

A photograph of a woman with voluminous curly hair hugging a young girl with curly hair from behind. They are both smiling and looking at each other. The woman is wearing a white t-shirt, and the girl is wearing a white tank top. The background is a bright window with light-colored curtains.

2025 YEAR IN REVIEW,
OUR FIRST THREE YEARS:
**BUILDING WHAT DIDN'T
EXIST BEFORE**

FIVE DRIVERS OF BRAND IMPACT

01

National Thought Leadership

The Center is widely recognized as a leading voice in Black maternal health, influencing national discourse through media features in outlets like Forbes, Axios, and CBS.

02

Policy Influence and Systems Change

The Center played a pivotal role in shaping the Massachusetts Omnibus bill, one of the most comprehensive maternal health laws in the U.S., helping set a blueprint for equitable maternal care nationwide.

03

Community Engagement and Convening Power

As the host of the largest Black maternal health conference in the country, the Center brings together researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and families to foster collaboration and drive collective action.

04

Visibility Through Awards and Platforms

Recognition through coveted awards and innovations to speak at prominent national and global events reinforces the Center's credibility, visibility, and influence.

05

Growing Digital Presence and Professional Network

With over 19,000 followers and nearly half a million impressions across social media, the Center is building a dynamic online community of professionals, advocates, and changemakers committed to reproductive justice.

TUFTS RECOGNIZED AS A BLUEPRINT FOR MATERNAL HEALTH

470,000

social media impressions

19,300

followers across channels

35

current Mother Lab members

43

Tufts students trained, mentored, and graduated

135+

Media & Speaking Engagements from 2022-2025

53

Academic Journal Articles + Book Chapters Published



Global and national thought leadership



CREATING IMPACT ACROSS 8 MATERNAL HEALTH GAPS



POLICY

Postpartum Medicaid coverage varies by state, causing inconsistent care and accountability for maternal health nationwide.



DISPARITIES

Black women face higher maternal mortality and morbidity.



WORKFORCE

A shortage of maternal health professionals, obstetricians, midwives, and doulas, significantly impacts access to quality care.



RESEARCH & DATA

Insufficient and inconsistent research and data hinder efforts to address maternal health challenges



MATERNAL MENTAL HEALTH

Limited maternal mental health care and substance use policies deter treatment and increase postpartum health risks.



REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Reproductive rights have decreased in recent years, increasing risks of vulnerable populations in key states.



INFRASTRUCTURE

Under-resourced community models lack support and resources.



CROSS SECTOR COLLABORATION

Siloed maternal health programs and efforts miss opportunities for coordinated, comprehensive support.

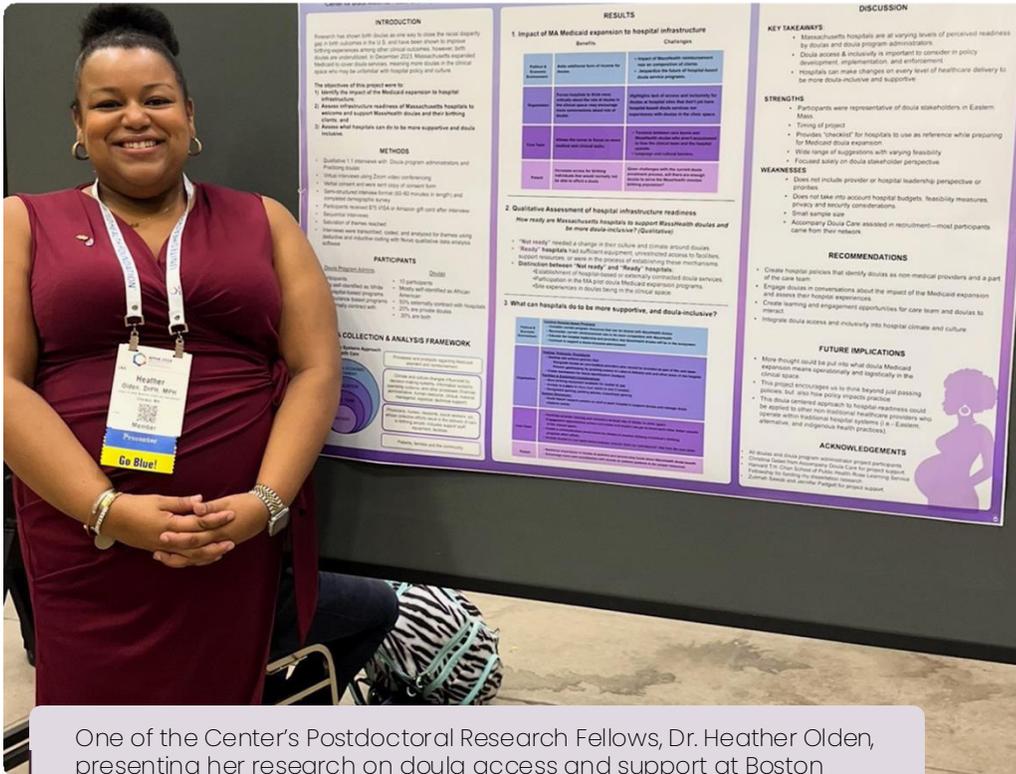
01 Filling Gaps in State & Federal Policy Implementation



Dr. Amutah Onukagha was appointed to the federal Advisory Committee on Infant and Maternal Mortality (ACIMM), administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration.

- Led efforts to pass Massachusetts Omnibus Bill H.4999 increased birthing rights and post-partum care for over **3 Million** women, impacting **65,000 births / year**. It laid the groundwork for other states to pass similar legislation.
- Delivered informational testimony in 2025 before the **Massachusetts Joint Committee on Public Health**, chaired by Representative Marjorie Decker, calling for action to advance maternal health equity.
- Instrumental in H.4818, “An Act to Reduce Racial Inequities in Maternal Health” established a **27-member commission** to address racial disparities in maternal health, targeting systemic barriers and improving outcomes for **1 Million women of color** in Massachusetts.
- Contributed to federal legislation = The Green New Deal for Health potentially impacting **169 Million American women** reflects a critical effort to address broad policy implementation gaps affecting vulnerable populations.

02 Filling Gaps in Racial Disparities



One of the Center's Postdoctoral Research Fellows, Dr. Heather Olden, presenting her research on doula access and support at Boston area hospitals in light of Medicaid expansion at the American Public Health Association conference in Minneapolis, MN in November 2024.

- Reached **10,000 people** at the National NAACP Annual Convention via thought leadership and presentation on leadership development addressing death and disability of Black women in the United States.
- Four years of continuous key note talks and presentations reaching **50,000 public health professionals** through the American Public Health Association (APHA).
- Dr. Amutah-Onukagha served as a keynote speaker at the **Aspen Ideas Festival** in July 2023, a premier gathering focused on global health innovation, policy, and equity.
- Dr. Linda Hudson, Sc.D., served as moderator for the **“Redesigning Maternal Health: Integrating Doulas into Care Teams”** webinar in March 2025, hosted by Maternal Health Leads. In this session, state-level leaders spotlighted innovative strategies for embedding doulas into care teams and shared best practices for enhancing access and improving outcomes across maternal health services.

03 Filling Gaps in Workforce Shortages



Maternal Outcomes for Translational Health Equity and Research (MOTHER) Lab trained and graduated over 70 students, expanding impact in maternal health equity.

Noteworthy strides in research and thought leadership:

- Published **19 articles** in peer reviewed journals such as: Journal of Health Disparities Research and Practice, the Maternal and Child Health Journal, and more
- Contributed to **4 book chapters and 15 journal reviews**
- Presented at **7 conferences** including the American Public Health Association Annual Meeting
- Moving the needle and advancing workforce issues with discussion, presentation, and talks on: **maternal mortality, maternal stress, reproductive health, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Black mothers**

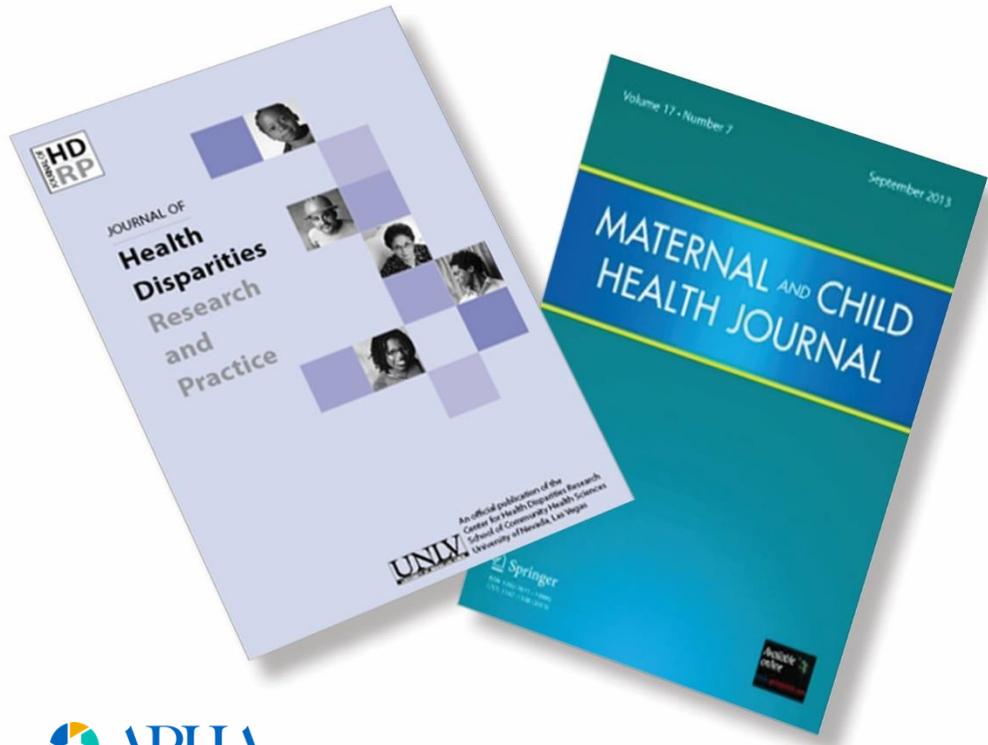
04 Filling Gaps in Research, Data and Measurement



2022–2025 Continuous Center Level Impact across all units

- Published over **22 articles** in peer reviewed scientific journals
- Contributed to **7 book chapters**
- **Delivered 11 presentations** including posters, oral talks, and roundtables across multiple academic and professional venues
- **Participated in 8 national and international conferences** over a 3-year span
- **Engaged over 40,000 people** through conference activities and presentations
- **Reached 12,000 people** with looped short film on display at APHA Conference

05 Filling Gaps in Mental Health & Substance Use



- **Published**
The Impact of Psychosocial Stress on Maternal Health Outcomes: A Multi-State PRAMS 8 (2016–2018) Analysis” in the **Journal of Health Disparities Research and Practice** – Aug. 2022
- **Published**
The Role of Health Systems in Black Maternal Mental Health Care Delivery in **Current Treatment Options in Psychiatry**, Oct. 2023
- **Published**
Investigating the Role of Race and Stressful Life Events on the Smoking Patterns of Pregnant and Postpartum Women in the U.S.: A Multistate PRAMS Phase 8 (2016–2018) Analysis” in the **MCH Journal**.- Dec. 2023

06 Filling Gaps in

Mental Health & Substance Use



 **frontiers**
in Public Health

- State Level Impact: **Written testimony for Michigan** state reproductive rights protection for 5 Million women in response to the Dobbs decision.
- State Level Impact: Members of the center served as leading advocates for the **Massachusetts Endometriosis Task Force**, championing research, awareness, and equitable care for those affected by the condition.
- Dr. Amutah-Onukagha is a member of the **Massachusetts Maternal Mortality Review Committee (MMRC)**, contributing her expertise to analyze maternal deaths and develop strategies to improve maternal health outcomes statewide.
- Published a peer-reviewed article in **Frontiers in Public Health Journal** examining how restrictive reproductive rights laws elevate maternal mortality rates while disproportionately impacting underserved communities.
- Presentations with a reach of **50,000** people at the APHA Annual Meeting, including Abortion Laws in New England and The Failure of Current Contraceptive Care Measures, critically examined regional legal landscapes and structural barriers in reproductive healthcare.

07 Filling Gaps in

Underfunded Public Health Infrastructure



MOTHER Lab students tabling for a SomerBaby-Center event.



Nurture kits for postpartum support



SOMERBABY-TUFTS PARTNERSHIP:

Bilingual and culturally congruent resources to **34,000 families** in Somerville, MA via the SomerBaby-Center partnership in Somerville, MA.



POSTPARTUM COMMUNITY-LEVEL SUPPORT:

The Center created and distributed **Nurture Kits** to high need parents of newborns, offering essential items like diapers, hygiene products, and educational materials to support families during the critical postpartum period.

08 Filling Gaps in **Cross Sector Collaboration**



Establishment of a robust Community Advisory Board - The Community Engagement and Research Unit developed a CAB composed of diverse stakeholders, including community members, healthcare providers, researchers, and maternal health advocates

Presented **3 film screenings:** *Black Motherhood Through The Lens*, *Laboring with Hope*, and *Aftershock* reaching 1500 people

Led 6 events over 4 years with a reach of **9000 people**

COMMUNITY ENGAGED RESEARCH

Black Birth Equity Study



- Conducted in-depth interviews and focus groups with Black women of reproductive age, their partners or birth supporters, doulas, and maternity care clinicians to **explore stakeholder perspectives, knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs on Black maternal health disparities** in both the U.S. and Massachusetts.
- Engaged a **Community Advisory Board to guide recruitment, data collection, and dissemination.**

Doula Enrollment Toolkit Study



- In December 2023, MassHealth, Massachusetts' Medicaid provider, initiated a program covering doula services for Medicaid subscribers, thus requiring doulas in Massachusetts to enroll in MassHealth as doula providers.
- We **conducted interviews with doulas who had already enrolled, were in the process of enrolling, or considering enrolling to determine enrollment challenges.**
- We convened a **Community Advisory Board (CAB)** to use data from the interviews to guide toolkit content and design.
- **Five PDF toolkits were developed and pilot tested.**
- We are currently working with Elm, an instructional design firm, to make the toolkits more interactive and engaging.

CENTRAL MISSION PROGRAMS



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



Mother Lab



Tech Solutions
for Doulas



POLICY/ ADVOCACY



Advocacy
Partnerships



Policy Briefs



RESEARCH & DATA



Be a Mom
Study (R01)



Grant Writing



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Community
Partnerships

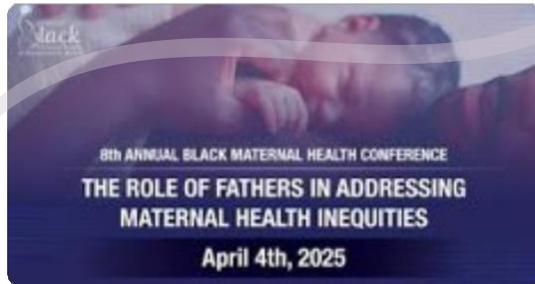


Community Thought
Leadership

IN THE NEWS & MEDIA

Thought leadership with a reach of over 17 million readers published in mainstream media such as The New York Times, USA Today, Forbes, The Boston Globe, The Washington Post, and Bloomberg Publications resulted in broader national recognition of maternal health inequities a critical public health issue.





THE LARGEST BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH CONFERENCE IN THE U.S.

Enrollment at the Black Maternal Health Conference grew to over **3,000 people in 46 states and 10 countries including Belize, Canada, Ethiopia, The Netherlands, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, The United Kingdom, and The United States.**

Recent Conference Themes:

- 2025**
 The Role of Fathers in Addressing Maternal Health Inequities
- 2024**
 Centering the role of technology in addressing black maternal health disparities.
- 2023**
 Centering the Role of Nurses and Midwives in Addressing the Black Maternal Health Crisis
- 2022**
 The Role of Policy in Addressing Black Maternal Health Disparities

AWARDS

2020

National Minority Quality Forum: Top 40 under 40 Leaders in Healthcare

2022

John C. MacQueen Lecture Award, Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs

2023

FDR Humanitarian of the Year Award, March of Dimes MA

2024

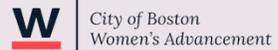
Academic Excellence in Black Maternal Health, Irth Crown Award

2025

EXTRAordinary Women (ExW), The Mayor's Office of Women's Advancement, Boston, MA

2025

Heroes Among Us, Celtics Community, Boston, MA



PARTNERSHIPS



WHERE WE LED THE CONVERSATION



AUGUST 2025

Dr. Amutah-Onukagha was honored as one of the Top 10 Minority Healthcare Innovators for Fierce Healthcare (Award + Article)



OCTOBER 2025

Speaker at HLTH (One of the premier and largest healthcare innovation gatherings globally)



NOVEMBER 2025

Keynote at the Women's Health Innovation Summit (Largest Women's Health Conference globally)



2025 RESEARCH EXCELLENCE & RECOGNITION

DR. SHIKHAR SHRESTHA



PRESENTATION

Presentation at Tufts Medicine Women's Health Summit: Bridging Collaborations across the Lifespan "**Substance Use and Pregnancy Outcomes.**"

PUBLICATION

The role of nurses, midwives, and doulas on breastfeeding: changes during the COVID-19 pandemic (**Frontiers in Global Women's Health**)

2025 RESEARCH EXCELLENCE & RECOGNITION



DR. FARIDA YADA



Published a Scoping review (with MotherLab) on Food insecurity and Perinatal outcomes:

YADA F.N., Kiani M., Ali I., Ajayi K., Dhaurali S., Snape L., Ourdyl N., Gravesande T., Palle M., Amutah-Onukagha N., Examining the influence of food insecurity on perinatal health outcomes among Black birthing individuals in the U.S.: A systematic scoping review. (2025) Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40615-025-02364-2>

Published a Book Chapter (with MotherLab) in the book: Navigating Black Maternal Mental Health and Well-Being:

Sharara L., Gravesande T., Dugat V., **YADA F.N.**, Amutah-Onukagha N. (2026). Chapter 7 - Addressing Maternal Mental Health Trauma in Black and Brown Communities: A Culturally Competent and Bioethical Approach. In R. Kassimu & E. Wachira (Eds.), Navigating Black Maternal Mental Health and Well-Being (pp. 113-144). IGI Global Scientific Publishing. **YADA F.N.**, Kiani M., Ali I., Ajayi K., Dhaurali S., Snape L., Ourdyl N., Gravesande T., Palle M., Amutah-Onukagha N., Examining the influence of food insecurity on perinatal health outcomes among Black birthing individuals in the U.S.: A systematic scoping review. (2025) Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40615-025-02364-2>

Published two editorials this year:

- Amutah-Onukagha, N., **YADA F.N.**, Olden H.A., Advancing Birth Quality by Bridging Historical and Contemporary Gaps on Black Maternal Health. (2025). Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic & Neonatal Nursing. DOI:[10.1016/j.jogn.2025.03.003](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jogn.2025.03.003)
- Olden H.A., YADA F.N., Where Are All the Black Midwives? (2025) Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic & Neonatal Nursing. DOI: [10.1016/j.jogn.2025.03.004](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jogn.2025.03.004)

Published a preprint of a dissertation paper, which was subsequently peer reviewed and published as an open-access article in Populations.

YADA F.N., Brown C.S, Huber L.R., Olorunsaiye C.Z., Amutah-Onukagha, N., Starker Glass T., (2025). Type of Attendant at birth by detailed maternal nativity among US-born, Caribbean-born, and Sub-Saharan African-born Black women. Preprints DOI: [10.20944/preprints202502.1909.v1](https://doi.org/10.20944/preprints202502.1909.v1). **YADA F.N.**, Kiani M., Ali I., Ajayi K., Dhaurali S., Snape L., Ourdyl N., Gravesande T., Palle M., Amutah-Onukagha N., Examining the influence of food insecurity on perinatal health outcomes among Black birthing individuals in the U.S.: A systematic scoping review. (2025). Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40615-025-02364-2>

GRANT REWARD

Dr. Yada was awarded the Natalie V. Zucker Early Career Researcher Award from the Zucker Research Center at Tufts School of Medicine.

2025 RESEARCH EXCELLENCE & RECOGNITION

DR. HEATHER OLDEN

PUBLICATIONS

An editorial in the Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic, and Neonatal Nursing (JOGNN)-

- Citation: Olden, H. A., & YADA, F. N. (2025). Where Are All the Black Midwives? Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic & Neonatal Nursing (Special Series: Black Maternal Health), 54(3) 334-337.

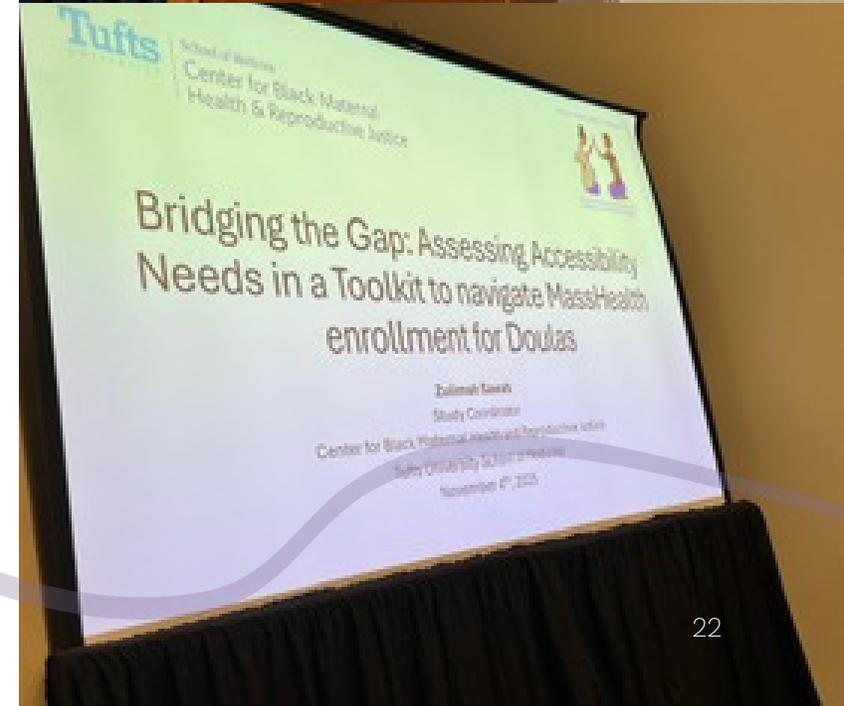
PRESENTATION

Presentation at the American Public Health Association in Washington, DC in November 2025 titled, "Supporting Doula Enrollment in MassHealth: A Community-Driven Toolkit"

- Co-authors: Zulimah Sawab, Christina Gebel, MPH, LCCE, Birth Doula; Elysia Larson, Jerrica Raspberry Lawson, Ndidiyama Amutah-Onukagha, PhD, MPH

Presentation: Poster at the American Public Health Association in Washington, DC in November 2025 titled, "What Respectful Maternity Care Means to Non-Hispanic Black Mothers In Massachusetts: A Qualitative Analysis"

- Co-authors: Farida Yada, PhD, MPH; Christina Gebel, MPH, LCCE, Birth Doula; Elysia Larson, ScD, MPH; Jeannette Myrick, MPH, Ndidiyama Amutah-Onukagha, PhD, MPH



CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

To advance maternal and women's health equity at scale, our most pressing cross-cutting needs include:

□ **National Reach & Influence**

Amplifying our leadership beyond state borders to shape the future of maternal and women's health through research, policy, and replicable models of care.

□ **Community-Rooted Engagement Infrastructure**

Deepening partnerships and building systems that prioritize trust, accessibility, and sustained collaboration with the communities most impacted by maternal health inequities.

□ **Innovation for Equity**

Developing, testing, and scaling tech-enabled and community-informed solutions that improve outcomes and eliminate disparities in maternal and women's health.

□ **Strategic Visibility & Thought Leadership**

Elevating our presence through convenings, publications, and coalitions that align with institutional priorities and position us as a national catalyst for change.



Center for

Black

Maternal Health
& Reproductive Justice