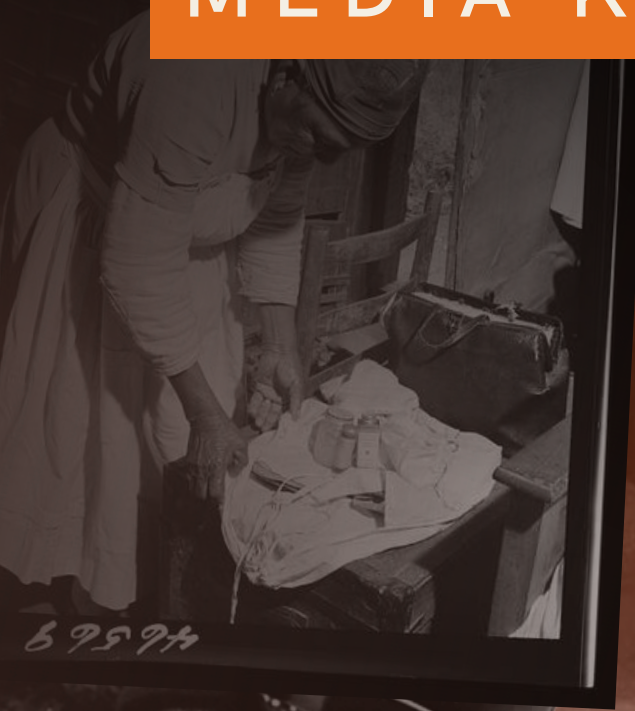


Birthing in the *Fire*

MEDIA KIT



About the Exhibition

We know the disparities. What happened before them?

Birthing in the Fire™ is a free digital exhibition exploring the history behind today's Black maternal health disparities — tracing how more than four centuries of law, economics, medicine, policy, and ideas about race continue to shape reproductive healthcare in America.

Across seventeen chapters and five acts, the exhibition moves from Black midwifery and a 1662 Virginia statute through slavery, racial hierarchy, wealth, medicine, structural racism, weathering, and obstetric racism. It examines not only how laws and institutions changed over time, but how the ideas and conditions they helped create can persist, reorganize, and ripple across generations — including into pregnancy, birth, postpartum, and healthcare today.

The goal is not to suggest that every present-day disparity or harmful experience can be traced neatly to a single moment in history. **It is to help readers see the threads between what came before and what we experience now** — and better understand how history, policy, economics, institutions, and individual actions can converge in the same room.

And the exhibition does not end with harm. It turns toward Black midwives and organizations carrying changemaking work forward today and asks readers to consider their own place in what comes next: What do I have the ability to influence from where I am?

Birthing in the Fire™ is free to explore and share.

Explore: birthinginthefire.com

ONE SENTENCE

Birthing in the Fire™ is a free digital exhibition exploring the history behind today's Black maternal health disparities — tracing how more than four centuries of law, economics, medicine, and policy continue to shape reproductive healthcare in America.

SHORT DESCRIPTION

Birthing in the Fire™ is a free digital exhibition exploring the history behind today's Black maternal health disparities. Across seventeen chapters and five acts, it moves from Black midwifery and slavery through racial law, wealth, medicine, structural racism, and obstetric racism to the reproductive healthcare system today. Rather than ending with the history of harm, the exhibition turns toward the people carrying change forward and asks what each of us can influence from where we are.



Birthing in the Fire Exhibition

QUICK FACTS

Created + Written by
Cheyenne Varner

Published by
The Educated Birth®
In Partnership With
The Educated Birth Foundation

Format
17 chapters across 5 acts

Reading Time
A little over two hours from beginning to end.
Most chapters can be read independently in
approximately 5–10 minutes.

Access
Free. No account or registration required.

Educational Use
Free to assign, share, and teach with.

Inside the Exhibition
Long-form storytelling, primary historical
documents, archival imagery, research, federal
data, recommended resources, and roughly two
dozen interactive and visual exhibits.

Topics Include
Black midwifery, slavery and reproductive
control, racial law, racial wealth, structural
racism, criminalization and family
surveillance, American gynecology,
weathering and allostatic load, obstetric
racism, reproductive justice, institutional and
systemic harm, allyship, and individual and
institutional leverage.

Created For
Midwives, doulas and community birth
workers, clinicians, public health
professionals, educators, students,
reproductive justice organizations, families,
and others interested in maternal and
reproductive health.

Website
birthinginthefire.com

About Cheyenne Varner



Cheyenne Varner is a reproductive health educator, writer, illustrator, health equity advocate, birth worker, and founder of The Educated Birth®. For a decade, her work has focused on making reproductive health education more representative, accessible, and grounded in the realities of people's lives. She has developed hundreds of educational resources and illustrations used by birth workers, educators, healthcare professionals, organizations, and families across the United States and internationally.

Varner entered birth work in 2016, in large part because of her growing awareness of the Black maternal mortality crisis. Her work since has explored not only disparities in maternal and reproductive health, but the histories, systems, policies, and lived experiences that help explain how those disparities are produced. In 2019, she wrote the Blavity essay “Stop Telling Me Black Women Die During Childbirth And Start Showing Me How We Can Thrive,” articulating an early version of a question that would eventually become central to Birthing in the Fire™: What do we do with awareness once we have it?

Her professional work has included collaboration with medical anthropologist Dána-Ain Davis, PhD, whose dimensions of obstetric racism she illustrated for *The Human Story: An Introduction to Anthropology*, as well as an earlier collaboration with Davis and LeConté J. Dill published in *Anthropology News*. She illustrated Karen A. Scott, MD, MPH, FACOG's SACKRED framework, featured in the CDC Museum exhibition *Health Is a Human Right: Achieving Health Equity*, and has illustrated findings from the Birth Place Lab's Giving Voice to Mothers Study.

Varner's writing and illustrations have appeared in *American Anthropologist*, and she has been interviewed or featured by Refinery29, Next City, Babylist, Virginia Mercury, Evidence Based Birth, and others. She has spoken at national conferences and convenings including the Black Maternal Health Conference from Black Mamas Matter, Collaborative Doula Conference, American Association of Birth Centers Birth Institute, and National Conference on Health and Domestic Violence. Varner is the creator, researcher, and author of *Birthing in the Fire*™.



The Personal Lens Behind the Exhibition



Birthing in the Fire™ grew from nearly a decade of Cheyenne Varner studying, teaching, and working within reproductive health. But between 2020 and 2026, many of the questions she was asking professionally also became personal.

Across three pregnancies, Varner had three very different birth experiences — including two cesareans and one VBAC — with care that crossed racial identities, professions, birth settings, hospital transfers, and institutional policies. She experienced excellent care from a white midwifery team whose policy did not include accompanying families through hospital transfer; a peaceful out-of-hospital VBAC with an all-Black midwifery team that later supported her through postpartum complications; and care from a Black and white midwifery team that accompanied her through a transfer and eventual cesarean. During that hospital experience, a Black woman OB-GYN initially resisted allowing Varner's white doula into the operating room.

For Varner, those experiences complicated simple narratives about race and reproductive healthcare. The racial identity of a provider did not necessarily predict how supported she felt, and excellent individual care could exist alongside institutional policies that limited support. People practice inside institutions. Institutions operate inside systems. That distinction became central to Birthing in the Fire, which asks readers to consider interpersonal, institutional, and systemic harm without treating them as interchangeable.

"When I look back at my own births, I can see threads of so much of what we're exploring in this exhibition — not because every difficult thing that happened to me was racism. But understanding the history gave me better questions to ask about why care works the way it does, who has power in a given moment, what choices are available, and what happens when individual people are operating inside much larger systems."

Those experiences also reinforced Varner's desire not to create another resource that increases awareness of Black maternal health disparities without helping readers consider what comes next. Birthing in the Fire ultimately turns toward people doing changemaking work now and leaves readers with a question: From where I am, with what I have, what can I actually influence?

About The Educated Birth®

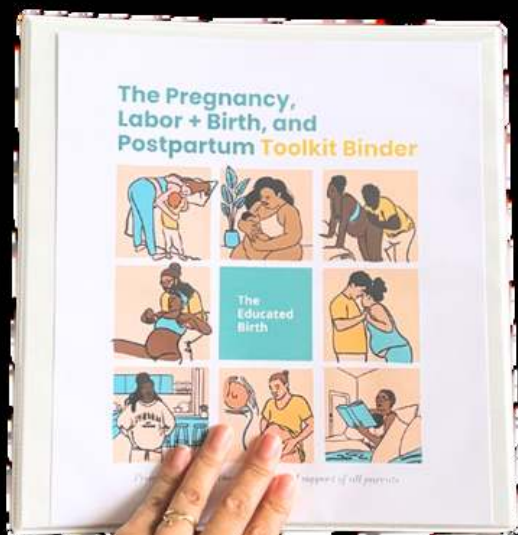
The Educated Birth® creates teaching tools for pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum health education that are effective, accessible, inclusive, and high-quality. Its print and digital resources are designed specifically for reproductive health professionals — including birth workers, doulas, childbirth educators, public health professionals, midwives, OB-GYNs, and others — to help them more confidently, comprehensively, and equitably support a wide range of parents and parents-to-be.

Founded by reproductive health educator and illustrator Cheyenne Varner, The Educated Birth's resources include infosheets, activity sheets, anatomy graphics, illustrations, planners, checklists, and other tools designed for use in real-world education and care. The organization also publishes educational and storytelling content for parents and professionals through Everyday Birth Magazine and develops workshops, learning experiences, and public educational projects including Birthing in the Fire™.

Today, The Educated Birth's materials are used across all 50 U.S. states and in more than 14 countries, with a combined reach of more than 100,000 people across digital platforms, email, social media, and the web. Resources are also published in Spanish as part of the organization's ongoing work to expand multilingual access.

The Educated Birth has been recognized and its work used or supported by organizations across the reproductive health field, including Doula Trainings International, Birthing Advocacy Doula Training, Ancient Art Midwifery, Common Sense Childbirth, Hypnobabies, and SisterSong. In 2023, the National Perinatal Task Force recognized The Educated Birth as an Official Perinatal Safe Spot for its commitment to equitable, culturally inclusive perinatal care.

VIEW MORE AT [THEEDUCATEDBIRTH.COM](https://theeducatedbirth.com)
+ [EVERYDAYBIRTH.COM](https://everydaybirth.com)



Share + Use the Exhibition

Birthing in the Fire™ was designed to be read, shared, discussed, and used.

The full exhibition takes a little over two hours to move through, but most chapters can be read independently in approximately 5–10 minutes. Individual chapters can be incorporated into college and university courses, professional trainings, healthcare team discussions, birth worker education, reading groups, newsletters, resource directories, and other educational settings.

The exhibition is free to access, share, assign, and teach with. No account is required.

Organizations interested in going deeper can also inquire about companion educational materials and facilitated workshops that extend the exhibition through discussion, reflection, and contemporary case studies.

Speaking + Interviews

Cheyenne Varner is available for interviews, podcasts, panels, workshops, and speaking engagements related to Birthing in the Fire™, Black maternal health, reproductive health history, health equity, representation, reproductive justice, and translating complex health and historical information into accessible education.

Speaking + Workshop Inquiries:

hello@cheyennevarner.com

Contact + Support

Media + Interview Inquiries

hello@theeducatedbirth.com

Speaking, Workshops + Institutional Inquiries

hello@cheyennevarner.com

Exhibition

birthinginthefire.com

Additional Media + Selected Work

cheyenneishereforyou.com/media

Supporting Free Access

Birthing in the Fire™ is offered free in partnership with The Educated Birth Foundation. Donations help sustain the exhibition, keep its research current, and support the continued growth of its stories, resources, and educational offerings.

Support the Exhibition: <https://secure.givelively.org/donate/educated-birth-foundation/birthing-in-the-fire>