'We shouldn't be losing our lives': Death of Olympian reignites Black maternal health conversation

By Akilah Davis
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The conversation around Black maternal health is back in the national spotlight after U.S. Olympic Champion sprinter Tori Bowie died.
DURHAM, N.C. (WTVD) -- The conversation around Black maternal health is back in the national spotlight after U.S. Olympic Champion sprinter Tori Bowie died from complications of childbirth.

"I was in pain. I was invisible and no one was listening to me," recalled Brittany Turner.

The Raleigh mother miscarried four times and was worried she'd lose her son too. She said doctors didn't take her pain seriously when she was in labor.

"There was still no urgency or concern until someone put something on me and saw that my baby and body were in distress. Then I was believed," she said.

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According to BlueCross BlueShield of North Carolina, the Tar Heel state has the 11th highest infant mortality rate in the country. Black, American Indian and Hispanic babies are up to 2.4 times more likely to die in the first year of their lives. Black birthing people
have the highest maternal mortality rate in the country and are 3 to 4 times more likely to die during childbirth.

The ABC Owned Television Stations Equity Report found twice as many Black residents and six times as many Hispanic residents do not have health insurance in Raleigh and Durham metro areas compared to white residents.

"These disparities and health concerns or increased health burdens occur for Black women no matter what our economic status is," said Dr. Keisha Bentley-Edwards with Duke University's Samuel Dubois Cook Center on Social Equity.

Experts call maternal and infant mortality a public health crisis. Edwards shared critical solutions in the form of doulas and advocates for women that she believes could help turn the tide.

"They're like why do we keep bringing up all these bad news? It's because the news hasn't changed. We need to keep talking about it until we can get these numbers down," she said.

Today Turner's youngest son Brayden is almost two years old. While she would like more children, it's a risk she's not willing to take.

"We shouldn't have to be losing our lives and babies because no one is listening to us," she said.
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