



**Unheard:
Pain, denial & the
Black birth experience**

Featuring Stanis Askew, Doula

This time on Code WACK!

**What exactly is a doula and how does it differ from a midwife?
*How can doulas support those who are most likely to die from giving birth?***

To find out, we spoke to **Stanis Askew**, a full-spectrum doula in Southern California who supports families from conception until after birth. She works with [Frontline Doulas](#), a perinatal health program connecting Black families with Black doulas, and is passionate about elevating the Black birth experience.

SHOW NOTES

WE DISCUSS

What exactly is a doula and how does it differ from a midwife?

"..a doula ... provides emotional support and advocacy for a birthing person or a birthing family in the sense that they can be a prenatal partnership. They can also be during the birth process itself and then also postpartum. So it's an essential part of the whole, entire birthing process.

"Sometimes doulas also, they'll have a specific realm that they like to work in. So some do prenatal and ... prenatal and birth generally come coupled together. But some also (will do) what they'll call a full spectrum (which) is prenatal, birth and postpartum. Then you'll also have those who (specialize) in just postpartum as a doula." – **Stanis Askew**

Today Black women in America are three times more likely to die from a pregnancy-related cause than White women according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. What factors do you think contribute to this?

"Great question - and it's actually the reason why I got into doing what I do - this birth work. So the factors that I think contribute to it - the lack of education as far as the medical staff and the lack of courtesy or listening to the patient ... in the hospital setting. So I think that's what contributes to it.

"Black women tend to not be heard. It's more of 'you have a higher pain tolerance.' So then when you say, 'I am in pain and I need something, it's, 'You are okay, just push through it,' [even] when and truly there's something wrong.'" – **Stanis Askew**

Racism is an important factor in high maternal mortality rates, but what about lack of health insurance or underlying chronic conditions - medical conditions?

“Both of those are other factors that do play into it. It's not necessarily lack of [insurance], but it's the type of health insurance that ... the client may have.

“So if they are on Medi-Cal, which you know, it's great insurance. I would think medical providers would be more apt to take it because it's a guaranteed payment, right, instead of private insurance.

“And then from my background in HR ... obviously there's a difference between an HMO plan and a PPO plan. People do pay more for your PPO plans because you do get to select and go to any network doctor. You have that right to have a specialty doctor... I think [insurance] does play a major factor into who your medical insurance provider is. I can see that.” – ***Stanis Askew***

Helpful Links

[What Is a Doula?](#) *WebMD*

[Having a Doula – What are the Benefits?](#), *American Pregnancy Association*

[Data show community-based doulas improve outcomes for Black mothers,](#)
Blue Cross, Blue Shield of California

[Doula Services as a Medi-Cal Benefit,](#) *Department of Health Care Services,*
State of California

[Medi-Cal Coverage for Doula Care Requires Sustainable and Equitable Reimbursement to be Successful](#), *National Health Law Program*

[HMO vs. PPO Plans](#), *Health for California/Covered California*

Episode Transcript

Read the full [episode transcript](#).

Biography: Stanis Askew, Doula

Stanis Askew, who works with [Frontline Doulas](#), is a Southern California-based full-spectrum doula who is passionate about helping people and supporting Black births. She says she first became a doula at the age of seven when her older sister – then a teenager - revealed to her that she was pregnant. Askew applies her 18-plus years of experience in human resources to her birthwork. She has developed and implemented techniques that allow her to collaborate with medical professionals in a unique way.

Askew helps birthing families from conception to 40 days after birth. She encourages a healthy and active pregnancy and is a certified yoga instructor, lactation educator and parent coach.

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