

Rho Sims

Rhonda “Rho” Sims is a powerful advocate for maternal health equity, driven by her lived experience and personal loss. As a community organizer in the state and past Preeclampsia Foundation program manager, she has a deep understanding of patient needs.

Rho founded The Black Maternal Health Collective, a statewide coalition providing vital resources and advocacy for woman of color. She led the first Columbia Black Maternal Health Week and serves on several key policy initiatives, including the South Carolina Birth Outcomes Initiative and the SC & Rural State Maternal Health Task Force. Additionally, Rho is a patient reviewer for the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), and a trained community doula through Health One Connect.





Matters of the Heart: A Story of Compassionate Doula Care

The Impact of Doula Support on Maternal Health

Agenda

- ☐ My Passion for This Work
- ☐ Define a Doula's Role
- ☐ Dive into Lived an Experience Story
- ☐ Explore Evidence + Lived Experience
- ☐ Takeaways for Our Tool bag

Rho & Her Team



- Advocate since I lost a sorority sister in 2019.
- Hired my first doula with my first child in 2015 & first midwife in 2018.
- Doula Fan Girl now trained community doula through Health One Connect.
- Changed my outcomes with 3 children
- Birthed an organization that supports, empowers, and engages with birth workers such as doulas.

What is a Doula?

Provides **culturally appropriate** support and education.



Practice as a member of the team, **working collaboratively** with those providing clinical care and social services to pregnant person.



Expertise lies in the domain of **physical, emotional** support and **advocacy**.

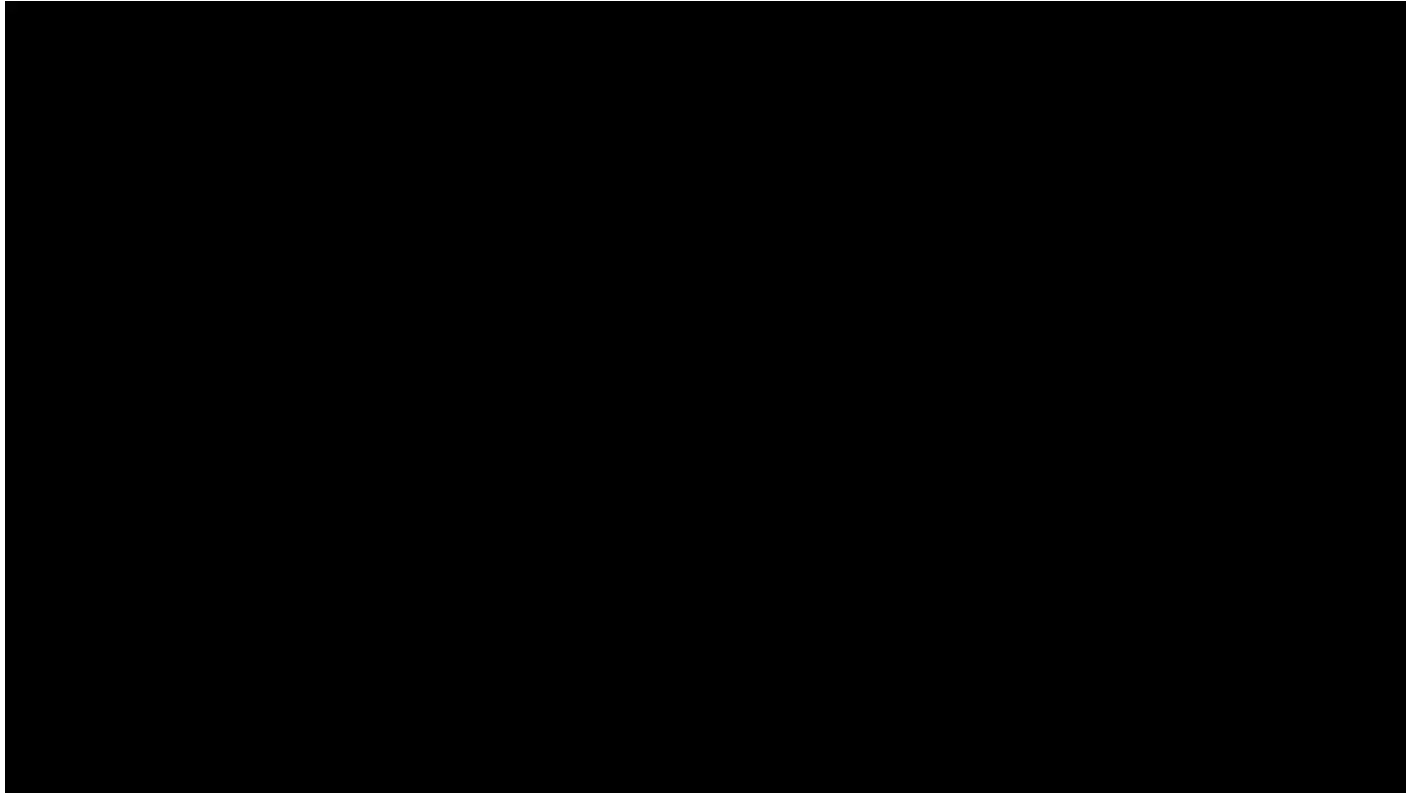


Establishes a trusted relationship from **prenatal to postpartum** periods

Our Heart Matter: Juquita & Tia's Story

Meet Quita & Tia→

JuQuita's Story





Birth 1: Let's Compare



Quotes From Quita – Birth 1

“I didn’t know nothing”

“I was scared”

“I was up and down”

“I was always sick”

“I was terrified”

“I didn’t know what to do”

“My mom and child’s father didn’t know how to support me”

“It was rough”



Birth 2: Let Talk!



Quotes From Quita – Birth 2

“I knew so much”

“I had options”

“I spoke affirmations over me and my baby”

“Me and my baby were a team”

“I didn’t know I could have this feeling”

“I didn’t feel rushed”

“My mom and child’s father didn’t know how to support me”

Evidence + Lived Experience



Other Things That Happen!

Quita had the baby before Tia was granted access to the room

Quita's Mom and child's father knew their role and supported her.

She knew what to do the entire time because Tia had prepared her for birth.

Malani had to have surgery immediately following birth.

Tia and Quita met at her home, coffee shops and parks as she prepared for birth.

Quita advocated and felt safe with the NICU nurses and her doula, she said the hospital staff was amazing!

Postpartum transition & care for Quita was joyful in birth 2 vs birth 1.

Takeaways:

1. Continuous support changes outcomes.
2. The relationship starts early and connects often.
3. Collaborative planning builds trust
4. Empowered families strengthen communities.
5. Trained doulas are a significant part of the birth team.
6. Doulas are multifaceted – not only do they provide emotional and physical comfort they fill the gaps in birth education, infant care & safety and chest/breastfeeding education.



"Birth Work is Heart Work"



Reflections! Q&A

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Thank you!