

Transcript of Interview with Ife Adebowale by Kit Heintzman

Interviewee: Ife Adebowale

Interviewer: Kit Heintzman

Date: 02/28/2022

Location (Interviewee): Columbus, Georgia

Location (Interviewer):

Transcribed By: Angelica S Ramos

Some of the things we discussed include:

The loss of Black and Brown history, and the whitewashing of Black and Brown histories when told; Black women in the history of midwifery, wetnursing, and caring for babies. Deciding to become a doula based on a personal traumatic experience during pregnancy. Not wanting other mothers to experience traumas. Delivering own child. How hospital visitation restrictions during COVID impacted doula presence in hospital. Gap in healthcare treatment for Black and Brown women; the pandemic exposing this. Fears that the pandemic would reduce women's interest in doulas; grateful to have been wrong about this. The pandemic changing people's ideas of health, and with that pregnancy. Networking in person pre-pandemic and creative problem solving for distance or support. Transitioning a birth education class from in person to online; expanding the audience globally. Support for fathers to better support mothers. Encouraging delayed cord cutting. Placenta encapsulation, belly binding, lotus births, maternity planning, blessingway. The ethics of hospitals keeping the placenta and using it for research. Keeping grounded: meditation, journaling, being in nature, gratitude, affirmations. Listening to positive music and affirmations to move forward with positivity. The pandemic bringing people to closer; watching how much people care; feeling a part of a bigger "we". Government splitting people apart; elitism; global wealth inequality. Slow political change; the difference between increased awareness and systemic change. Community based doulas—those outside of a handful of approved doula associations—not being permitted in the hospital; that these associations are predominantly white; historical connections to the experiences of Black midwives; financially punitive access to professional organizations; hierarchies in the profession based on education vs. apprenticeship. Being pro-Black. A Mother Earth being denied authority over pain medication and management and advocating for the mother. Having to be home more; having more time to be a mother and give own children emotional support. The difference between curing an ailment and treatment. Having had COVID, vitamins, rest; experiences happening for a reason. BigPharma, for profit healthcare, vaccines; alternative medicine; preventative care. Mandates and infringing on rights. Getting engaged during the pandemic; being supported by a partner while sick. The alkaline body and health. Talking with children about COVID in plain speech; not talking down to children. The difficulty of self-care when considering the needs of five children and a partner; learning to perform selfcare.

Kit Heintzman 00:00

Hello.

Ife Adebowale 00:01

Hi.

Kit Heintzman 00:03

Would you please start by stating your full name, the date, the time and your location?

Ife Adebowale 00:08

Yes, ma'am. My name is Ife Adebowale. Today's date is February the 28th 2022. The time is 11:05am. Eastern Time, and I am located in Columbus, Georgia.

Kit Heintzman 00:25

And do you consent to having this interview recorded, digitally uploaded and publicly released under a Creative Commons license attribution noncommercial sharealike?

Ife Adebowale 00:35

Yes, ma'am.

Kit Heintzman 00:36

Would you please start by introducing yourself to anyone who might find themselves listening to this? What would you want them to know about you and the place you're speaking from?

Ife Adebowale 00:45

Yes, well, good morning, good afternoon or good evening to anyone that is listening. Again, my name is Ife Adebowale. And I am the founder and owner of cherishing life beginnings, doula, birth and educational services, LLC here in Columbus, Georgia. Our mission here in Columbus, Georgia, right now we are a community based service organization. So our mission here in Columbus, Georgia is to be able to provide low cost affordable care, to those mothers that aren't able to, you know, to afford a doula or a birth worker in general. We are here to aid with alleviating the systematic and structural racism in the healthcare system. And we are also here to just be advocates. We are a organization that is advocates of home births, natural births, unassisted births, and advocates for breastfeeding. So in a nutshell, we are here to provide any and everything that a mother earth needs when she is going through pregnancy, labor and postpartum.

Kit Heintzman 02:02

What brought you on the path to do this work?

Ife Adebowale 02:04

Interesting enough, my path began from my own personal experience. Back in 2011, I had a really traumatic experience in the hospital when I had my third baby. So I had told myself, you know, if I got pregnant again, I would do it differently. I wouldn't have a hospital birth, I would seek an alternative route. So moving forward in 2015, I got pregnant again, and I stood on my word. So I began just looking into the community seeing you know, if there was anybody that assists mothers with homebirths, you know, anybody that could provide resources and knowledge and there were very few slim and far in between. I did end up finding a midwife based out of Atlanta who was about an hour and a half away from me. I actually got in touch with her. We talked, I hired her. And she was actually the inspiration of me becoming a doula. She actually [inaudible] me. She told me just, you know, talking to me and being my being my midwife. She just saw the character in me of nurturing and loving and, you know, really intuitive and wanting to know so much about what she did. She was like, I think you would be great at being a doula. I had no clue what a doula was so I smiled, it was like, Okay, but when she left, I actually went and I dug into like, what is a doula? And upon my discovery, I learned that a doula was just a woman, a woman,

servant, someone that comes in and assists the family with education. Whether it be you know, informational education, a spiritual aspect, you know, if she's going through any type of trauma, being able to assist her in healing, you know, so that that would bring forth a more positive childbirth. So once I discovered what a doula was, it it was like an eye opener. And I do do not believe in coincidence. The ancestors, you know, the most high creator in the universe, you know, they they all conjured together and they was like, Hey, we know you don't notice, but you're gonna end up delivering this baby alone with just you and your husband, so you better learn everything that you can. And when that was downloaded in me, I took that approach and my midwife wasn't present when I gave birth to my fourth daughter, but I was prepared. My you know, I prepare my he's now my ex husband, but I prepared my husband at the time and we had a unassisted home water birth, with nobody but us. And it was the most beautiful experience the most empowering experience that I ever had in my life. And I told myself that I have to share this with other women, like if I went through this, you know, and I came out of this empowered other women or, you know, other persons need to know about this. And that's how cherishing lives beginnings was born.

Kit Heintzman 05:36

What you're telling me a story about what life has been like for you during the pandemic?

Ife Adebowale 05:42

Well, interesting enough, I am a, you know, I'm a private owner. So I really don't work in the hospital as much. Being a doula, you know, some doulas really work in the hospital. So I attend a lot of home births. Now, since the pandemic has occurred, it has, you know, made me sit down and reevaluate the way my business is structured. Because I do have women that want to be in the hospital. But due to different restrictions of the hospital will only have one one support person, I had to figure out creative ways to be able to support my mothers if I'm not there present. So, pandemic has definitely challenged me to be more creative in my business, it has actually drawn more business to me because a lot of mothers are afraid to go into the hospital complex, because pregnancy is not a sickness, but going into a hospital where everybody is sick and trying to be healed. A lot of mothers don't want to take that risk. So it has been a plus, for me as a private owner, organization. But it also has been you know, for my Doula friends that work in the hospital, hospital setting, it has been difficult, because, again, the restrictions that they have there, so.

Kit Heintzman 07:22

To the extent that you're comfortable sharing, would you say something about your own experiences of health and healthcare infrastructure before the pandemic?

Ife Adebowale 07:31

Okay. Well, prior to the pandemic, again, I had a traumatic experience in the hospital setting. So therefore, you know, it has been my goal to ensure that mothers do not experience those type of things. So prior to the pandemic, I was a sports educator, I wanted to teach women to empower them, and to ensure that these types of things that did not happen, now that the pandemic is here, and more, again, more women are, have become more aware of things, and they are looking for individuals to assist them, whether it's in a hospital setting, or whether it's at home. So from my personal experience, you know, there is a gap in the healthcare system when it comes to black and brown women. That is statistically proven, you know, if you go out and do your research, but at the same essence, I think because of this, is bringing a lot of awareness, and I'm beginning to see a lot of different changes, because of these different restrictions and things that are coming to the forefront. So I would like to say from the

past to now, the pandemic has really brought out a lot of things to head. He's brought a lot of things to head, and things are becoming a things are being addressed now. So in essence, I would say COVID hasn't been as bad when it comes to the development and the growth of the healthcare system and the gap that's there when it comes to black and brown women. So.

Kit Heintzman 09:36

Do you remember when you first heard about the pandemic?

Ife Adebowale 09:39

Yes. I do. Remember when I first heard about the pandemic. And I was actually I can't say I was afraid or terrified, but I knew something was coming and change was coming. And you know, we're here.

Kit Heintzman 10:09

What were some of your initial reactions once the pandemic arrived?

Ife Adebowale 10:15

My initial reactions, [children in the background] and I do apologize. Excuse me, I'm sorry. Some of my initial reactions to the pandemic, when I when I first heard about it was, you know, how, how is this going to affect my business? How is this going to affect my family? And how's it going to affect those that I actually worked with? So, I, in my mind, I actually thought things were going to be worse. As far as the business. I thought women just really weren't going to be seeking doulas because of the dynamics of things. But I was pleasantly surprised.

Kit Heintzman 11:24

What was your day to day life looking like pre pandemic? And then how has that changed over the course of a pandemic?

11:33

Well, pre pandemic, again, as I stated, things were just a little slower, pre pandemic, because women weren't really curious about home births and waterbirths. And, you know, it wasn't trendy. So to say, even though I don't think this is a trend, now, I think this is gonna be permanent, you know, women are really, really need this assistance. But prior to pandemic, things were slower. Women really weren't interested in the services that I was providing, because all was well. But now that the pandemic has happened, again, it just, it has just brought things to head and made individuals just really think more about their health and their birth rights and how they actually want a birth as opposed to someone telling them how to birth.

Kit Heintzman 12:35

Describe some of the services you offer as a doula and then how, what if any accommodations needed to be made during COVID?

Ife Adebowale 12:43

Okay, well, the first service that I provide is certified birth and postpartum services. This is basically where we come out to families. And we provide educational, spiritual, mental and emotional support during pregnancy, labor and postpartum. Again, when I stated earlier, as far as the creativity of my organization, when COVID hit, it had, it put me in a mindset where I had to figure out more creative ways to get to women because number one, we

were enclosed, so I wasn't able to go out in network and speak to women and you know, just see a pregnant woman and you know, pass on my business card. So it definitely made me become more creative by going virtual, create creating a virtual platform for women in the hospital, so that I could be there for them. It required us getting a lot more in tune with one another because a mother always would have to, she couldn't feel me or seem, you know, feel me or sometimes see me physically. So we actually had to really get in tune to one another where, you know, although I'm on the other side of the telephone, or you know, I'm on a laptop and she's in the bed, she can spiritually connect with me and understand what I'm telling her and I understand what she telling me and me actually, you know, internally you know, filling and connecting with her so I can let her know you know how to handle the next contraction that's coming up, prepare her for that next contraction is coming up because I'm there timing, I'm in essence with her. It also allowed me to go virtual with my birth educational classes. Women still want birth education, but didn't feel comfortable being in a group setting. So I had to be creative and, you know, create a virtual childbirth class in order to continue to educate the community. The other services that I provide I am a birth doula instructor. So once again, just like the educational piece with the mothers, I had to stop my in person, child, excuse me, my birth training classes. And I had to put those online, which was actually a phenomenal thing, because I've reached so many more women, internationally, you know, stateside, opposed to just the women that are in the city of Columbus, Georgia. So, you know, a situation that initially started out bad, actually turned into something very good for my business. But I cannot say that across the board. Other services that I do provide is placenta encapsulation. We provide breastfeeding or lactation services, we provide belly binding services, and that's basically belly you using a Banku, belly binding claw, mousseline cloth, actually, and you wrap the mother's abdomen, to and this actually assists with getting mother organs back position in place. And it also assists with weight loss. As far as I hate to say this, but the flap that's left after pregnancy, it also assists with getting the elasticity of the skin back. So those are the services that I currently provide. And we are looking to add so much more to our portfolio. Oh, and I did forget to mention, I also do maternity planning. We do blessing ways. And for those that do not know what a blessing ways, if you are familiar with a baby shower, that's a time where every family, every friends, family come in and they give and celebrate baby, while blessing way is the opposite. This is a time where you come in and you celebrate the mother, the rice, the rites of passage coming from, you know, a woman into motherhood. And we just pour into Mother we celebrate her we love on her. And it's just a beautiful event for mother and friends. So that's those are the services that we currently provide.

Kit Heintzman 17:33

There's been a lot of talk from teachers in like high school and college and elementary settings about how different online teaching was. What was teaching online, how did that feel different for you, given the difference between teaching, like parental education classes, but also teaching other potential doulas?

Ife Adebowale 17:53

Well, I can definitely say I am one that enjoys in person better, I actually enjoy hands on interaction. Because when you're teaching both a mother or a student, you actually want to be able to teach them comfort measures to be able to assist a mother or for a mother to be assisted. So being able to demonstrate these things hands on and a mother, you know, a birth worker being able to work with a mother and showing her how to do these things or showing, showing the father how to do these things. So it has been a challenge with it being virtual, but we make it work, you know, we provide instructional videos, to show them where they can go back and look at these videos. Okay, this is how I should breathe. And I can practice these breathing mechanisms or, okay with the father and the mother. Well, Dad, these are things that you can do to assist the mother and they can go back and watch

these videos and practice on their own for, too perfect, as opposed to, you know, me being hands on showing them. So, again, it's it was a bit difficult. But, you know, in all things, changes only thing unedible inevitable. And we had to make it work. So we have.

Kit Heintzman 19:25

How have some of the other like, I'm not sure how other services may or may not have had to have changed. So does something like Placenta Encapsulation, does that have to have changed from what you were doing before to what you are doing now?

Ife Adebowale 19:38

As far as the placenta encapsulation, that really didn't change much from then to now, of course, there are a bit more restrictions on it. So we had to create a contract that we provide to the hospitals so that they know that you know when Mother Earth has had her baby we will be there, we have all the guidelines, as far as you know, when it comes to the Biohazard and all that good stuff. Gloves, we have everything that's required. So it's not really a difference in that opposed to it just being a bit more restricted. And the guidelines being a little bit more stricter, which is a good thing, because you know, you are dealing with dealing with an organ. So.

Kit Heintzman 20:28

Would you say a little about the value of placenta encapsulation?

Ife Adebowale 20:31

Yes, yes, placenta encapsulation. So, first of all, I want to kind of break this down. So if you decide that you do not want to consume your placenta, which a lot of women do not, I do encourage delayed cord clamping. Now in a hospital setting, this is kind of difficult, because they really will not allow the cord, the placenta and cord to stay attach no longer than about five or 10 minutes, which is not beneficial at all, in the hospital setting. So unfortunately, with that being stated, Placenta Encapsulation is very important, because a Mother Earth can, instead of allowing the hospital to use the placenta, for stem cell research and things of that nature, the mother actually can consume those things and get that nutrients back to the baby, the placenta house about 1/3 of blood volume that the baby needs. And when that cord is cut early, the baby doesn't receive that blood, which can cause a lot of illnesses along the line in a child's life. So but to kind of talk on the benefits of the placenta encapsulation, you know, with a mother ingesting her placenta, it aides with milk production, it ate with the quality of the milk, it aids the mother with getting her body back in order because of the hormonal it aids with balancing the hormones, things of that nature. And again, with the baby, not receiving the blood, like the stem cells to antibiotics and things of that nature. When the placenta is encapsulated, the mother will receive this and in turn, she gets that back to the baby. So that's one of the beautiful things about placenta encapsulation. Or another way you can do this is a lotus birth and a lotus birth is when you keep the umbilical cord and placenta attach into it severs naturally from the baby. By doing this, everything transfers directly into the baby a mother doesn't consume anything, everything is directly transferred to the baby, when you do the Lotus birth. And again, the benefits, the baby receives all of his blood. So you won't have situations in the future where there's like iron deficiencies, things of that nature. It assists. Again, the antibiotics, the nutrients, the stem, blood cells, all of these things are transferred, transported back into the baby. So either of those options are beautiful. But one option that I think hospitals really need to recognize is really allowing for a delayed cord before they clamp, allowing that to stay on at least an hour and a half or into the cord completely stops pulsating.

Kit Heintzman 23:56

How has your role in emotional and spiritual support changed during the tumultuousness of COVID?

Ife Adebowale 24:06

Ah, well, I must say that during this period of COVID, I have come very grounded and rooted into my spirituality. I think that I believe which this is what this is about, but things that I believe I see coming to fruition when it comes to you know, the government, you know, the world so, it's just really has put me in the mind set of, you know, getting myself grounded, spiritually, keeping my family grounded, ensuring that you know, they understand what's going on, but keeping a strong mind a sound heart, you know, and remaining humble. Because there are a lot of things going on out here. You know, and we're easily distracted by our day to days and you know, the things that TV distract us with or with peers distract us with but so lot going on out here. So spirituality has been my go to, to keep me where I need to be.

Kit Heintzman 25:26

How do you ground yourself spiritually?

Ife Adebowale 25:29

As far as my spiritual ground, grounded some gonna say that's probably not a word. What I like to do is be in nature. I hug trees, I meditate, I do a lot of journaling, I do a lot of writing. But yes, if I had to give a small regimen, in the mornings, I wake up, when I open my eyes, before I do anything, I give gratitude, to the most high to the ancestors creators, just for giving me life, you know, for all the things that has happened in my life, all the things that they have set forth, just giving gratitude, that's the start of the day. Next week, in front of our altar, we give thanks. You know, I lite my candles, I say your prayer, do a little journaling. And then I usually get my day started. And in between, in the meantime, I'm always listening to positive inspirational music affirmations. Because, again, it's just so much negativity out here in the world, I just try to consume and keep everything around me positive, so that I can remain optimistic grounded in, you know, being able to move forward with the mission that has been set forth for me.

Kit Heintzman 27:01

Are you willing to share a bit about some of the, because the last few years have been so much more than COVID? Right, like last few years have been a lot? Would you be willing to say something about some of the other issues that have been touching you impacting you, that you've been thinking with over the last few years?

Ife Adebowale 27:21

Well, over the past few years, just a lot of the injustices that has been occurring has really been hard. You know, and I think it's a beautiful thing, because it has brought the American people closer, you know, those that see the bigger picture, and understand, you know, right from wrong, you know, we all have our different ideas, and we've all been bred certain ways, but the unity of the people has really been powerful for me, I am a woman that you know, is pro black. And being pro black. That means that, you know, I love everybody, but I put my culture first, you know, because we're at the bottom of the totem pole, you know, in everything, you know, it just it is what it is. So, you know, seeing the unity amongst all people, White Black, Chinese, Mexican so on that has really, like, set a light in me, because it makes me realize that you know, even though we all have our differences, and we all believe what we believe at the end of the day, we all bleed the same blood. And we're all going through the same struggles. And nobody struggle is any better than anybody's no matter what walk of life they're in. So that has

been very detrimental even in me continuing to build up my business. Because again, I've catered to low income, I've catered to the Black and Brown individuals, but because of because of what I see now is like, you know what, I shouldn't put a cap on this, you know, continue to help my people. But in essence, this is about everybody, not just us, or them is a we. So that's one of the biggest things that you know, even though even though we don't get all the justices that we should you know, just knowing that individuals care outside of my own race like they really care like in, in history, you know, we we've been kind of groomed to think that nobody cares about others but us, you know. So getting outside of that, and embracing unity amongst all people has been something very impactful, special special, and has been a influence in what I do now.

Kit Heintzman 30:20

You had mentioned in your introduction, becoming interested in being a doula as a part of a response to systemic medical racism. And I would love to hear things that you have to share about how you how you've pursued that intervention. And if it does, or doesn't look different during COVID.

Ife Adebowale 30:47

Okay, so as far as the systematic and structural racism, Kit, it goes so deep queen, that would probably be a subject that we would have to have a whole nother two hours on. But to try to put it in a nutshell from the past, present and COVID. Much hasn't changed systematically. Awareness is being brought out about the situation. You know, you have I take that back. Things are changing. Laws and regulations are changing. doulas are becoming more prominent in today's society in the hospital complexes being accepted in the hospital complex. One restriction of that though, which saddens me is that community, doulas. There's a restriction of community doulas in the hospital setting because of COVID. They have a list of organizations, which are mostly white affiliated organizations that are allowed in the hospital. That's DONA, CAPPa and Inca, those are the leading doula organizations but those are also the leading white or Caucasian doula organizations. If you are outside of that, you are not allowed in hospital setting. So sadly, it kind of goes back to the the alleviation of black midwives is kind of the same cycle that's happening right now. So unfortunately, things are changing. But not necessarily changing in a direction that in compass every doula, you know, they're putting restrictions on who can be in the setting, which, and I apologize, they're putting restrictions on who can be in the hospital setting, which intern the community, doulas we're now faced with, okay, we're either just gonna have to do the work in the community, assisting mothers who want home births, or we're gonna have to figure out another route into getting into the hospital setting and the only route would be is spending more money in order to get affiliated with the right, the right organization to get into the hospital setting. So unfortunately, even with the progressive movement forward, we're still striding backwards when it comes to black and brown doulas being in the hospital settings.

Kit Heintzman 34:02

Would you be willing to share anything about having having dedicated so much time and attention to questions of racism in the medical setting and context around pregnancy? Do you have observations about racism in the government management of COVID?

Ife Adebowale 34:22

Um, no, because the hospital births that I dealt with during COVID Because I advocated for my mother's it actually ended up it almost ended up being an incident with one of my mothers because she didn't believe in all of the interventions of the hospital. And she didn't want him. They make you sign forms when you go into the hospital and most time women don't read them, they just they just sign him and then when things happen They

just kind of go with the flow. Well, she wasn't that mother, she read every word and the things that she didn't believe in or didn't agree with, she marked out. So when the midwife and the OB came in, they she was asking for a little bit of pain medicine to relieve some of her pain, and they would not give her any pain medication until they went through that form, to ensure that what she marked out was, I guess what she was competent, you know, that, making sure this is what she wanted, even though she knew this is what she wanted. You know, she's laboring. So now I had to advocate like, No, this is what we want, you know, she has signed the document. Now, if there are any issues, you know, if you need to go over whatever you need to go over do that. But you're prolonging and you're hindering the process of birth. So we need to go ahead and get this out of the way. So if I wouldn't have been there, I think it would have been an issue. And that is just one of the many examples of you know, us not having a voice in health care system light, you do what we tell you to do, or you don't receive service. And that's so unfair. So that's an example that I can give recently, that just happened, where I as a doula had to actually advocate for the mother, in order for her to get what was required.

Kit Heintzman 36:35

May ask what your experiences have been like, as a mother during a pandemic?

Ife Adebowale 36:42

Well, honestly, as a mother, it has been a really good thing. I've had to be home more. And I have five children. So I've had to be home more, which made me able to focus time and attention more to my children. So it definitely has not been a negative thing, it's been very positive, because it allowed me to slow down. And not only, you know, think about my business, come up with great ideas, but it also allowed me to be a mother, you know, not the hustle and bustle of life, you know, just trying to make money and make sure your family is good, but actually giving them the emotional support that they need, you know, taking the time out and doing one on one things with them. Because as a birth doula, I'm sure you can imagine, you know, having two to four clients of mine, during birth education, you know, it can be very overwhelming, very time consuming. So I really appreciated COVID, you know, not the deaths and all the negatives that came from it. But all the good and positive that it that did come from it. As far as the business bringing me closer to my family. Me and my partner, we got closer, we got engaged, so we're getting ready to get married. So it's just yay. It's just been a really grand experience outside the negativity that was around it, because I did lose three family members from it as well. So.

Kit Heintzman 38:34

I'm curious, what does the word health mean to you?

Ife Adebowale 38:39

What does health mean? I am going to give you a phrase that basically Psalms what it means health is well, when you take your health into consideration, a lot of things that we deal with in life, just from our health, you know, understanding the foods that we eat, you know, for example, salty potato chips. They say that when you eat a lot of salty foods that you're dealing with stress, what is it called? You're dealing with stress that you haven't dealt with. And I don't know if that makes sense. But you have stress and you haven't dealt with the issue that has caused it. So a lot of people that have you know those food, indulges a lot of times that comes from stress, it comes from issues and problems and it's very important to understand the the root of that. So when you understand your health, and you began to understand the route, and unlike our healthcare system, you know, it's more of a treat, They treat, they don't necessarily cure the problem. So when I think about hills, I think about a cure, I think about getting to the root and plucking that root up to ensure that whatever it is that that is negative,

that is no good to me that is no longer there, because we've completely gotten rid of it. Same thing comes down to our health, we have to dig in and understand what's causing these ailments. So that we can have a better way of dealing and curing the problems opposed to just treating.

Kit Heintzman 40:42

What are some of the things that you want for your own health?

Ife Adebowale 40:46

As far as my own health, just just as my body has done, continue to function properly. You know, I had COVID, you know, I talked to a lot of different people that have had it, it took me down for two days, I had a lot of body ache, a body pain, but I fast for two days, those two days, I just fast and drunk water and just rested, I took my zinc, I took my magnesium, you know, I tried to get out in the sun as much as I could. And after those two days, I was able to get out the bed again, I was still feeling kind of grouchy and lightheaded. But just knowing that my body was able to kick COVID. But you know, because I have kept it to a place where my body is alkaline enough to be able to fight off things to where it just doesn't, it yes, it attacks, but it doesn't take me out. So my overall goal is optimal health, I just want to be able to be healthy. So if you know something enters into my body, my body is capable of fighting it off without me having to go get help blessed that I am able to be able to go get help. But that's my envision my goal of having optimal health to where my body just naturally does rejuvenate, does what it needs to in order to heal me opposed to having to get on a whole bunch of pharmaceutical drugs going in to get, you know, certain type of tests being done every month. Yes, that.

Kit Heintzman 42:42

What was the emotional experience like of catching COVID?

Ife Adebowale 42:46

I was scared. I was I was actually very afraid. Because again, I had lost three family members. So when I when I initially I didn't well, honestly, I did not go get tested. So I cannot say 100% That I had COVID When it initially came, I thought it was just the flu. But all of the other symptoms, even though COVID is very similar to the flu in the cold. It was other symptoms that I was experienced that with COVID related outside of just the flu. So I was terrified. But again, you know, grounding myself in when I was laying in the bed, you know, not able to move because my body was hurting so bad. My head was hurting so bad. It was like I was floating hurtin in, in like, something was laying on my back. Like it was terrible. But, you know, just praying, praying, praying, just knowing that, you know, if God brings me to something, he's going to bring me through it, you know, I had to experience this for a reason, you know, just trying to keep myself positive, continuing with positive affirmations and, you know, trying to alleviate that fear because fear can consume us. So, you know, really alleviating that fear. Like, okay, this too shall pass. They did, and I'm grateful.

Kit Heintzman 44:22

Would you share a few of the affirmations that you've been using?

Ife Adebowale 44:25

Ah, yes, yes. Yes. One of my favorite affirmations is that I am healthy, which is quite a few. I'm sorry. I am healthy. I am wealthy. If God brings me to it, he will bring you through it. I am enough. I am in evitable world. My Peace is inevitable. I have to have peace is So many affirmations. But those are a few. And of course, you

know, I am grateful. I am grateful. That is one of it not one that is the first thing that I say when I wake up in the morning. I am grateful. So, those are

Kit Heintzman 45:15

what does the word safety mean to you?

Ife Adebowale 45:20

Safety? Safety to me means no harm coming to or against me, or anyone around me. Yeah, we'll go with that.

Kit Heintzman 45:40

There's been this really narrow conversation about safety under COVID. Like it's all of these tiny, tiny procedures that we do in our daily life. Thinking about that really small understanding of what safety means, what are some of the ways that you've been determining what feels safe for you and your family, with you?

Ife Adebowale 46:00

Well, as far as my family, when it comes to safety, I explain everything to my girls, and I don't explain it on like a little kiddie level. I explain things to not, I'm gonna use layman's terms. You know, because sugarcoating things is not good. So when it comes to my children, you know, I'm always telling them, you know, watch your surroundings, you know, be mindful of those that are in the room with you, you know, always be observant, of, you know, things that are going on, when it comes to hygiene is, you know, because of COVID, you know, always keep your hands clean, I'm always fussing at them about keeping their hands on sanitizer on which they never do. But you know, the importance of keeping your hands clean, don't put your hand in your face after you touch something, you know, at home is so hard, because they're girls, you know, teenagers, so, but trying to teach them organization, because organization is a part of safety. You know, you have to put plans and things in place in order to keep yourself safe. So these are different things that I do. I mean, it's more of just, you know, communicating safety procedures, and you know, of course, acting upon those things, because they, they do what they see. So if they see mommy washing her hands, every time she comes out the bathroom, or they see me using his sanitizer as I walk around, you know, they all tend to do the same thing. So yes mam.

Kit Heintzman 47:49

What's having a partner been like during the pandemic?

Ife Adebowale 47:52

You said was having a partner? Safety. Ensuring that, you know, if I'm incapable of handling something, for example, when I was sick, during COVID, he not only took care of me, but he took care, you know, the things that I would normally do. We took care of that. So definitely, security and safety with my partner has been a plus.

Kit Heintzman 48:28

How are you feeling about the immediate?

Ife Adebowale 48:32

I'm sorry, can you repeat that question?

Kit Heintzman 48:34

How are you feeling about the immediate future?

Ife Adebowale 48:38

Ah, how am I feeling about the immediate future? Honestly, I don't know what to feel is so much going on in the world right now. You know, honestly, I don't know what to feel. All I know is that we, as a people, as Americans, I mean, it doesn't even matter if you're American, but we as a people, we have to look outside of politics and religion and all these different things that keep us removed from one another distracted and divided and realize that nothing is going to change until we unite on all four fronts and really make the change that's necessary and I don't know if you are understanding the undertone to what I just said. But our government is not representing us properly. And because of it is causing a lot of chaos in the world. And is bringing even more division when there shouldn't be at all. So, again, I don't know what to think. All I know is that this is a spiritual warfare, not only a political one. So it's very important that we all begin to tap back into ourselves and really find who we are because we need it, we're going to need it, we're going to have to put our egos in differences aside, and really come together in order to fight the evils in this world. And it's not just a black and white evil, you know, is this an elitist evil.

Kit Heintzman 50:49

What are some of your hopes for a longer term future?

Ife Adebowale 50:55

I've got to say, sound like a little kid when I say this, but peace, world peace. That is, you know, I used to laugh when, you know, when a question is asked, you know, at pageants, it's like world peace, you know, when the leaders are asked is like, world peace, and here I am, is like world peace, like, my goodness, you know, is the energies, you know, we all feed off of each other, we're all energy energy doesn't die, it only transfer, you know, and until we can begin to realize how deep this this warfare that we're going into, you know, it's biological, spiritual, it's physical, it's political. But until we're able to understand these things, and look past the distraction of the TV, where it's just political, will never get to where we should be as a human race. It's enough money out here for everybody, you know, not one person should be in control of 90% of people, how they make their money, or when they can use it or, you know, so Yeah, most definitely world peace. You know, individuals just realizing that we need each other, you know, it doesn't matter your color. There bad people in all races, you know, they're bad black people, they're bad white people, Asian people, so we have to be able to filter out the bad and find the good, not only in our sales, but in those around us. So that we can begin to work together as one because we all when it comes to the essence of spirituality, religion, we're all oneness. You know, there's no difference in any of us. So I know that really don't speak on your question. But that's just what, that's what we need. Peace, everywhere, all aspects of love.

Kit Heintzman 53:11

What are some of the ways that you've been taking care of yourself over the last two years?

Ife Adebowale 53:17

Man, so for the last two years, one thing that I have really indulged in is self care. I am a mother of five, and I have a spouse. So of course, like, all everything I do is based around them. So you know, I have \$100, and, you know, I see a cute outfit for me, but I wouldn't get it knowing that hey, my baby girl need some shoes, or, Hey, I know, I gotta go get everybody's socks. So these last two years, really taking the time out to focus and love on

myself. And pouring back into myself has been detrimental. Because again, the type of work that I do is very exhausting. It's very draining, because we're bringing it forth life, you know, not draining in a bad way. But it does take a lot of energy out of you. So just taking the time to, you know, take a bubble bath at night, you know, or to sit down and read a book. Or just to again, just to get away from everything and everybody and go sit down at the river or go to the park and hug trees. You know, those. Those have been my go to these last two years because again, I've poured into everybody else and been on the go, go, go, go go. I just never took the time for self. So self care.

Kit Heintzman 54:52

We're nearing the end of my questions. So we know we're in this moment where all of these scientists are doing all of this, this research, right like they have to be to understand the virus better to work towards treatment management. I'm wondering what you think people in the humanities and social sciences can be doing right now. So that we also understand not just how this works, but also the human social experience. What can we be doing right now?

Ife Adebowale 55:24

I'm so sorry, Kit. I could not hear your question. Because of my three year old, complaining about something new. [speaking to her son] So you lost the remote? I'm sorry, you lost the remote. I need to finish my interview son, I'll be with you in a second. Just have a seat. Okay. Okay, can you please repeat that question?

Kit Heintzman 55:47

Yeah. So of course, what do you think people in the humanities and the social sciences should be doing right now and studying right now so that we can tell them your human side of the COVID story?

Ife Adebowale 56:01

Huh, no, that's an interesting question. As far as that, I would say that, it is very important for us to look for alternative ways of curing because there is a lot of research out there own alternative cures to COVID. But due to the pharmaceutical and the medical complex, the only cure is vaccine. Trying to find preventive measures, again, alternative preventive measures opposed to vaccines is vital. Because it's very important to understand that individuals, people, in general, you know, we have rights, and to impose on those rights by mandating things is not good. So I just think it's very important for preventive measures to be explored. And also finding alternative ways and actually listening to these alternative ways. Because we all know that if you change your diet, if you stop eating breads and sugars, and processed food, that that will automatically start eating fresh fruits and vegetables. And you know, we're all live food, we all know, and it's scientifically proven that the body on its own will go into an alkaline state. And diseases cannot live inside of an alkaline body. So I say that to say, is very important for the science, technology, all those different fields that are seeking cures, that they're looking at different ways, natural ways to heal the body, because God created a herb for everything, believe it or not, and there is a way to cure everything outside of, you know, using toxins and chemicals in, you know, a fetus and aborted fetus cells and all these different things that are inside of vaccines is a natural way to do it. So we should do that.

Kit Heintzman 58:51

I'd like you to imagine speaking to some historian in the future watching this, tell them what kinds of histories can't be forgotten. What do they need to write about now, that is imperative?

Ife Adebowale 59:11

Well, one thing that I think is imperative to write about now, outside of just the COVID, and how is affected and impacted our lives, but to also just kind of, and I don't know if this is possible, but just kind of do a backtrack. Let's let's go, let's go back these last 40 years and look at the advancements and what were the pros of this, what were the cons of this, okay, is this still sufficient now? Or is this something that was sufficient then because of the type of diseases and things of that nature that they dealt with? So actually re evaluating things from the past to bring And fourth, what is current and to alleviate was not an add to is very important. Just just thinking along the aspects of you know what I do, because a lot of times our history is lost. And when I say our history, black and brown individuals histories, are loss, and a lot of times our history is whitewashed as well. So it's very important for us to go back and look back at the things that we dealt with in the past things that worked things that were relevant, then and now. And if it's not, then we need to change that. So that would be something that I think is very, very important. Not only from a not only from a racial standpoint, but from a stance of, you know, we can't forget where we came from. We have to revisit those things. We have to keep those things that are relevant from our past and bringing those to the future. But the things that were, then that are no longer now, you know, we can keep these in some type of archive, you know, but let's not keep dancing and parading around things that worked in the past that we're in a different time now. You know, we have to bring forth what was good and alleviate, what wasn't it keep moving towards our future.

Kit Heintzman 1:01:47

I want to thank you so much for everything that you've shared with me today. And those are all of my questions. But at this point, I just want to open up some space. If there's anything you'd like to pass on to some imagined historian of the future, please say so now.

Ife Adebowale 1:02:04

Well, one thing that I would like to say is that I'm not sure what the future of midwifery and doula is going to be. But I do hope that that is this is something that continues to grow in every community, whether you're dealing with community based midwives, or doulas It is my hope that, you know, everybody can see the benefit of what the community based doulas and midwives are doing, as well as the ones that are working digitally, you know, do diligently in the hospital settings, you know, just bridging that gap between the two, because we both need each other. When things don't go right it in the hospital, I mean, in the home birth setting, that we have to transport to the hospital setting. And a lot of times we get slack, because it's like, well, you know, y'all you're on, that's negligent, what you're doing, and that's incompetent what you're doing, but in actuality is not you know that what we do is what we've done, since the beginning of times, we've always birth our babies at home, we've always assisted mothers with birth and babies, you know, we wet nursed our oppressors, children, you know, so like, birth work is what we do. And to be divided in the systems because of the way we choose the path we choose to take or the education, you know, hadn't formal education opposed to have an apprenticeship and direct hands on education, your education is no better than mine. So bridging the gaps trying to find a way to connect and everybody able to work in harmony. opposed to well, I work here and this is my what I do, and you work here and this is what you do, and nobody is willing to negotiate or compromise. So it is my hope that in the future, as the industry of midwives and doulas grow, that the gap is bridged between the two and the structural and systematic racism. Hopefully, those numbers are significantly lowered when this is watched. And if not, then we know that there's still a problem and we need to reevaluate, sit back down, do it together and move forward.

Kit Heintzman 1:04:50

Thank you so much.

Ife Adebawale 1:04:51

Thank you. Thank you so much. I really appreciate you Kit.