

# PERINATAL PERIOD

SEASON 2

**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 P.S. Blossom is a guide that accompanies each topic covered in the P.S. 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.

## Perinatal Period

The perinatal period spans from the start of pregnancy and extends to one year postpartum.

The perinatal period is an especially vulnerable time for a pregnant person. The physical, mental, and psychological changes surrounding the birth are critical. Aza Nedhari, a Certified Professional Doula, defines a doula as “a non-clinical support person, (...) doulas can support people across the life course whether that's during birth, during postpartum, and even during abortion, and during in transition or in death. (...) they are there as an advocate and as emotional and sometimes physical support for an individual and their family.”

There are different approaches to the perinatal period and care. A holistic approach addresses the person, not just one system at a time. The holistic approach focuses on the pregnant or birthing person's physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being and mental health. Mental health is a crucial factor in this period, not only due to the dramatic hormonal changes but also due to the change in their identity and how they transform into a parent. Doulas and midwives can make a difference in supporting and attending to a person and their family's health during this period.

“ Birth justice really is about protecting choice and prioritizing consent, and not just as an act, but as an intentional practice. ”

—Aza Nedhari

### NARRATIVES AROUND THE PERINATAL PERIOD

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 the perinatal period:

- “Society bears no responsibility for care, leave time, or anything associated with population replenishment.”
- “Pregnancy is meant to be painful, but you'll be fine - the baby takes priority, so you can always do pitocin and get a C-section.”
- “The only people who can care for pregnancies or deliver babies are doctors - midwives, and doulas aren't certified or part of the system.”

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

- Mental, physical, spiritual, emotional, and energetic well-being all influence the well-being of a pregnancy.
- Create spaces where visibility around pregnancy/birth (the psychological, financial, physical, and other pieces are elevated so that people can make more informed decisions.
- Birth matters. The mother, birthing parent, and baby matter. It all matters; no outside person gets to say one matters over the other.



## Aza Nedhari *(she/her)*

S2 EPISODE 10+11

[Aza Nedhari](#) brings over 18 years of experience in community organizing, reproductive justice, and program development. She is a mother, licensed Certified Professional Midwife (CPM), Family Counselor, and the Co-founding Executive Director of Mamatoto Village. Aza is a fiercely dedicated woman who believes that by promoting a framework of justice, the reduction of barriers in maternal and child health begins to dissipate, giving rise to healthy individuals, healthy families, and healthy communities. Aza is pursuing her Doctorate in Human Services with a concentration in Organizational Leadership and Management with an eye toward the sustainability of Black-led organizations and cultivating innovative models of perinatal care delivery and workforce development.

“ Reproductive justice was a call to action, it was a statement, it was a full confirmation, affirmation that Black women developed in the early 90s as a framework to assert what we needed, telling people how we needed to be cared for. ”

“ I did try to get away from [midwifery] for a little while. With any purpose that you're supposed to be walking in, it won't leave you alone. It shows up in your dreams, it shows up in random people calling you back to where you belong, answering the call, doing the ancestors' work. ”

“ Midwifery spoke to me at a spiritual level, it spoke to me at a cultural level. I believe that I'm walking in the tradition, in the light of Grand Midwives, Black Elder women, and Black women who really, to me, birthed this nation. ”

### ON THE EPISODES

In [Upholding the Black Midwife Tradition with Aza Nedhari CPM, LGPC \(Part 1\)](#), Aza explains what being a CPM entails, how the births of her children inspired her, and her role in her godmother's delivery of a baby in a snowstorm, to venture into this field. She fills us in on the differences between doulas and midwives and explains a midwife's role in a holistic approach to care. We also discuss how the concepts of 'birth justice' and 'reproductive justice' relate to her work. In [Part 2](#), we continue talking about pregnancy, sexuality, and reproductive justice. Aza explains how the stories and narratives she heard growing up relating to sexual education and sexual health shaped her. She shares how she is educating her children on topics that were taboo to be spoken about when she was a teen. She also talks about her organization, Mamatoto Village, some of the programs it offers, and the work it does in the community.

“ I believe that my individual power is what it is, but it's building with other people, it's matching my power to theirs that allows me to make a greater difference and a more deep impact. ”



## Maya Hardigan *(she/her)*

S2 EPISODE 12+13

[Maya Hardigan](#) is the Founder and CEO of [Mae](#): a culturally responsive digital-first platform connecting Black expectant and new mothers with critical resources to drive positive pregnancy outcomes. Before founding Mae, Maya spent 15 years in digital healthcare, most recently at Pfizer, primarily focusing on building and scaling technologies to engage, inform, and optimize patient care while driving financial and operational efficiencies for healthcare payers. Maya holds a Bachelor's in Biology and Psychology from Duke University and an MBA from Columbia Business School. She is the proud mama of three little girls and resides in Brooklyn, NY.

“ I don't think any of our companies can say we're 100% culturally competent, but we can aspire to have that cultural alignment and a reflection in our employee population and in our local partner population. ”

“ When we think about bringing Black expectant mothers access to best-in-class maternal health resources, we don't want to introduce the barrier of out-of-pocket pay. ”

“ I think a life of prosperity begins with a successful early start and making sure that we're birthing our babies into a set of circumstances and scenarios that will allow those babies to become thriving, contributing, and healthy individuals. ”

### ON THE EPISODES

In [Where Mom is Served Wholly \(Part 1\)](#), we speak with Maya and how her lived experiences as a Black woman, mother, and leader uniquely positioned her to launch and lead her startup to reduce maternal health disparities for Black women. She shares the importance of giving moms a trusted partner and community to talk with during pregnancy and postpartum. In [\(Part 2\)](#), we continue speaking with Maya about the perinatal period and the disparities that lead to maternal and pediatric deaths.

“ It's really important that we [push back] on this very untrue narrative that Black women and particularly those who are covered by Medicaid plans are disengaged, don't care, are simply showing up at the emergency room at the point that their baby's coming. ”

## Reflection Questions

How would you like to prepare for pregnancy?

What does care for multiple pregnancies look like for you?

What does genuine holistic and equitable care look like after experiencing a miscarriage?

What are markers most women experience during their 1st pregnancy?

Do you know the average cost of pregnancy/birth in the hospital vs a home birth in America? Which did your family choose and why? How much did insurance cover?

At what point is it ideal to have a doula or midwife?

Did you start setting aside money to have a child prior to having children?

What are some holistic practices that lessen the possibility of injury during birth?

What does postpartum look like for you?

What does receiving comprehensive support in the 4th trimester look like for you?

## Guest Recommendations Topic

### The Foremothers & Midwifery Traditional (Part 1)

- Listen to the episode [here!](#)
- Read the full episode transcript [here!](#)
- [Mamatoto Village](#)
- [North American Registry of Midwives](#)
- [Inner Circle Midwifery](#)

### The Foremothers & Midwifery Traditional (Part 2)

- Listen to the episode [here!](#)
- Read the full episode transcript [here!](#)
- [Southern Birth Justice](#)
- [National Black Midwives Alliance](#)
- [Jennie Joseph](#)
- [Ancient Song Doula Services](#)
- [Shades of Blue Project](#)
- [Restoring Our Own Through Transformation](#)
- [Community of Hope](#)
- [The Bloom Collective](#)
- [Jamaa Birth Village](#)
- [American Midwifery Certification Board](#)
- [National Association to Advance Black Birth](#)
- [Village Birth International](#)
- [Black Mamas Matter Alliance](#)

### Where Mom is Served Wholly (Part 1)

- Listen to the episode [here!](#)
- Read the full episode transcript [here!](#)
- [Mae Health](#)

### Where Mom is Served Wholly (Part 2)

- Listen to the episode [here!](#)
- Read the full episode transcript [here!](#)
- [Medicaid Health Plans of America](#)
- [Chicago Birthworks Collective](#)
- [Jackson Safer Childbirth Experience](#)
- [National Birth Equity Collaborative](#)

## Follow Our Guests

Aza Nedhari

[Linkedin](#)

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Maya Hardigan

[LinkedIn](#)

## 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.

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Check out the P.S. Blossom Podcast on [Amazon Music](#), [Apple Podcasts](#) and [Spotify](#)!

**Doula** Medicaid Midwifery Tradition Postpartum  
Community Sexual Education Power Maternal  
Pregnancy Reproductive Justice Insurance 4th  
Grand Midwives Birth Justice Black Support  
Prenatal Collective Equity Perinatal Integrated  
Companies Consent Mothers Birth Justice Do  
Postpartum Maternal Health 4th Trimester M  
Integrated Care Medicaid Midwifery Traditio  
Power Community Sexual Education Pregnant  
Reproductive Justice Insurance Grand Midwif  
Birth Justice Black Support Perinatal Collect  
Equity Perinatal Integrated Care Consent M