

KFF Health News

Sacramento Press Club Journalism Awards Social Justice and Equity Reporting Stories by Sarah Kwon and Ronnie Cohen

**Amid Lack of Accountability for Bias in Maternity Care,
a California Family Seeks Justice | Aug. 8, 2023**

<https://kffhealthnews.org/news/article/maternity-care-bias-accountability-april-valentine/>

**Mothers of Color Can't See if Providers Have a
History of Mistreatment. Why Not? | Oct. 6, 2023**

<https://kffhealthnews.org/news/article/black-mothers-birth-equity-data-reviews/>

**Backlash to Affirmative Action Hits Pioneering Maternal Health
Program for Black Women | Nov. 24, 2023**

<https://kffhealthnews.org/news/article/pregnant-black-mothers-guaranteed-income-affirmative-action/>

In spring 2023, Sarah Kwon read about April Valentine, a Black woman who died giving birth at a Los Angeles hospital. The case garnered short-term media attention, but Kwon stuck with Valentine's family as they questioned whether racism played a role in her death and filed multiple complaints with the state.

Kwon's analysis showed state regulators are ill-equipped to find discrimination in such cases, and that California had not substantiated one complaint going back a decade.

Readers wrote to Kwon telling her how they were moved to tears. Even though The Los Angeles Times had a reporter covering Valentine's death, they [ran Kwon's piece](#), as did [Word in Black](#), a consortium of 10 Black publishers, including the Sacramento Observer.

Kwon followed up by exploring why Black and brown mothers can't find quality providers using consumer rating sites and hospital patient satisfaction scores. She found these sites [rarely reveal racial and ethnic breakdowns](#), which could help warn patients about discriminatory providers.

Then, Ronnie Cohen broke the story about an emerging [backlash against health equity initiatives](#). Cohen revealed how conservative groups have sued San Francisco guaranteed-income programs, including the Abundant Birth Project, alleging illegal discrimination by awarding stipends only to people of a specific race.

Cohen's story highlighted how this case is part of a growing national movement to eliminate racial preferences, which could endanger other measures designed to reduce health inequities. Her reporting influenced other journalists nationwide to examine this movement, and was extensively credited during a lengthy segment on CNN on Black maternal health. The story was also picked up by The [Los Angeles Times](#), [BET](#), and [the Griot](#).