

**October 1, 2025**

Dear Community, Partners, and Friends,

It is with immeasurable joy and deep gratitude that I share this milestone with you. In alignment with a visionary 5-year plan, with support of our Board of Directors; and after ten years of leading Jamaa Birth Village as its Founding CEO I am formally retiring. As I am stepping into a new chapter, one marked by celebration, legacy, and the blessing of passing on the baton to a new leader of Jamaa — I am honored to welcome a successor who is bold, brilliant, and unwavering in her work at the intersections of African Indigenous Practices & Women's Leadership, Cultural Preservation, Education, and Communal Well-Being. My retirement welcomes in a leader with a dynamic global perspective and a visionary spirit, ensuring Jamaa will continue to rise, expand, and carry forward its mission with even greater strength.

What began as a vision sparked along the shores of Ghana and grew into Missouri's first Black-led midwifery clinic has now blossomed into a nationally and globally recognized, pioneering, cultural maternal health center. Together, we've not only cared for thousands of families, but we have also changed the story of what is possible when Black women, Black community members, and Black birth workers lead the way.

Being a trailblazer has been both humbling and demanding. At times, it felt as if I were walking through a dense forest where no path existed, clearing the way so that those who follow could walk freely, safely, and surely to nourishment, resources, and sacred care. Over a decade ago, there was a lack of support for Black Midwives or Black-led midwifery clinics in Missouri, less than 10-Black practicing doulas in St. Louis, and no coordinated pathways led by Black women or Black community birth workers that centered our families in dignity and truth in improving maternal health. Trailblazing comes with sacrifice, with wounds, and with criticism. But it also comes with the wisdom that leadership is not about being liked, or about being perfect and free without mistakes-but about carrying others on your back, and lifting them higher, leading with integrity even through the grit and grime, so that generations to come may flourish, and walk a clearer path to generational wellness.

The year of 2015 changed me. I remember the injustices that I experienced as a teen mother who was forced into labor prematurely beyond my comfort. I also remember feeling empowered and well supported once I received midwifery and doula care with my youngest child. Jamaa Birth Village was birthed from a space of disrupting systematic racism in maternal health. The vision bestowed upon me during my first visit to Ghana exposed me to the impact that this fight could make for Black families 100 years from now. These seasons of change were powerful incubators for vision, for listening to Spirit, for envisioning new pathways forward, and for laying the foundation-allowing me to spring forward when called to protest and activate against maternal health injustices. Many of you have watched me fight many injustices on this journey of lifting Black mamas, babies and families, and have joined me in those fights as advocates, allies and collaborators. So many of you have watched and supported me in evolving from a community member, mama, community librarian, Yoga teacher, community healer, doula, student midwife, to a pioneering midwife, doula trainer and Founder.

I thank you, so deeply for being a partner in this work. Your support with Jamaa Birth Village has allowed our growing community to inspire, care for, educate and support thousands of women, babies, families, leaders and providers from Missouri to Ghana; and I am forever grateful.

**Together and through my visionary leadership, Jamaa Birth Village has:**

- Birthed Missouri's first Black Certified Professional Midwife & Missouri's first Black CPM Preceptor
- Served thousands of families with free and low-cost midwifery, doula and mental health care
- Trained hundreds of doulas across the nation and in Missouri, successfully closing the doula disparity gap in the St. Louis region, through STL's first Black led doula training
- Launched Missouri's first Doula directory and BIPOC Doula collective
- Grew Black midwives in Missouri, inspiring and assisting over 20-Black women in becoming student midwives across the state
- Led Missouri's trailblazing and pioneering Doula Friendly Hospital Initiative, training hundreds of medical providers and students in local hospitals, colleges and universities, on the foundations of cultural congruence and the benefits of doulas & community midwives, instilling new policies across a large hospital system
- Launched Missouri's first Black Maternal Health Summit for Black Maternal Health Week
- Launched the state's first Black led Birth Center & Postpartum Retreat Haven initiative
- Improved birth outcomes across communities and racial backgrounds
- Advocated for Black maternal health rights at the state capitol-securing Doula Medicaid reimbursement in Missouri
- Received the prestigious Merck for Mothers Safer Childbirth Cities Initiative designation and award, alongside 23-additional awards, and 17-resolutions and proclamations from Congress to STL County
- Achieved 10-firsts & implemented over 5-Founder created innovative care models
- Launched the world's first African Indigenous Midwifery Museum & Library Research Institute
- Launched Missouri's first Black led-Midwifery school, Okunsola's School of Traditional Midwifery and so much more

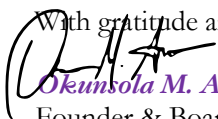
I'm honored to also share that I've worked diligently with the amazing team at Chicago Beyond-who've just announced a \$1million multi-year grant investment into The Historic Jamaa Birth Village Cultural Heritage Center, joining additional organizational grants secured by committed partners and funders-to ensure that Jamaa Birth Village continues to thrive, with its new leader starting with a strong foundation to elevate from, with trusted partners who believe in our shared vision, alongside a brilliantly backed team to journey with her through her leadership of the organizations next years.

As I retire from my role as CEO, my heart is full. Jamaa's impact has extended far beyond Ferguson, St. Louis, and Missouri, and it is now a movement that reverberates nationally and globally. And as we enter this new season, with a visionary leader at the helm, I am confident that Jamaa will continue to soar even higher.

To each mother, father, midwife, doula, student, elder, partner, and supporter: thank you. Thank you for walking with me, for trusting me, for believing in a vision that at times seemed impossible. Thank you for helping to prove that nothing is impossible when we walk together.

This is not goodbye; it is a sacred continuation. My future with Jamaa will continue as Board President Emeritus and organizational consultant. I now turn fully toward my calling as a Midwifery museum scholar, Midwifery Folklorist™, and cultural preservationist, and most importantly, spending more uninterrupted loving time with myself and family. I truly look forward to introducing you to The Historic Jamaa Birth Village Cultural Heritage Center's inaugural Chief Cultural Executive Officer in the coming weeks and celebrating with you at our grand re-opening this October 24-26, 2025, where together we will honor not only what has been built, but what is still to come.

With gratitude and joy,



**Okunsola M. Amadou, CPM (Retired)**

Founder & Board President Emeritus, Jamaa Birth Village