

FAMILY & MOTHERHOOD

SEASON 1

SHIFT

WITH P. S. BLOSSOM



Narrative Change SHIFT with P.S. Blossom

The US has a complex history with race, reproduction, and class, which leads to negative health outcomes for women and other birthing people of color. Dominant public narratives surrounding these health outcomes do not always reflect the perspectives, voices, or lived experiences of women and other birthing people of color. The P.S. Blossom podcast explores issues at the intersections of reproductive justice and capital with a specific focus on the autonomy of women and other birthing people of color.

SHIFT with PS Blossom is a guide that accompanies each topic covered in the PS Blossom podcast. It provides a reproductive justice approach to controversial conversations. We encourage readers to actively participate in SHIFT-ing the Narrative by sharing personal stories and lived experiences in their communities.

Family & Motherhood

While the meaning of family varies across contexts and cultures, typical descriptions include a monogamous, caucasian, heterosexual couple with children and conservative gender roles. Patriarchy, racism, and misogyny have played a historical influence on the perception of the “modern family”. Mothers historically have had conservative gender roles, which include responsibility for the family dynamic, children, and housework. Whereas fathers have historically been considered the breadwinners who are in charge of financial dynamics and household growth.

Systemic racism has controlled the narrative of families for generations around the world, as queer, non-monogamous, interracial, or blended families are still looked upon with bias in many countries. The fight for marriage and gender equality is necessary to alleviate harmful gender norms within the family structure and to ensure that gender-expansive and non-heterosexual couples can have the same rights as heterosexual couples under the law.

“**Maternal mortality is something that we're battling – Our healthcare system is failing Black women [and] failing women of color as it pertains to our reproductive healthcare because racism is real, even in the healthcare system.**”

—Monica Raye Simpson

NARRATIVES AROUND FAMILY & MOTHERHOOD

Sometimes, it is difficult to identify harmful dominant narratives since they are deeply rooted in our culture. By identifying harmful dominant narratives, we can positively SHIFT social structures and behaviors.

Here are some examples of **harmful dominant narratives** around family and motherhood:

- “A family is formed by a marriage between a woman and a man and the birth of biological children.”
- “Every little girl’s goal in life should be to have a family.”
- “Your family always wants the best for you, and you should always do what they say, even if you don’t agree with them.”

Here are examples of healthier **intersectional counter narratives** that can help SHIFT harmful dominant narratives:

- Families can look very different, from one person and their pet to a blended family of a grandparent, an uncle, and a third-generation child.
- You don’t owe forgiveness to your family after they wronged you just because they’re your family. Standing in your values even when others disagree is self-care.
- Not all families are healthy and loving. It requires strength and awareness to recognize it and walk away from it to protect your holistic well-being.



Monica Raye Simpson *(she/her)*

S1 EPISODE 1

[Monica Raye Simpson](#) is the Executive Director of SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective. A native of rural North Carolina, Monica organizes against human rights violations, the prison industrial complex, and structural racism through a feminist and interdisciplinary approach to Black liberation from a southern to a global scale. A true renaissance leader, she is also committed to birth justice as a certified Doula and centers the reproductive rights of Black women as part of her practice. Monica was named a New Civil Rights Leader by Essence Magazine and chosen as one of the Advocate Magazine's 40 under 40 leaders.

She is the only woman among the 4 founders of Charlotte, NC's Black Gay Pride Celebration, the first in the Bible Belt, which received awards from the National Black Justice Coalition and the Human Rights Coalition for its incredible launch with 7,000 participants. She is a Full-Circle Doula certified through the International Center for Traditional Childbirth, she serves on the boards of the Fund for Southern Communities and the legendary Highlander Center.

“Family is about the system of care that's created to provide [and] to support and protect each other. ”

“ [Reproductive justice] was one of the first movements where I felt like I could bring all parts of myself into the room at the same time. It allows me to bring my identity, my gender, my womb, my body; it centers all of that. ”

ON THE EPISODE

[Monica Simpson](#) joins us in [The Meaning of Family](#) to talk about how she found her political home in the organization and what it was that drew her to the reproductive justice movement. SisterSong was formed in response to rising maternal mortality rates, and, in this episode, we hear how racism in the healthcare system disproportionately affects women of color and how more and more Black women are returning to birth work in response. Monica shares her experience of family, her training as a doula, and what inspired her to become one.

“ Black women are dying at a rate three times, four times higher than White women in childbirth. ”



“ **All companies, regardless of your size and your demographics, should be thinking about how you are supporting families. ”**

“ **We teach women, as individuals, how to advocate for themselves, how to find their voices not only during their pregnancy and in labor, but – around motherhood in the workplace. ”**

Jennell Lynch *(she/her)*

S1 EPISODE 2

[Jennell Lynch](#), a career executive, trained doula, mother of four, and wife, used her dynamic insight and experience from working in male-dominated industries to create the Executive Doula Agency (EDA). After 20 years as an executive working in politics and private equity, along with a Master’s degree in organizational management and marketing, Jennell has learned the granular details that can create a healthier workspace for working women.

Throughout her career, she recognized that companies commonly lacked the internal support, knowledge, and resources for working women who are expecting or already mothers. Prior to starting EDA, Jennell was the Vice President of the National Association of Investment Companies (NAIC), a trade association representing the interests of minority-owned investment companies.

ON THE EPISODE

As discussed in [The Cost of Family](#), 43% of women do not return to work after having their first child but raising a child costs about \$ 17,000 a year. In this episode, Jennell talks about the financial side of family planning, how her company is empowering working mothers to find their voices, and how employers can support working mothers in their teams.

“ **People do not like to ask for help. Especially Black type-A women. We need to start asking for help. You will be amazed at the people that are willing to support you. ”**



“ I think I put too much pressure on myself to be in this completely healthy mental space once Phoenix arrived. Because the truth of the matter is I am still very much grieving my first son. ”

Porsha Summerville *(she/her)*

S1 EPISODE 3

[Porsha Summerville](#) is originally from Philadelphia and is a stay-at-home mom. She worked in sales from 2012 to 2019, and excelled in optimizing sales performance across global markets by translating strategic objectives into actionable plans.

“ It has been a lot [these] last couple of years, but I'm here today, and I get to live life and continue to move forward, [not] withstanding all that I've been through. I think that, within itself, is the best gift that I can ask for. ”

ON THE EPISODE

In [Resiliency with Porsha](#), we are joined by [Porsha Summerville](#), who generously shares the story of her journey as a mother. We hear about her wedding in 2017, their shared wish to start a family, and how she became pregnant with her first child, Josiah, only to lose him shortly after. She opens up about her experiences of healing and grief, medical gaslighting, and how therapy helped her cope during her following pregnancy and prepare for the birth of her second son, Phoenix. We also hear her thoughts on postpartum depression, marriage counseling, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on her second pregnancy. Porsha has walked a difficult path that has taken her through deeply bitter-sweet experiences of loss, hope, and grief.

“ I can be very happy that my second son is here, and I can have joy over here with Phoenix, but I can also honor that there is sadness still in me. And there is a little bit of light that [had] left me when my son Josiah left this earth. ”

Reflection Questions

How do you define a family?

Do you consider pets family?

Do you think you have to be married with children to have a family?

What are the narratives surrounding families in your culture?

How does the concept of family change between different cultures?

What are your opinions about legal advantages for married families over non-married ones?

Have you heard of generational trauma?

Do you think people should have assigned roles within the family?

How much do you think gender plays a role in the family dynamics?

Do you agree with the term “broken family” to refer to divorced or separated couples with children?

Follow Our Guests

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Jennell Lynch

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Porsha Summerville

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Guest Recommendations Topic

The Meaning of Family

- Listen to the episode [here!](#)
- Read the full episode transcript [here!](#)
- [SisterSong](#)
- [Birth Justice Care Fund](#)
- [National Association to Advance Black Birth](#)
- [Atlanta Doula Collective](#)
- [Black Mamas Matter Alliance](#)
- [Ancient Song Doula Services](#)
- [Center for Reproductive Rights](#)

The Cost of Family

- Listen to the episode [here!](#)
- Read the full episode transcript [here!](#)
- [The Executive Doula Agency](#)

Resiliency with Porsha

- Listen to the episode [here!](#)
- Read the full episode transcript [here!](#)
- [The Bradley Method](#)

Relevant Social and Platform Links

Rhia Ventures is a social impact organization with a mission to advance reproductive and maternal health equity by intentionally leveraging capital to center the needs, experiences, and perspectives of historically marginalized people in decision-making.

BLOSSOM

IG: [@ps_blossom](#)

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Family Blood

WOC Doula

Reproductive Justice

Black Women

Identity Womb

Gender Pregnancy

Childbirth

Biological Family

Mothers Family

Midwife

Motherhood

Child Loss

Grief

Therapy

Labor Healthcare

Reproductive Justice

Blood

Pregnancy WOC

Family Planning

Doula Black

Therapy Gender

Childbirth

Womb

Mothers

Biological Family

Identity

Pregnancy

Midwife

Family Planning

Black Women

Child Loss

Labor

Motherhood

Healthcare

Mothers

Blood

Family

WOC

Reproductive Justice

Labor

Doula

Womb

Mothers Childbirth

Biological Family

Identity