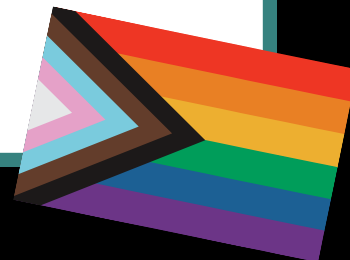
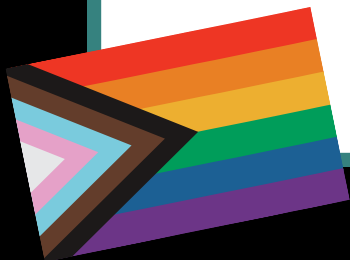


15 WAYS TO

**RADICALIZE**  
*your*  
**BIRTHWORK**  
*business*

RIGHT NOW!



# Before you jump in...

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...I want to address a few things. First, here is some information about me:

**I am a non-binary, feminine presenting, neurodivergent, able-bodied, housed, educated, self-employed white person, partner, and parent. I live on the colonized land of the Abenaki and Pennecook people.**

I wrote this resource to share the ways that I have, and am still making, changes based on my own learning, past experience, and heart work. This is not a resource with all of the answers - but it does present ideas to implement concepts into the structure of your birthwork business. That said, the work of anti-racism and anti-oppression is so much bigger than any one resource can offer you. So don't stop here, this is not a check off list!

Here are some assumptions, I am making about you as I wrote this...

- 👉 You believe that oppression and racism are detrimental to the field of birthwork (and our world), and that the intersection of these oppressions produces a combined effect on birthing people.
- 👉 That you have knowledge on racism and other oppressions, and have an understanding of how they show up and impact the system of birth. If you don't, that's ok too. Start with my number 1 and consider attending more training before you implement these practices.
- 👉 You are here because your heart wants a better world for all birthing people.

*This resource is not just about inclusivity,  
it's about changing the whole system of birth.*

# I'm so glad you're here!

*"If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."*

- Lilla Watson  
Aboriginal Elder, Activist & Educator

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Let's be real...the birth system is effed up . And it's not working for anyone - certainly not our clients, and not for us. I'd even argue that it's not working so great for medical professionals either.

The good news is that we can make an impact. That we have some power in all of this. Because as birthworkers we can demand better inclusivity, equity and care for everyone.

And we can do so by living out loud the actual system we want to work within - the one our clients can thrive in, and the one where medical professionals can focus on life-saving procedures and specializations rather than medicalized everyday birth.

So what exactly does it mean to live out loud? It means that you grab hold of your values and ensure they show up in every aspect of your birthwork - and there are a several ways you can start that right now!

👉 **In this resource, you'll find 15 ways to change your birthwork business** 👉  
**TODAY.**

**Let's bust this system together my fellow radical, magical friend!**

- Kelly xoxo



# Shout Your Values

Your values are what make up your authentic self. They drive you, lead you, and support you in living your purpose on this earth. By sharing your values out loud, you will not only help clients find exactly what they are looking for, but you'll build community with other birthworkers like you.

## What are your values?

- 👉 What are your top 5 values? *There are several online values quizzes and assessments to get you started, if needed!*
- 👉 How do these values show up in your birthwork?
- 👉 Now share your values with your potential clients. This can be obvious, by mentioning them directly...or you can show them by how you promote your birthwork.
- 👉 Mention your thoughts and feelings on the system of birth as well. When your clients know your values, they know if they are a good fit for you and you for them.
- 👉 It also means that you will serve like-minded people, which is how change happens.
- 👉 Community is what leads us to liberation.

When you deeply understand your values, it opens you up to all of the possibilities that support them and allows you to say no to what doesn't.



# 2

# Train it Up

There are trainings available that address oppression in the field of birthwork. They include topics such as ableism, transphobia, racism, fatphobia, homophobia, fertility treatment, neurodivergence, income, family make-up, sex work, substance use, among so many others. Find them!



*Train on these topics not to increase your reach as a doula, but because you want the world of birthwork to be better for everyone in it.*

**Sign up for as many trainings as you want and can, but follow these caveats...**

- 👉 Learn about "isms" by those impacted by that oppression.
- 👉 Choose to intentionally give your money to those that have these identities.
- 👉 Don't just listen with your head, also listen with your heart.
- 👉 And make sure to really listen, you are not in this to "fix it" but instead to follow the voices of those most impacted by oppression in birthwork.
- 👉 Pay as much as you can when they have a sliding fee scale.
- 👉 Sponsor someone when and if you can.
- 👉 Refer others to the training too!
- 👉 Here are some resources to get you started...
  - [Commonsense Childbirth](#)
  - [Moss the Doula](#)
  - [Birth Advocacy Doula Trainings \(BADT\)](#)
  - [Queer Birth Club](#)



# Own Your Privileges

**A privilege is when you receive preference and power for solely existing in an identity that the system rewards. Often, we are born into that identity. Regardless, it's still our responsibility to own the impact of having that privileged identity.**

## **Ok, but now what?**

- 👉 Examine your privileges and how they show up in the field of birthwork.
- 👉 *Some examples of privileged identities include whiteness, Christian faith, cisgender, heterosexual, partnered, straight-sized, neurotypical, English fluency, college-education, etc.*
- 👉 Contend with what it means to have these privileges.
- 👉 ...And the **complexity** of you also experiencing oppression in other identities, as we are not single identity people.
- 👉 Remember... Experiencing oppression does not make you the expert of all oppression, it only makes you an expert of your experiences.
- 👉 Share your identities (*as you safely can*) so that clients can find you based on their own identities and needs.

When you recognize your identities where you hold power and privilege, you can start to wield it to build a more just world, and to dismantle the systems that unfairly give you privilege in the first place.





# 3.5 Be Race Explicit

***\*Note: I am white and am speaking from my learned knowledge in this identity. Thus, I am speaking to white folks on this page - White folks, read this page. BIPOC folks, you do you.***

*"In a racist society, it is not enough to be non-racist.  
We must be anti-racist."*

Angela Davis

American political activist, professor, and author



***Racism impacts all aspects of birthwork. Being race explicit means acknowledging this and saying it out loud.***

## **How do I do this?**

- ☞ Maternal race data is more than just a number. It's actual birthing people and babies, you cannot forget that.
- ☞ Everyone is harmed by systemic racism. It's making white people sick too, as the U.S. also has terrible birth statistics for white birthing people. Fighting racism means liberating all of us.
- ☞ Work with others who are the same race as you. It is not on Black people to teach white people. *But that said*, white people are the ones who made the system, so they must be the ones to dismantle it...but only with guidance from those impacted by it.
- ☞ Be anti-racist every day, not just when the news erupts.
- ☞ And, consider where your every day exists and make impact in those spaces. Also show up on the front lines as often as you can.



# 4 Honor the Rebozo

So many birthworkers have this ancient and powerful tool in their birth bag. But are you also honoring its indigenous roots and practice in your birthwork? Where did you buy yours - was it from a person in Mexico that you supported? When you use it, do you tell your clients about its culture and the honor of using the wisdom of Mexican elders and birthworkers in your birth practice? If not, then you are appropriating.

*Cultural appropriation is when a person of a culture with power takes ownership, credit or profit from a cultural practice or item from a population their people have historically (and/or currently) oppress.*



## So, what do you do?

- 👉 Consider your birth practices and your racial and cultural identity - are you appropriating in any way?
- 👉 Learn about the history behind your practices and consider how they fall into your profit or business as your own.
- 👉 Purchase items from the cultures who make them - and honor these cultures and educate your clients on them.
- 👉 Choose to replace your tools and practices with ones that do not appropriate.





# Go Intersectional

"Cultural patterns of oppression are not only interrelated but are bound together and influenced by the intersectional systems of society. Examples of this include race, gender, class, ability, and ethnicity."

Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw

Civil rights advocate, scholar, professor, founder of the term intersectionality



**Intersectionality acknowledges that our identities overlap, and thus, so do the oppressions that impact them. For example, white women are impacted by misogyny and Black women are impacted by misogyny and racism. Kimberlé Crenshaw teaches that you cannot work to change the system for one identity but not the other.**

## How can you be intersectional as a birthworker?

- 👉 Be race explicit - in this country, race impacts every other oppression at every intersection.
- 👉 Focus on the system of birth, not the people within it. *i.e. The system of birth is problematic, not necessarily doctors. The system of hospital birth is problematic, not the life saving interventions that exist.*
- 👉 Both need to change, but if we only change the people and not the system, the issues will reinstate themselves over time.
- 👉 **Thus, we cannot say that homebirth is the answer.** In an intersectional system, homebirth has its own issues as well as privileges. Black trans birthing people do not have the same access to a safe, physiological homebirth that white cisgender women do.









# Check Your Ableism

**Ableism seems to be an area of oppression that is often left for last. There is very little, if any, representation of physically disabled birthing people in the mainstream media. And everyone seems to pretend that disabilities that are hidden to the eye, are not to be acknowledged at all.**

*In this country, ableism is the status quo. In birthwork, it's almost never talked about or accounted for.  
Just check your birth bag!*



## **So what can I do?**

-  Seriously, check your birth bag and birth resources!
-  What options do you have for people with sensory differences? People who cannot see, or hear?
-  Will your physical comforts support people with a physical disability?
-  How do you advocate for someone who might need more structure or consistency? Or for someone with anxiety?
-  What about your office? Your courses? Do you use subtitles, ramps, or extra wide chairs? Do you have room for a wheelchair at your table? Is your room neutral in scent and sounds?
-  Ever heard of sanism? It's oppression against those who have a mental disorder or cognitive impairment. How can you support clients who experience this?



# Go Gender Neutral

The gender binary seems to be the industry standard when it comes to pregnancy and birth. But women are not the only people who give birth. And when we fail to be inclusive of birthing people other than cisgender women, we are not acknowledging the complexity and nuance of birth.

## So what can you do?

- 👉 Use the term birthing people everywhere you can, and when you speak about birth.
- 👉 Describe client's as having a partner or partners if they do.
- 👉 Do not give a baby's sex when you announce a birth.
- 👉 When you speak about a person's pregnancy, do not gender the baby. Rule of thumb is to use the same pronouns that the birthing person is using for their pregnancy.
- 👉 Share your pronouns with your clients, when safe to do so.
- 👉 Ask your clients what pronouns they use and what pronouns you should use when you speak about the baby.
- 👉 Call out the transphobia rampant in the birthwork world when you see it.
- 👉 Challenge those who feel "oppressed" by the term birthing people.

Not all birthing people are women.  
Not all women give birth.  
But all women who give birth are birthing people.





# 8 Health at Every Size®

Health at Every Size (HAES®) is a foundation for understanding the impact of body size on health. And more specifically, it dispels the notion that bigger bodies cause poor health. HAES® also states that all food is neutral, that diets and restriction are harmful, and that a person's health is much more impacted by the experience of fatphobia and diet culture than their actual body size itself.

The size of your body is not an indicator of your health.  
It just isn't and we need to stop saying that it is.



## What can birthworkers do?

- ☞ Stop talking about nutrition until you learn about HAES® and how it can inform the information that you provide. *HAES® is not the same as Intuitive Eating.*
- ☞ Do not talk about weight or dieting with clients, ever...Unless they bring it up and you are HAES® knowledgeable and ready to respond accordingly. Otherwise, refer them to a HAES® provider.
- ☞ Encourage your clients to avoid the scale. You are not required to be weighed at prenatal appointments.
- ☞ Health is socially constructed, so allow a person to establish their own definition of health...not yours.
- ☞ Dispel the myths about fat people having babies - such as higher risk for gestational diabetes, birthing a big baby, pre-eclampsia, etc. But do talk about the impact of judgment by a provider as being an indicator of health during pregnancy!



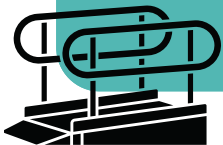
# 9 Expand Your Niche

**This is not about expanding the category of your niche but about the inclusivity of your niche. What identities does your niche support equitably? This is sometimes called "designing from the margins." And it simply asks, does your programming support more than white cis birthing people?**

## So how do I do it?

- ☞ Race, ability, gender, body size, etc. all impact the population you are working with - seen or unseen. Does your niche consider these intersecting identities?
- ☞ This can certainly feel big and hard because there is a lot to consider. The birth system is oppressive in so many ways, and to everyone in it. Just remind yourself that you will continue to change and build your birthwork as you continue to learn and grow.
- ☞ Consider using the concept of designing from the margins as a starting point. To do this, you figure out the single person who is most in need of your services and all of the oppressions that impact them. Then, design the program for them. This will then benefit everyone else too.
- ☞ An example of a design from the margins is the curb cuts in sidewalks. They were designed to support people in wheelchairs. But they help so many more than that - people with strollers, on crutches, with balance needs, etc.

*Designing a program from the margins has a ripple effect.  
It will benefit your clients, pregnant people,  
other birthworkers, and even you.*





# Who Do You Follow?

**Social media is an excellent place to learn, connect, and build community. But who do you follow? Are any of the birthworkers people of color? Black? Indigenous? Queer? Disabled? Fat-bodied? Transgender? Non-binary?**

## Who you follow matters!

- 👉 Stop following only the “big” accounts. So many are filled with bigotry, judgment, and privilege.
- 👉 Instead find your people who share your values in this work.
- 👉 And follow birthworkers who are underrepresented in the field and hold marginalized identities.
- 👉 Then share their stuff! And credit and tag them.
- 👉 Remember...if they said it first, don't reword it, or say it again, share their words with your support.
- 👉 Take note that you should not follow BIPOC or LGBTQ birthworkers for “education” unless you are willing to pay them. And when you *do* learn from them, pay them.
- 👉 And donate to them when you can - many people will ask for support for building their business, taking a sabbatical, attending school, etc. **Support people's growth and joy too!**

*Your social media following isn't about the “big accounts,” it's for following people who share your values and for building community with them.*












# Know Your Neighbors

There is an astounding gap in the field of pregnancy and birthwork when it comes to diversity. For those of us with privilege, we can and should ask more of it. Keep a record of other birthworkers near you. And make sure you include people with identities other than your own. This includes Black, Brown and Indigenous doulas and educators, as well as LGBTQ, disabled and fat-bodied birthworkers.

## AND...

-  Say hello and ask if you can refer to them.
-  Then actually do so.
-  Never make assumptions about another person's identities.
-  Instead, be up front about your identities so clients can find the birthworker that best supports them.
-  Mention other birthworkers with marginalized identities on your website so people can connect with them directly.
-  Is your location lacking in the the diversity of birthworkers? Connect with those that provide virtual services, and then donate to an organization that supports birthworkers with systemically oppressed identities.



*By supporting other birthworkers with systemically marginalized identities, we are building a system that better serves everyone.*



# Check Your Website

There are so many ways to create a website, but not many platforms give much advice on how to make your website inclusive to all people, including those who are neurodivergent.

For someone who is neurodivergent,  
a noisy or overwhelming website is enough  
to make them look elsewhere.

www://



## So what can you do about it?

- 👉 Have your site evaluated for neurodivergence. Some orgs will run an eval for free and give you a few examples of changes.
- 👉 Have several different (*including neurodivergent*) people give you feedback.

## Here are some tips to get you started:

- 👉 Use a sans serif font, and make it at least 12-14pt in size.
- 👉 Avoid flashing, or busy images. And do not autoplay videos or sounds.
- 👉 Choose colors that are simple, cohesive and do not clash.
- 👉 Use subtitles and captions.
- 👉 Consider reading level and break text into chunks and paragraphs.
- 👉 Make call-to-action buttons clear and descriptive. And, use icons to point them out.
- 👉 Offer your content in other formats.
- 👉 Allow for site translation and also dimming software, if possible.



# 13

# Diversify It All

**Diversity simply means to show variation. And variation is important when it comes to representation in birthwork. It is your role to ensure that diversity shows up on your website and other materials!**

## **What exactly does diversity look like?**

- ☞ It means that you show people of different sizes, races, genders, partnerships, abilities, ages, etc. in your images and graphics. You can, and should, do this on any and all materials you create.
- ☞ Pay attention to stock graphics, as they too default to white, straight-sized, cisgender, able bodies.
- ☞ If your images are diverse, examine them for equity and anti-oppression. What images are you putting with what topic? What is happening in those images? So often Black folks are represented when the hard stuff is talked about, or in turmoil. Show people with marginalized identities in their joy too.
- ☞ If you need to show emotions like pain or sadness or anxiety, etc. this is a good time to use images of those who hold privilege.
- ☞ Finally, do not show widespread diversity in your images and materials if you are not prepared to serve these clients.

*Diversity is not equality nor equity. It's simply the notion of mixing it up. It's about representation, which is an essential piece of systemic change.*





# 14 Use a Scholarship Fund

**A scholarship fund is a simple way to make your services more accessible to those that need monetary support. It's also a way to prioritize those with systemically marginalized identities in our communities - both by ourselves and by our clients that hold privilege.**

## **How do you do this?**

- ☞ Choose how you will establish the fund - will it be from your own profit, or will a portion of all sales support it? Will you ask for donations, or will a sliding fee scale include a top tier to contribute to the fund? Or will you use another way?
- ☞ Decide who the fund will support - will you prioritize those with marginalized identities (BIPOC birthing people, LGBTQ people, single parents, etc). Will everyone have access with no questions asked, or will you survey applicants?
- ☞ How will you make access simple and straightforward, and without revealing a person's identity to anyone but you.

## **But what if my birthwork doesn't include taking on clients?**

- ☞ You can donate a portion of your profit to birthworker organizations or memberships whose goal is to increase representation among birth workers .

*A scholarship fund is so much more than access. It also tells your clients that you acknowledge the need for reparations and financial restructuring in order to support all identities..*





# Be Anti-Capitalist

*Maybe we ought to worry less about the dumpster fires and instead start some ourselves.*



In the world of birthwork, anti-capitalism means that it's not about profit AND it's not about sacrifice. It means that birthwork can serve us all. It also means that you consider the different lives and needs and wants and impacts of those you serve and why it matters to be explicit about that.

## How do you do it?

- 👉 This is not the same as do it for free or do it for little. **As a birthworker, you are not the bottom of the barrel and should not have to serve no matter the money.**
- 👉 Anti-capitalism is about understanding that people have different incomes and life circumstances and finding your way through that.
- 👉 A sliding fee scale is one example of a way you can implement anti-capitalism. Here, you are showing your clients that you are willing to consider their life circumstances when it comes to payment. Other options are payment plans, bartering, etc.
- 👉 It's not entirely about those with less should pay less. It's also about those with more should pay more.
- 👉 AND, it means that your rates should match your life needs. What is the income you need to live safely and joyfully and what is your work capacity? This is your rate.
- 👉 Then, be explicit with clients about your rates and why you chose them.



# F\*ck White Supremacy

Do you have employees? Or hope to have some one day? Or heck, are you tired of the grind? You can decide not to follow the patriarchal make-up of work in this country. The culture was decided by white cis-men and you can refuse to comply.

## What exactly can I do?

👉 Dr. Tema Okun shares several characteristics of white supremacy culture. Read about them and consider ways to eliminate or restructure them in your own birthwork. And certainly for your employees.

## 👉 *The characteristics are:*

- Fear
- Perfectionism
- One Right Way
- Paternalism
- Objectivity
- Qualified
- Either/Or and the Binary
- Progress is Bigger/More
- Quantity over Quality
- Worship of the Written Word
- Individualism
- I'm the Only One
- Defensiveness
- Denial
- Right to Comfort
- Fear of Open Conflict
- Power Hoarding
- Urgency

*It's time to stop pulling up the bootstraps and instead focus on ditching the boot all together. Everyone likes cros better anyhow.*



# Nice to Meet You!

**Hi! I'm Kelly Warner (she/they) and I'm sick and tired of the current birth system because it's not serving our clients, or us as birthworkers.**

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More specifically, I'm a (r)Evolutionary BirthWorker, and Radical Parent. I believe that all births are good births and that we all deserve a just system.

My first major advocacy effort was in high school when a Vice Principal pulled my school newspaper article on the need for comprehensive sex education. We protested by publishing a blank space in the paper and taking it up the ladder. I convinced my Principal that it was essential reading for my fellow students, and he was convinced. No more pieces were pulled after that.

That is the day I learned that you can change the system when you ask more of it. I also learned that my love and drive for reproductive and sexual health was unwavering. As such, I have been in reproductive justice work for 21 years. Along the way, I continue to see more and more of the overwhelming oppression around me so I continue to learn, shift, and implement anti-oppression into all of my practices, work, and life.

No one should live this way. Racism, transphobia, fatphobia, homophobia, and ableism have no place in the birth system, let alone in our society. I deeply believe that by unraveling the injustices of the birth system, we can shift the system for the better for everyone, including you!

I'm so glad you're here and I can't wait to meet you.  
**Join me** over **@justbirthwork** to go through the resource together!

- Kelly xoxo



Just  
BirthWork