



Enlightened
SOLUTIONS

HEALTHCARE

Project Noir

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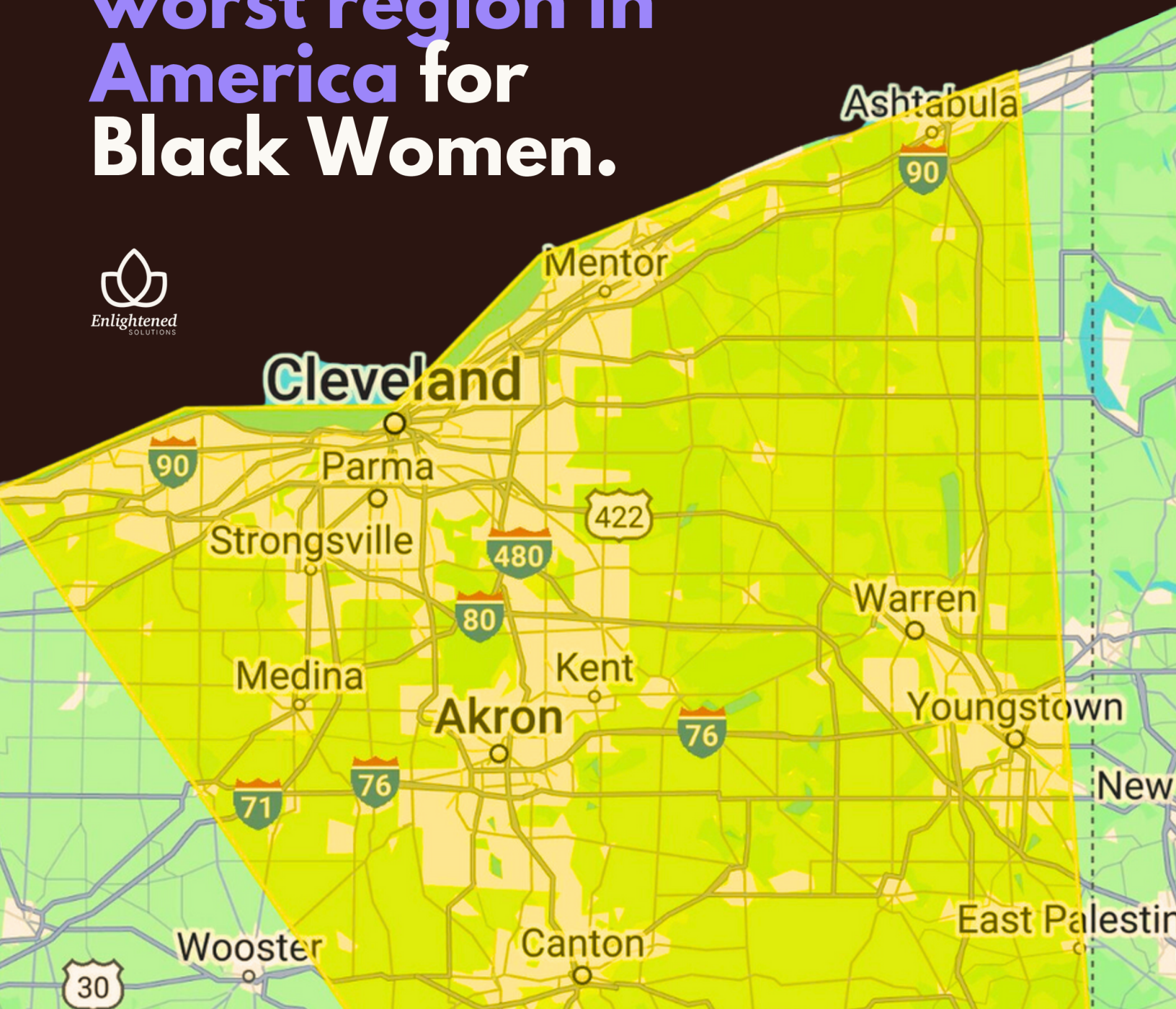
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In 2020, Northeast Ohio was ranked the worst region in America for Black Women.

Has
anything
changed?



For the full Project Noir report, head to projectnoir.org.



HEALTHCARE

GLOBAL ESTEEM. PERSISTENT DISPARITIES.

Despite our region's stellar global healthcare and healthcare innovation reputation,¹⁴ we must still underscore a troubling reality: health disparities continue to adversely affect Black Women and families seeking care at our local institutions.

And to preempt, these health disparities are not solely related to poverty.

Black Women of means, class, and education¹⁵ in Northeast Ohio experience some of the worst healthcare outcomes in the nation when being treated in traditional healthcare systems.

Northeast Ohio healthcare systems hyper-focus on weight, sexuality and reproduction, often neglecting other chronic or critical needs.

This narrow approach reinforces negative stereotypes and undermines comprehensive care, reflecting a broader failure to address the unique, intersectional needs of Black Women.

Black Women need Black healthcare providers. Black families need Black healthcare providers.¹⁶

How are leaders in healthcare business, recruitment, and educational institutions recruiting to Northeast Ohio actively and transparently investing in a comprehensive strategy?

Specifically, how are they allocating financial resources to educate, recruit, and retain Black medical providers, birth workers and advocates across diverse specialties into the region?

14. "Cleveland Industries | Health Care." This Is Cleveland, This is Cleveland, 2024.

15. Fishman, S. H., Hummer, R. A., Sierra, G., Hargrove, T., Powers, D. A., + Rogers, R. G. (2021). Race/ethnicity, maternal educational attainment, and infant mortality in the United States. *Biodemography and Social Biology*, 66(1), 1-26.

16. For the Fiscal Year July 2023 to May 2024, Village of Healing Center achieved 2,561 visits, doubling the total visits from the previous year. Additionally, 95% of mothers receiving care at the Village of Healing Center delivered at 37 weeks gestation or later. | Village of Healing Center, Fiscal Year Report (July 2023 to May 2024)



Healthcare Statistics

56%

of respondents have been spoken down to about their symptoms or health

55%

of respondents said they felt uncomfortable with a healthcare provider

40%

of respondents said the Healthcare staff's body language made them uncomfortable (refused to shake their hand, will not make eye contact)

42%

of respondents were made to wait for very long times while other patients with less severe issues are seen

41%

of respondents were told to lose weight or change their diet/exercise routine, when this is unrelated to the reason they came in (e.x. came in for an eye exam and told they need to lose weight)



Healthcare Statistics

35%

of respondents were told that their health issues are in their head or not real

35%

of respondents' healthcare provider refused to provide treatment or testing

29%

of respondents were given bad news without compassion or kindness (e.g. told they are very sick and not given any support or treatment options, told to stop crying)

30%

of respondents have been subjected to painful procedures without enough pain management

28%

of respondents had been subjected to inappropriate comments about their sex life (for example, Assuming their children have different fathers, or that they are unmarried)

Healthcare Statistics

10%

of respondents had procedures performed without their explicit consent or going beyond their given consent

13%

of respondents had Healthcare staff who used inappropriate language like “baby daddy”

27%

of respondents were pressured to get on birth control or other family planning tools

7%

of respondents were subjected to unnecessary breast exams

10%

of respondents were subjected to unnecessary pelvic exams



Healthcare Themes

BEDSIDE MANNER + OVERT CALLOUSNESS

One of the most ubiquitous issues faced by Black Women seeking healthcare in Northeast Ohio is the lack of adequate bedside manners among medical professionals.

This manifests as dismissive attitudes toward patient questions and concerns or a profound lack of empathy. Black Women also encounter interactions where concerns are minimized or outright disregarded.

The emotional toll of dehumanizing interactions with medical professionals can lead to a **reluctance to pursue necessary medical attention**, ultimately compounding chronic or critical health outcomes for Black Women across Northeast Ohio.

Cleveland's Black maternal healthcare crisis is marked by alarmingly high rates of infant and maternal morbidity as well as reduced life expectancy on Cleveland's East Side neighborhoods.¹⁷ These statistics ring true across Northeast Ohio in Lorain County, Stark County, Summit County and Trumbull County.¹⁸

“A nurse at the hospital made me feel incredibly uncomfortable during a pelvic ultrasound. **Her bedside manner was awful**, and she treated me like I was just a practice dummy rather than a human being.

I saw later that the hospital has terrible reviews, but I had already scheduled my appointment there.”

PROJECT NOIR 2024 PARTICIPANT



17. Oprea, Mark. “[Here Are the Best and Worst Northeast Ohio Neighborhoods and Suburbs for Life Expectancy.](#)” Cleveland Scene, Cleveland Scene, Sept. 2024

18. Tejada-Vera B, Bastian B, Arias E, Escobedo LA., Salant B, [Life Expectancy Estimates by U.S. Census Tract, 2010-2015.](#) National Center for Health Statistics. 2020.



Healthcare Themes

BARRIERS TO BODY AUTONOMY

The marriage of discriminatory healthcare practices and rapidly changing state and federal legal restrictions extends to limiting access to essential services such as prenatal and pregnancy management, and abortion healthcare for Black Women in and around Northeast Ohio.

Black Women face layered obstacles including financial and cultural barriers¹⁹ to fertility treatments²⁰ and a higher rate of surgical interventions for fibroid management²¹ compared to non-Black Women.

Biases around sexual behavior and reproductive choices lead healthcare providers to question the competence and decisions of Black Women concerning fertility, pregnancy, childbirth, and parenting.



These challenges are frequently worsened by negative stereotypes held by insurance companies, medical professionals, and hospital administrators.

America has seen the impact of such limitations as fatal and profoundly affecting Black families across the country.²²

All biases profoundly undermine Black Women's efforts to exercise reproductive body autonomy, often limiting access to necessary, less expensive and invasive care.

19. Goddard, Isabel, and Carolina Aragão. "A Growing Share of Americans Say They've Had Fertility Treatments or Know Someone Who Has." Pew Research Center, 14 Sept. 2023.

20. Mallenbaum, Carly. "What It Will Take to Eliminate Disparities in Fertility Care for Black Women." Axios, 2023.

21. "The health disparities of uterine fibroid tumors for African American women: a public health issue" Eltoukhi, Heba M. et al. American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology, Volume 210, Issue 3, 194 - 199

22. Surana, Kavitha. "Abortion Bans Have Delayed Emergency Medical Care. In Georgia, Experts Say This Mother's Death Was Preventable."



Healthcare Themes

ANTI-BLACK STEREOTYPES

Stereotypes contribute significantly to a hostile healthcare environment for Black Women, creating a cycle of disrespect and inequity that pervades every interaction within the healthcare system.

From the moment Black Women enter traditional healthcare facilities in Northeast Ohio, they often face stereotypes that compromise their dignity and quality of care.



This can start with interactions with security guards and receptionists, and extend to highly specialized providers who may set a negative tone and project biases throughout the visit.

Such biases continue with medical professionals who, through the lens of harmful stereotypes, may exhibit discriminatory treatment and a lack of respect for their genuine concerns.

The impact of these stereotypes is evident not only in individual interactions but also in the broader healthcare experience.

This systemic issue exacerbates existing health disparities, making it more challenging for Black Women to receive the comprehensive and respectful care they need.

“I overheard healthcare staff making derogatory comments about Medicaid, that implied patients with this insurance were ‘less valuable’ or ‘less important’ than those with other types of insurance or paying patients.”

PROJECT NOIR 2024 PARTICIPANT



Healthcare Themes

OVER SEXUALIZATION

Black Women and girls, regardless of experiences or specific health concerns, often face unwanted sexualized attention or assumptions about their sexual behavior.

The over-sexualization of Black Women in healthcare settings²³ is a deeply ingrained issue, illustrating the historical prevalence of racism and misogyny, particularly through the lens of the "Jezebel" stereotype.²⁴

This abhorrent stereotype depicts Black Women as "hypersexual" and "overly desirous," perpetuating harmful assumptions that their bodies are primarily objects of sexual gratification rather than human beings with genuine healthcare needs.

This objectification breaches professional boundaries and creates a hostile and uncomfortable environment.



For young Black Women and girls, over sexualization during healthcare appointments can be profoundly damaging, affecting their willingness to seek necessary care during adolescence.

"A white male gynecologist made comments about my **sexual activity with my husband** while he was actively doing my Pap smear.

It was extremely uncomfortable, and I felt incredibly **vulnerable** and **embarrassed**."

PROJECT NOIR 2024 PARTICIPANT

23. Chambers Jerald, Morgan. "[Respectable Women: Exploring the Influence of the Jezebel Stereotype on Black Women's Sexual Well-Being.](#)" 2018.

24. Pilgrim, David. "The Jezebel Stereotype - Anti-Black Imagery - Jim Crow Museum." jimcrowmuseum.ferris.edu, 2012, jimcrowmuseum.ferris.edu/jezebel/index.htm



Closing Thoughts

PAIN MANAGEMENT + IMPORTANCE OF BLACK PROVIDERS

Black Women are disproportionately affected by chronic pain on a physical level,²⁵ yet they frequently encounter substantial obstacles in obtaining high-quality and effective pain management within traditional healthcare systems.

This critical issue is characterized by the frequent underestimation and undertreatment of pain experienced by Black patients, highlighting broader systemic gender and racial biases and inequities in traditional healthcare systems.

These disparities are the result of individual decisions made by medical providers and teams of healthcare decision-makers, **reflecting a culmination of entrenched racial and gender biases within healthcare systems.**²⁶

The need for culturally competent care is paramount, and Black healthcare providers, both within traditional healthcare institutions and in transformative clinics play a crucial role in addressing these issues.

Black providers and support advocates who understand the unique experiences and challenges faced by Black Women are better equipped to offer empathetic, patient-centered care that addresses not only clinical needs but also the cultural and emotional well-being of their patients.²⁷

Clinics and organizations operating outside traditional healthcare models often emphasize this kind of care, advocating for patients in ways that prioritize their individual needs while still providing premium care with exceptional metrics.



25. Ndao-Brumblay, S Khady, and Carmen R Green. "[Racial differences in the physical and psychosocial health among black and white women with chronic pain.](#)" Journal of the National Medical Association vol. 97,10 (2005): 1369-77.

26. Mateo, Camila, et al. "[The Sociopolitical Context of the Unequal Treatment Report: Then and Now.](#)" The Urban Institute, 2024.

27. Snyder JE, Upton RD, Hassett TC, Lee H, Nouri Z, Dill M. "[Black Representation in the Primary Care Physician Workforce and Its Association With Population Life Expectancy and Mortality Rates in the US.](#)" JAMA Netw Open. 2023.



PROJECT NOIR 2024 CALL TO ACTION

Enlightened Solutions believes Northeast Ohio will be a national leader in racial and gender equity — especially for Black Women.

This Call to Action is a starting point, based on Project Noir research and themes. We can transform our region through these ideas and more; yet we need all industries—from elected officials to individuals—to commit and meet the moment.

Join us.

Elected Officials (Local, County, Regional, State and Federal)

Immediate Actions

Partner with Enlightened Solutions to craft longitudinal data-driven policies addressing pay inequity and workplace discrimination.

Draft and support legislative policies addressing pay inequity, workplace discrimination, and healthcare disparities.

Ongoing Advocacy Ideas

Champion accountability measures for hiring practices and pay transparency.

Form a Healthcare Equity Oversight Committee to monitor progress and propose new policies.

Establish a Workplace Equity Certification Program.

Workplaces

Immediate Actions

Collaborate with Enlightened Solutions to analyze workplace discrimination through legal frameworks.

Invest in internal equity programs focused on the needs of Black Women.

Ongoing Advocacy Ideas

Advocate for stronger protections against workplace discrimination.

Establish a Workplace Equity Certification Program offering financial benefits for equitable practices.

Healthcare

Immediate Actions

Implement data collection protocols focused on the health outcomes of Black Women.

Commit publicly to equity goals for Black Women, outlining specific objectives and timelines.

Ongoing Advocacy Ideas

Partner with Enlightened Solutions for longitudinal data-backed research studies on health disparities.

Advocate for funding for hospitals implementing health equity initiatives.

Education

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Immediate Actions

Create awareness Campaigns to address the targeted gender and racial challenges faced by Black Women and girls.

Ongoing Advocacy Ideas

Establish education equity task forces involving faculty, students, and external experts.

Advocate for the expansion of mental health services tailored to Black Women and girls.

Establish institution-wide task forces dedicated to addressing race and gender-based disparities by location.

Philanthropy and Community Groups

Immediate Actions

Support Project Noir fundraising for longitudinal, data-driven research and equity initiatives.

Engage with Enlightened Solutions to align efforts with broader philanthropic trends.

Ongoing Advocacy Ideas

Promote Project Noir 2024 through local and national platforms.

Collaborate with Enlightened Solutions on events discussing outcomes of Project Noir 2024 and next steps by industry.

Individuals

Immediate Actions

Promote and spotlight Project Noir 2024 themes.

Post and tag @WorkEnlightened on social media and use the hashtag #ProjectNoirCLE to connect with others.

Ongoing Advocacy Ideas

Co-host advocacy events with Enlightened Solutions to explore key themes.

Advocate for policy changes addressing disparities in workplaces, healthcare, and education.

Donate to Enlightened Solutions via Project Noir research to further their impact.

Media

Immediate Actions

Launch dedicated features focusing on the experiences of Black Women in Northeast Ohio.

Partner with community organizations to co-produce accurate, impactful content.

Ongoing Advocacy Ideas

Diversify newsrooms to authentically reflect community challenges and successes.

Facilitate public discussions featuring Black Women leaders and experts.





Listen to Project Noir Podcast Clips

Find
"Project Noir by Enlightened Solutions"
on these podcast platforms:



SPOTIFY



RSS



APPLE

Featuring the **anonymous, re-recorded lived experiences of Project Noir 2024 participants**. Each short podcast clip offers a creative way for listeners to engage with the Project Noir 2024 report.

We want to make sure that each experience is not reduced to mere statistics; each vignette captures the emotional and personal nuances that statistics alone cannot convey.

#ProjectNoirCLe





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