



SYLVIANE A. DIOUF

DREAMS OF AFRICA IN ALABAMA

THE SLAVE SHIP CLOTILDA AND THE STORY
OF THE LAST AFRICANS BROUGHT TO AMERICA



From the Clotilda to the Magic City Classic: How Far Have We Really Come?

The Alabama Department of Public Health
& The March of Dimes
Prematurity Summit 2014
November 14, 2014

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Objectives



- ❑ To clarify the reality of an infant born to a woman in Alabama and their hope (or fate) for the future.
- ❑ To understand, and provide examples, that the birth and life of a child is interdependent upon the community in which the child lives (i.e. Birthing Project).

Infant Mortality During Slavery



- “There was nothing the planter was more interested in than the increase of his slaves through the birth and rearing of children”⁴
- Importance of prenatal care: Slave women were assigned lighter tasks, confinement, midwifery or actual physicians
- Postnatal care: Mothers were out of work for approximately four weeks and assigned lighter tasks

Infant Mortality During Slavery



- Postnatal care: Breastfeeding was a TOP priority among slave women.
- A 'nurse' was kept in charge of the infants
- Postnatal infant deaths were mainly due to infectious etiologies
- Co-sleeping was an issue then and now

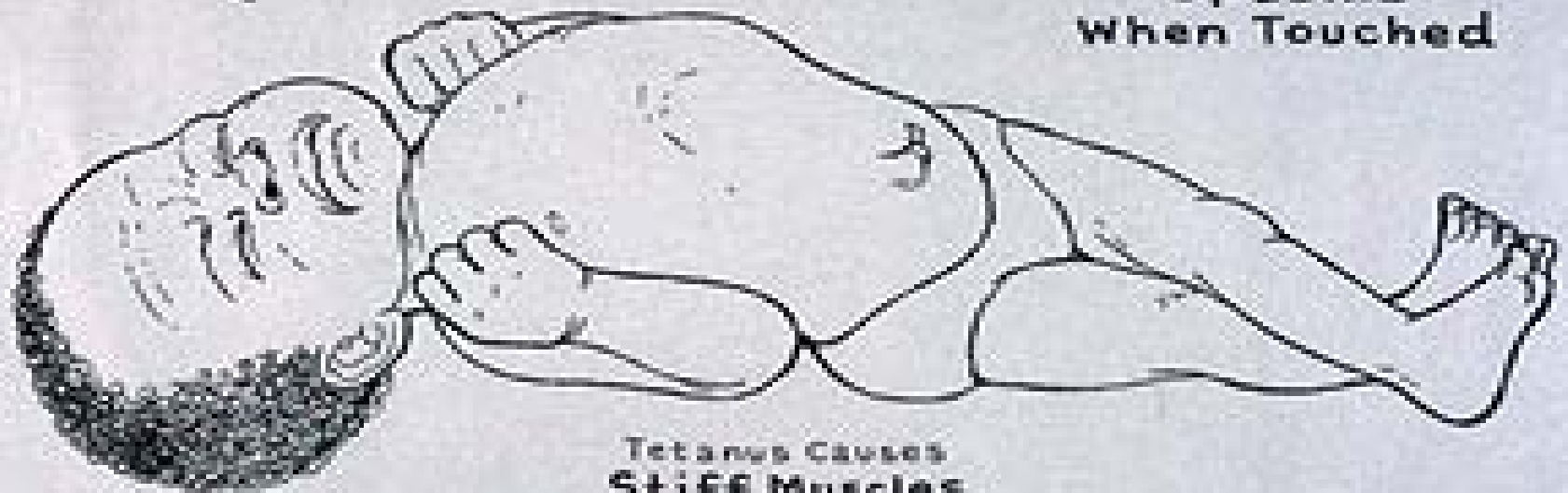
Trismus Infantum



Tetanus

A Newborn Baby
With Tetanus
Stops Sucking
the Breast

A Person With
Tetanus Has
Spasms
When Touched



Tetanus Causes
Stiff Muscles
All Over The
Body

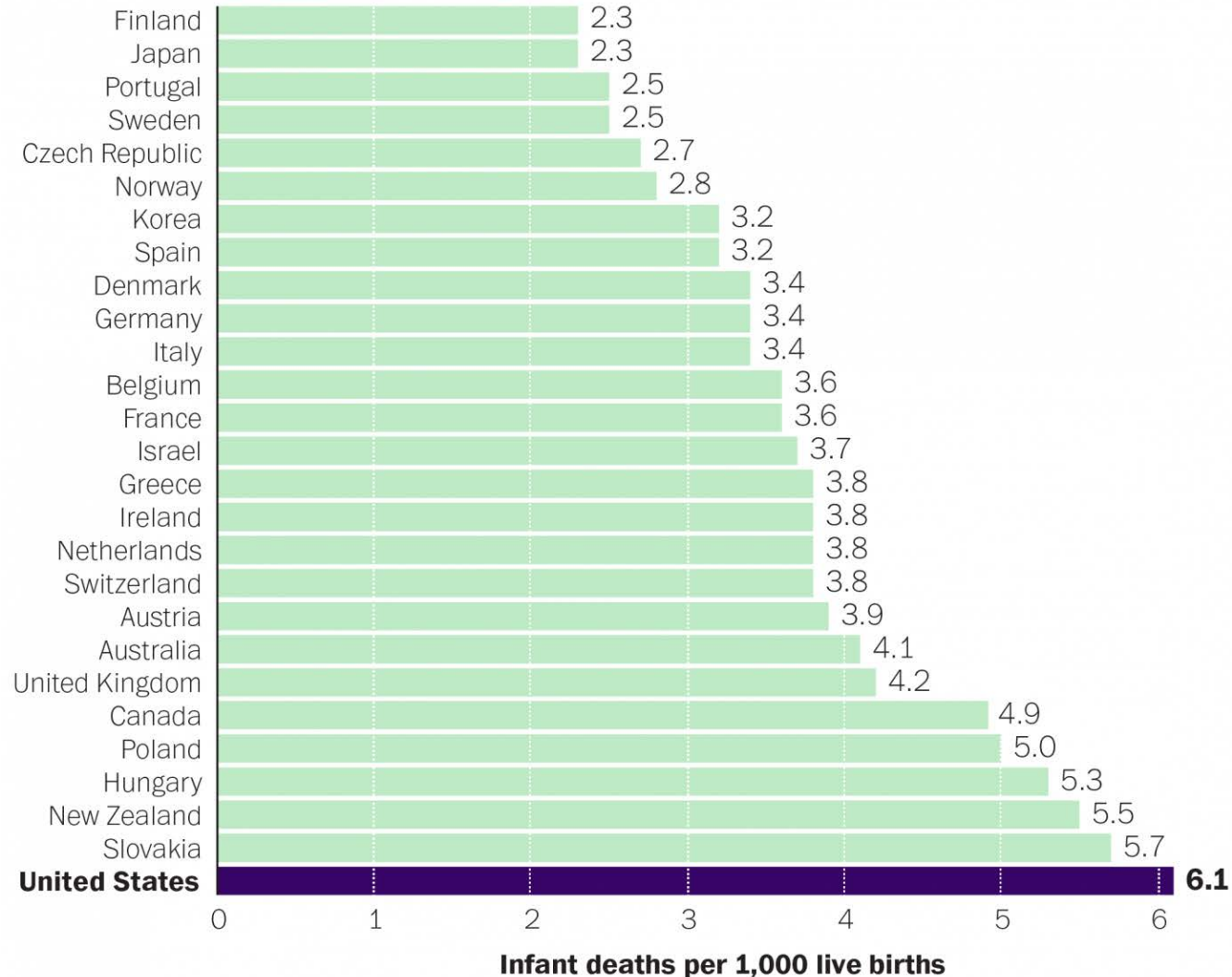
Infant Mortality Rates During Slavery



- Infant mortality rates of slave infants: Were smaller during the first month when compared with the other 11 (*neonatal rates about 35.9% of total infant mortality*)
- IM Rates of 1850: ~100 per 1000 live births
 - Slave Women: ~150/170 per 1000 live births

U.S. lags behind other wealthy nations on infant mortality

Infant mortality rates in selected OECD countries, 2010



Where Do **WE** Rank?

(Kaiser Family Foundation)



Washington DC



US Territory

Ole Miss

Mississippi



Alabama

Interesting Stats for 2013 for Infant Mortality in Alabama



- ◆ AL-Black 12.6% (US-Black 11.4%) vs. AL-White 6.9% (US-White 5.1%)
- ◆ Number of teen births 2007-2013: **8,776** to **5,420**
- ◆ Percentage of births to teenagers 2006-2013: **13.7%** to **9.3%**
- ◆ IMR teenagers to adults: **12.5%** to **8.2%**
- ◆ Years 2003-2013: ~10% of births are low birth weights
- ◆ 76% of births had adequate Prenatal Care (PNC), but there were still > 800 births in AL without PNC

Births in 2013 and Alabama



| | Total Number | Rate | Rates of White | Rates of Black |
|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Jefferson | 8,626 | 13.1 | 12.2 | 14.1 |
| Madison | 4,106 | 11.8 | 11.2 | 13.4 |
| Mobile | 5,576 | 13.5 | 11.7 | 15.1 |
| Montgomery | 3,165 | 14.0 | 12.1 | 15.2 |

Births to Teenagers

As a percent of all births in 2013 (Alabama)



| | Total Number | Total Percent | White (%) | Black (%) |
|------------|---------------------|----------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Jefferson | 678/8,626 | 7.9% | 214 (4.9%) | 464 (10.9%) |
| Madison | 280 | 6.8% | 146 (5.4%) | 134 (9.5%) |
| Mobile | 572 | 10.3% | 258 (8.3%) | 314 (12.6%) |
| Montgomery | 309 | 9.8% | 50 (4.6%) | 259 (12.5%) |

Fetal Deaths in 2013 in Alabama



| | Total Number | White | Black |
|------------|--------------|-------|-------|
| Jefferson | 95 | 23 | 72 |
| Madison | 37 | 13 | 24 |
| Mobile | 37 | 12 | 25 |
| Montgomery | 31 | 3 | 28 |

Infant Death and IM Rates in 2013 in Alabama (8.6%)



| | Total Number | White | Black |
|-------------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Jefferson | 109 (12.6%) | 37 (8.5%) | 72 (16.9%) |
| Madison | 37 (9.0%) | 20 (7.4%) | 17 (12.1%) |
| Mobile | 54 (9.7%) | 22 (7.1%) | 32 (12.9%) |
| Montgomery | 24 (7.6%) | 4 (3.7%) | 20 (9.6%) |

C O M M U N I T Y

IT
TAKES A
VILLAGE



Birthing Project USA

"The Underground Railroad for New Life"



An International Organization & Resource Center for improving birth outcomes for women of color.

Enter [HERE](#)

“We grow healthier babies by providing care and support to their mothers during and after pregnancy!!”

Infant Mortality and the Birthing Project

Infant Mortality

•Last year in the US nearly 4,000,000 infants were born.

•Over 241,000 of these infants were born weighing under 5.8 lbs
–Highest rates seen in African-Americans, and Puerto Ricans

•57,000 of these infants were born weighing under 3.0 lbs
–Highest rates seen in African-Americans

•Last year nearly 30,000 infants died before their first birthday
–Highest rates seen in African Americans, American Indian/Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians and Puerto Ricans

•Last year nearly 19,000 of these infants died before they turned one month of age
–Highest rates by a factor of 2 were seen in African Americans

•Last year 250 women died from childbirth complications
–Highest rates seen in African American women

•Black infants are more than twice as likely as white infants to die within their first year of life

Birthing Project USA

Our national, community-based, organization serves mothers and babies who need health care and social support to improve their chances of having good birth outcomes. We began in 1988 in Sacramento, CA with 9 women and 1 man. Since then, we have been replicated in over 90 cities and in four countries. We have welcomed more than 10,000 babies into the world.

Through our four program models we have welcomed over 13,000 babies

1. Sisterfriend
2. Saturday Morning Beauty Salon
3. Barbershop
4. Academy of Dreams

Our Five Point Approach to Combating Infant Mortality

1. **Equate:** Inequities must be pointed out
2. **Engage:** Those most at risk must be given a voice and made part of their solution
3. **Educate:** Knowledge is the key step in any change
4. **Expect:** Foster a sense of entitlement around good health
5. **Endure:** Every great movement has started with one person demanding change

“The Birthing Project, which has grown into an international movement of mostly grassroots women making a place for themselves in the system of care for pregnant and parenting mothers, is proudly referred to as “the underground railroad for new life”. We need each other...the mirror, the support, the encouragement...the prayers, the dance, the jubilation...the messenger that has our best interests at heart, the lap to rest our head, the arms to hold our baby while we take a break...the warrior to stand up for us, sit down with us, be a bridge for crossing.”

– Mama Katt,
Founder Birthing Project USA



Jola Crear-Perry, MD
Executive Director



What is the Birthing Project?



The Birthing Project is the “only National African American maternal and child health program in the United States. Its purpose is to encourage better birth outcomes by providing practical support to women during their pregnancy and for one year after birth of their children”

- Mission: Assist the local communities to improve their health status addressing the systemic causes: deficiencies in education, social justice, and economic disparities
 - ✦ Identification of needs
 - ✦ Implementing of programs/services
 - ✦ Working collaboratively with other organizations

Birthing Project



- **When:** First began in Sacramento, CA in 1988 comprised of “SisterFriends” providing one-on-one attention to pregnant teens/women
- **Where:** There are over 100 Birthing Projects open nationwide/globally
 - Recently: Tupelo and Anguilla, MS
 - Globally: Honduras; Addis Adaba, Ethiopia; Lagos, Nigeria



EVERYDAY HEROES

50 AMERICANS CHANGING THE WORLD ONE NONPROFIT AT A TIME

Photographs by Paul Mobley Text by Katrina Fried
Foreword by Arianna Huffington



Birthing Project



- **How: Need 10 women that can commit to being “conductors on the Underground Railroad” of New Life for 18 months**
 - Can operate from Homes, Churches, Service groups (i.e. Sororities), Clinics, Health Departments, Hospitals, and places of employment



Patricia
Loggans

JoAnne
Boyd

Susan
Smith

June

Connie

ADE
HCS

Lisa

Marpella

AREN

Patricia

Alicia
Heard

Maria

Suzi
Walker

Bonnie
Anderson

Marcia

Lula
Mildred

WIKIE
MON

Roxana

ERIKA
84-Now

Diane

Keicia

Tumeko
Love

Bettye
Sof

Jamila

STICE I Love

Vera

HE
y

Maria

Hattie
mma

Mary

EVELYN
MA KITTY

Patricia

Nagy

Maggie

Lisa

Mary
Cat

Beatrice

M

Virgo

Patricia

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Birthing Project SisterFriend Program



- Each “SisterFriend” is responsible for befriending one woman (whether teenage/adult) prenatally through the child’s first year of life
- Who can be a SisterFriend?
 - Anyone who is committed to the cause (regardless of formal education, marital status, ethnic background...)



Tatxie







Birthing Project: SisterFriend Program



- **Strategy:**

- **Pregnancy:** complying with prenatal care and learning of resources to maintain a healthy lifestyle (healthy diet, smoking cessation)
 - ✦ Collaboration with other organizations: Health Departments, Social Services
 - ✦ Attending childbirth and parental classes
- **Infancy:** parenting and life skills, importance/affirmation of continuing formal education, employment goals, understanding the community

OUTCOME: Over 10,000 babies born into the Birthing Project Community





TENnder CARE
Check In • Check Up • Check Out
TENNESSEE'S EPSDT PROGRAM



Families Are Talking
Families Are Talking

...and the health department
...and the health department
...and the health department

Families Are Talking

Don't Drink and Drive

Don't Drink and Drive

Don't Drink and Drive

Don't Drink and Drive

Men, Babies & The Law: 16 Things You Should Know

Am I Ready to Be a Dad?

Will Her Prom Dress Still Fit In December?
BE RESPONSIBLE





An
by Un



Importance of Paternal Involvement



- Infants with absence fathers revealed LBW babies, prematurity, and SGA
- Black infants (without present fathers) had a four-fold increase in infant mortality
 - Regardless of race, neonatal death rate of absent fathers is quadrupled those with involved fathers
- Black infants born to absent fathers were 7 times more likely to die than Hispanic/White infants
- More OB complications: chronic HBP, anemia, placental abruption

Barber Shop Program



- Assists fathers to become active parents in their children's lives (starting prenatally-infancy and beyond)
 - Parenting classes
 - Job training (resume' assistance)
 - Housing placement
 - Counseling: anger, substance abuse
 - Legal/Medico-Assistance
 - Re-entry from criminal justice system



Dr. Nina Ford Johnson's Experience: *Nashville Birthing Project*

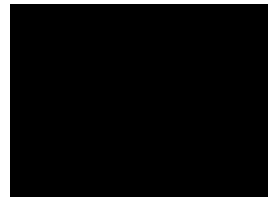


- My Little Sister: 19 year old G2P1, mother of Navaeh
- Me: 3rd/4th year medical student at Meharry Medical College
- Attended classes with her at the Village for Cultural Arts in Nashville once a month on Saturdays
 - Advised to contact her once a week to check in with her (often times she contacted me)
 - I attended several of her prenatal visits

Dr. Nina Ford Johnson's Experience: *Nashville Birthing Project*



- I was present on the same day of both deliveries of my little sister and her older sister (with 2 totally different outcomes)
 - Older sister: the baby boy died during the delivery
 - My little sister: I was present for the delivery of a healthy baby girl and was able to hold her minutes thereafter



Thank You!!



- **Special Gratitude:**

- ◆ Kelly Warren, MSW, MPH (Public Health Director of MCHD) for all of the Alabama Statistics she assisted me with
- ◆ Dr. Kim Wyche-Etheridge: Assistant Director for Public Health Initiatives at Tennessee State University and the Medical Director for the Birthing Project
- ◆ Birthing Project USA office administrators for pictures
- ◆ Ms. Tracee Wallace (and her daughter) for the interview
- ◆ Mrs. Lillian Maddox-Whitehead for the photos of the Nashville Birthing Project

Sources



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