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Queens Village: Creating Safe Spaces and Amplifying Black Women's Voices

🕒 September 7, 2023 👤 Sojourner's Truth



Meredith Shockley-Smith

By Asia Nail
The Truth Reporter

In the heart of many cities, beneath the bustling surface, lies a hidden treasure waiting to be unearthed. In Queens Village, a thriving community is blossoming, a sanctuary where Black women gather to rest, relax, and repower. It's a place where resilience

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meets rejuvenation, where unity is the driving force, and where change is the ultimate goal.

"Dr. Meredith Shockley-Smith, is the visionary founder of Queens Village," shares Toledo Area Coordinator Crystal Martin.

"She knew that change had to start from within the community."

With a mission as powerful as the women it serves, Queens Village is more than just a place; it's a movement, a catalyst for transformation.

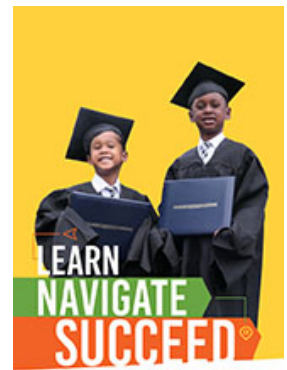
Here, they change the narrative, invest in leadership, create opportunities, and engage with the community to address the inequities that affect Black women, particularly when it comes to maternal and infant health.

WHAT

Queens Village, originally founded in Cincinnati, Ohio, is a community-based initiative bringing together powerful Black women from like-minded organizations. These thought leaders come together in growing chapters across the country to improve Black infant mortality from the ground up.

WHY

Addressing the inequities that affect Black women is a critical imperative to achieving health equity. "These disparities are multifaceted and deeply rooted in systemic, historical, and socio-economic factors," explains




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Martin.

“The stark reality is that Black women in the U.S. are up to three times more likely to experience infant loss, regardless of socioeconomic status.”

Queens Village stands as a powerful response to this harrowing statistic. Their initiatives are rallying cries for change, coupled with calls to action to address these disparities head-on.

Changing the Narrative

Queens Village is rewriting the story for Black women. In a world that often overlooks our voices, this community has become a platform for Black women to share their experiences, challenges, and triumphs. Just as a pen can reshape a story, Queens Village is reshaping the narrative.

“As black women we are disproportionately affected by chronic conditions and complications during pregnancy,” says Martin.

Comprehensive maternal health programs and support for managing chronic conditions can help mitigate these risks.

Accurate data collection is also essential to understanding the extent of these disparities. Funding research focused on maternal and infant health among Black women can provide insights into effective interventions as providers track progress.

Stress and trauma play significant roles in impacting the Black community as



well. The chronic stress of racism and discrimination on both macro and micro levels can have a profound impact on Black women's health.

Healthcare providers must be culturally competent, understanding the unique experiences and needs of Black women. This includes respecting cultural traditions and preferences in healthcare decisions.

“Our Queens Village Communities partner with organizations that provide mental health support, trauma-informed care, and culturally proficient counseling services,” Martin adds.

Investing in Leadership

Empowerment is a cornerstone of Queens Village. By investing in Black female leadership, social capital, and power, they are building a generation of strong women who can uplift their communities. Like seeds planted in fertile soil, these leaders are poised to grow and flourish, leaving a lasting legacy of change.

Creating Opportunities

Creating safe spaces for black women to both personally and professionally thrive actively addresses systemic racism.

Queens Village understands this and prides itself on bridging the gaps to opportunities. They actively promote economic and professional opportunities for Black women, ensuring we have the tools and resources to not only succeed but



resources to not only succeed but thrive. This is a place where doors open wide, and paths to success are illuminated.

Engaging Community

In the quest for equity, Queens Village engages with social, political, and medical communities. “We are driving change by supporting equity initiatives and reducing implicit bias that disproportionately affects Black women,” says Martin.

Important issues such as delayed diagnoses, inadequate treatment, and dismissive attitudes are all addressed in their anti-bias training. “You can’t address a bias if you do not recognize that one exists. When you understand the challenge you can then address it properly. That’s why our workshops are so powerful,” she explains.

“We recently had a workshop on the importance of rest. It was mind boggling to see how overwhelmed many Black women are day to day.”

Queens Village also asks their allies to use their voices in rooms and conversations in which Black women are not present to reduce and eliminate the adversity we experience.

“Each of our organization’s Chapters champion education,” says Martin. “We provide valuable support networks throughout Ohio that advocate for policies that prioritize maternal and infant health for Black women specifically. This is the best way we’ve found to track progress.”



Join the Movement

Queens Village invites all who are willing to join their movement. Whether through donations, sponsorship, or active participation, this is a community that values every contribution.


“Together, we are working towards a future where maternal equity is not a distant dream but a lived reality for all Black moms and babies,” says Martin.

Addressing the inequities that affect Black women in maternal and infant health requires a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach. It involves changes at individual, community, and systemic levels, along with a commitment to dismantling the structural barriers that have perpetuated these disparities for generations.

Efforts like Queens Village serve as a shining example of how communities can come together to make a difference. In Queens Village, every woman is a queen, and together, they are building a kingdom of empowerment, resilience, and change. As they continue to amplify Black women's voices, they are sowing the seeds of a better world, where safe spaces thrive, and Black women are at the forefront of a brighter future.

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