

Description

The Midwives' Anti-Racism Pledge

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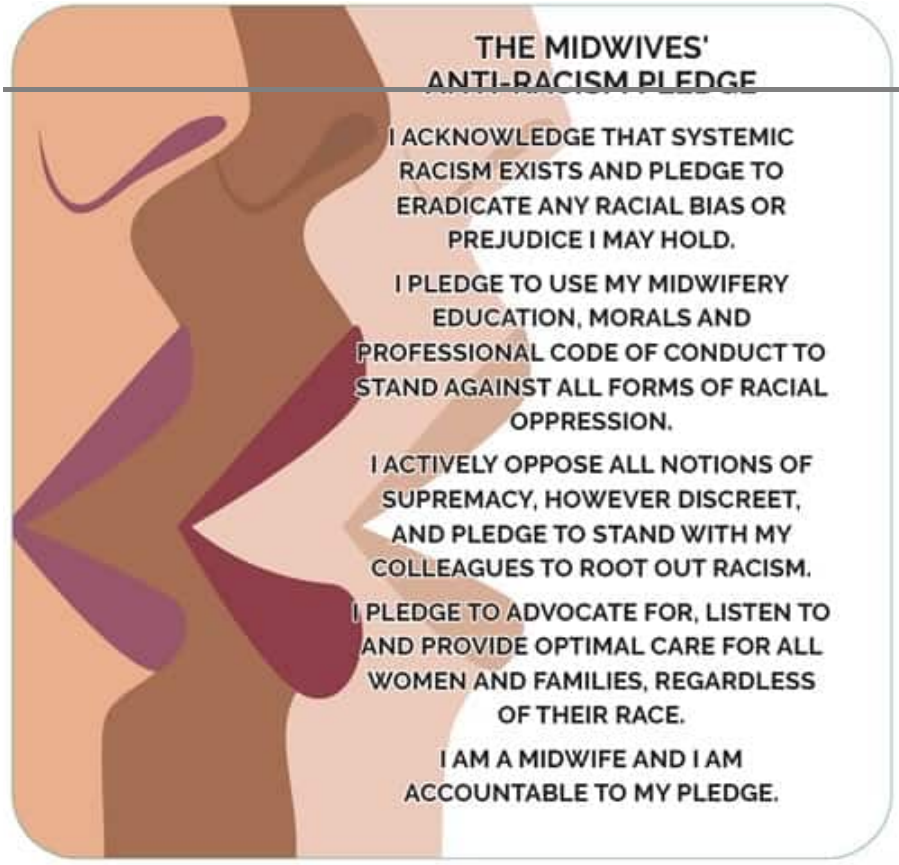
Summary

In this stirring call to action, Natalie Goodyear explores the need to prioritise diversity in contemporary midwifery education. She also invites the midwifery community to take the Midwives' Anti-Racism Pledge, which asks student and qualified midwives alike to commit to challenging the bias or prejudices they witness or hold, as a means to improve midwifery care and the wellbeing of Black and ethnically diverse women and midwives.

Discussions regarding institutional racism can evoke powerful emotions such as guilt, defensiveness, anger and indignance. However, these feelings do not absolve individuals from acknowledging and responding to the growing evidence that Black, Asian and ethnically diverse women and birthing people have consistently higher morbidity and mortality rates than their white counterparts.[1]

In response to the racial disparities highlighted in the 2019 MBRRACE report,1 the campaign group FiveXMore has petitioned parliament to find solutions to the five-fold increase in maternal mortality for Black women in the UK.[2] Reproductive justice activist Mars Lord has been working to raise awareness of conscious and unconscious bias within maternity care for years,[3] and unions and the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) are beginning to follow suit.[4,5]

However, Black midwives are over-represented in NMC fitness to practice processes, although white midwives are more likely to be the subject of complaints.[6] Furthermore, as approximately 94% of simulation body parts are white,[7] and textbooks use predominately white-centric terminology and imagery, students and midwives can lack confidence around identifying complications when caring for non-white people.



As vital contributors to maternity services, students and midwives must act to combat implicit and explicit bias both within themselves and others. Taking the Midwives' Anti-Racism Pledge demonstrates commitment to adopting attitudes and behaviours which seek to address and eradicate racism within midwifery care and education, and achieving culturally competent and safe care that improves the pregnancy outcomes of Black, Asian and multi-racial birthing people in the UK. **TSM**

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