual connection, nurses and midwives gathered in Chicago, Illinois for the 67th American College of Nurse-Midwives' Annual Meeting: *Together Again*. With this year's meeting focused on creating unity, growth, and diversity in midwifery, the Midwifery Mentoring & Belonging team was invited to speak on centering Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) learners and the BIPOC community. The presentation highlighted the history of midwifery, the lack of BIPOC representation in the profession, and its impact on BIPOC learners and the BIPOC communities. Re-diversifying the workforce and providing intentional, structured mentorship support for BIPOC midwifery learners and midwifery mentors was identified as tools for success throughout a learners education and career, and achieving health equity in the communities we serve.



There were many heartfelt moments as team members and people in the audience shared their own personal stories as "onlys" and how meaningful it was to be a part of a team driving the mission to re-diversify midwifery. It was an especially momentous occasion for our Social Media Specialist, Marshawna Sparks and our Content & Engagement Specialist, Maritza Franqui, who attended the annual meeting for the first time. They shared their experiences as both teams members and first year midwifery learners and what this program has meant to them.

Audience members were excited to learn more about the program and hoped to one day be able to collaborate and implement a BIPOC midwifery mentorship program of their own.

*"I feel so inspired by the work and dedication of the many Black and Brown midwives that have worked tirelessly to provide care and support to Black and Brown families. It was an honor to share space with some of the best in the field, whose endless pour of wisdom and support inspired me to dream big and imagine a bright, impactful future as a nurse-midwife."*

Maritza Franqui,  
UCSF Midwifery Learner  
MMB mentee  
Class of 2023



*"As a midwifery learner, presenting at ACNM was such an honor. I was a representation of change, bringing diversity to the profession, and am extremely grateful to be a part of an amazing team that has created tangible ways to change the midwifery profession and support the next generation of midwives."*

Marshawna Sparks  
UCSF Midwifery Learner  
MMB mentee  
Class of 2023

# BlackCentering's Inaugural Celebration

The inaugural Black Centering Community Gathering kicked off in June with booming success! Black Centering Midwifery-Led Group Prenatal Care, founded by MMB co-lead Asmara Gebre, is group prenatal care led by Black providers for Black pregnant people at San Francisco General Hospital. Given the challenges and safety concerns of COVID-19, all Black Centering groups have been held virtually. Asmara and Black Centering co-facilitator, Charmaine Moore created innovative ways to provide care and engage participants to have the pregnancies and births they desired. After ten virtual sessions together, Black Centering pregnant and postpartum mothers finally met in person for the first time!

It was truly a joyous occasion as guests walked through the Museum of the African Diaspora (MOAD) for the first time, sharing their birth stories, how they've transitioned into parenthood, and what being a part of Black Centering has meant to them. Many had the opportunity to get one on one lactation counseling from Catiana Perez and connect with future Black Centering providers and various community partners.

The celebration could not be made possible without the enthusiastic support of and collaboration with MMB mentees, Katiana Carey-Simms, Maya Combs, Jordan Smith, Maritza Franqui, and UCSF midwifery alumna, Alli Mitchell and co-director of the Black Midwifery Fellowship launching this fall, who played an integral role in the behind-the-scenes strategizing, planning and event set up; Chef Eskender from Radio Africa Kitchen who invested time and love into creating a beautifully nutritious catered lunch; Zac Westbrook and Mo Afatasi for their stunning artistic crafts and contributions; and the Children's Book Project who made a generous donation of books. A team from the Postpartum Justice Project shared the history of the Postpartum Justice Project and their available community offerings including the work that has gone into securing that each centering participant had access to six weeks of nutritious meals provided through their NOURISH! program.

To date, Black Centering has had five groups, with many more groups to come – Black Centering is anticipating working with six groups a year. Traditionally, Centering group celebrations are held during the last group session, but Black Centering will do things a little differently, instead hosting a larger community Black Centering gathering, biannually. Participants from all Black Centering groups and community members will be invited to share space and build community with one another.

People interested in joining Black Centering as a patient can show interest [here](#).

Interested in learning more? Website launching soon at [blackcentering.ucsf.edu](http://blackcentering.ucsf.edu).











# In the Community

## Black Centering Nature Walks

Black Centering will be hosting monthly nature walks led by founder, Asmara Gebre and MMB mentee, Katiana Carey-Simms, every second Saturday of the month at the San Francisco Botanical Garden!

Folks who would like to join a Black Centering group as a patient or community partner can show interest [here](#). Follow Black Centering on Instagram for updates at [@BlackCentering](#).

## Aspiring Midwife and PhD Student Looking for Birth Workers to Interview!

Simona Spiegel (she/they) is a queer mixed Afro-latinx (Dominican) and Ukrainian aspiring midwife. Simona is currently a PhD student in medical anthropology at University of Notre Dame and doing research on midwifery knowledge and racial politics. Her research is focused on understanding barriers to midwifery training and midwifery care access, and supporting community-led initiatives and solutions.

Simona is calling on birth workers (any type) to volunteer for a 30-60 minute interview on Zoom or in person. There is a guided informed consent process and all the information shared will be anonymous and private. Volunteers will receive a \$20 payment in reciprocity for their time and energy. **If you are interested in participating or want to learn more about the project, contact Simona at [sspiegel@nd.edu](mailto:sspiegel@nd.edu).**

Learn more about Simona and her previous projects [here](#).

## Like, subscribe, & share!

Join us on our social media channels and let us know what content you are interested in! We'd love to feature you! Email us your ideas, suggestions, and photos sharing your work and experiences in the field, and in the community, at [midwifementoring@ucsf.edu](mailto:midwifementoring@ucsf.edu) or contact us directly through our social media channels. And don't forget to like, subscribe, share and tag us!

### Facebook

[@midwiferymentoringbelonging](#)

### Instagram

[@midwiferymentoringbelonging](#)

### Twitter

[@MMBelonging](#)

### YouTube

[Midwifery Mentoring & Belonging](#)



Maritza Franqui, RN, Student Nurse-Midwife and MMB mentee is the creator of *The Midwifery Times*.

If you would like to be a contributor to our quarterly newsletter, email: [midwifementoring@ucsf.edu](mailto:midwifementoring@ucsf.edu), 'Subject: Newsletter Contributor'.

You can also reach Maritza directly at: [maritza.franqui@ucsf.edu](mailto:maritza.franqui@ucsf.edu).