



# From Barriers to Belonging

BREASTFEEDING, HEALTH  
EQUITY, AND THE LAW

New York Statewide Breastfeeding Coalition Annual  
Conference

March 27, 2025



*Virtual Conference*



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The **beginning** of my  
belonging story





A sense of belonging is  
**something you must create  
for yourself.**





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## Montreese Ransom

Belonging Strategist • Coach •  
Speaker • Empowermenteur



# What is a Belonging Strategist?



You belong here



# Belonging and Vaccine Hesitancy & Rejection



 **frontiers**  
in Public Health

ORIGINAL RESEARCH  
published: 20 January 2022  
doi: 10.3389/fpubh.2021.623795



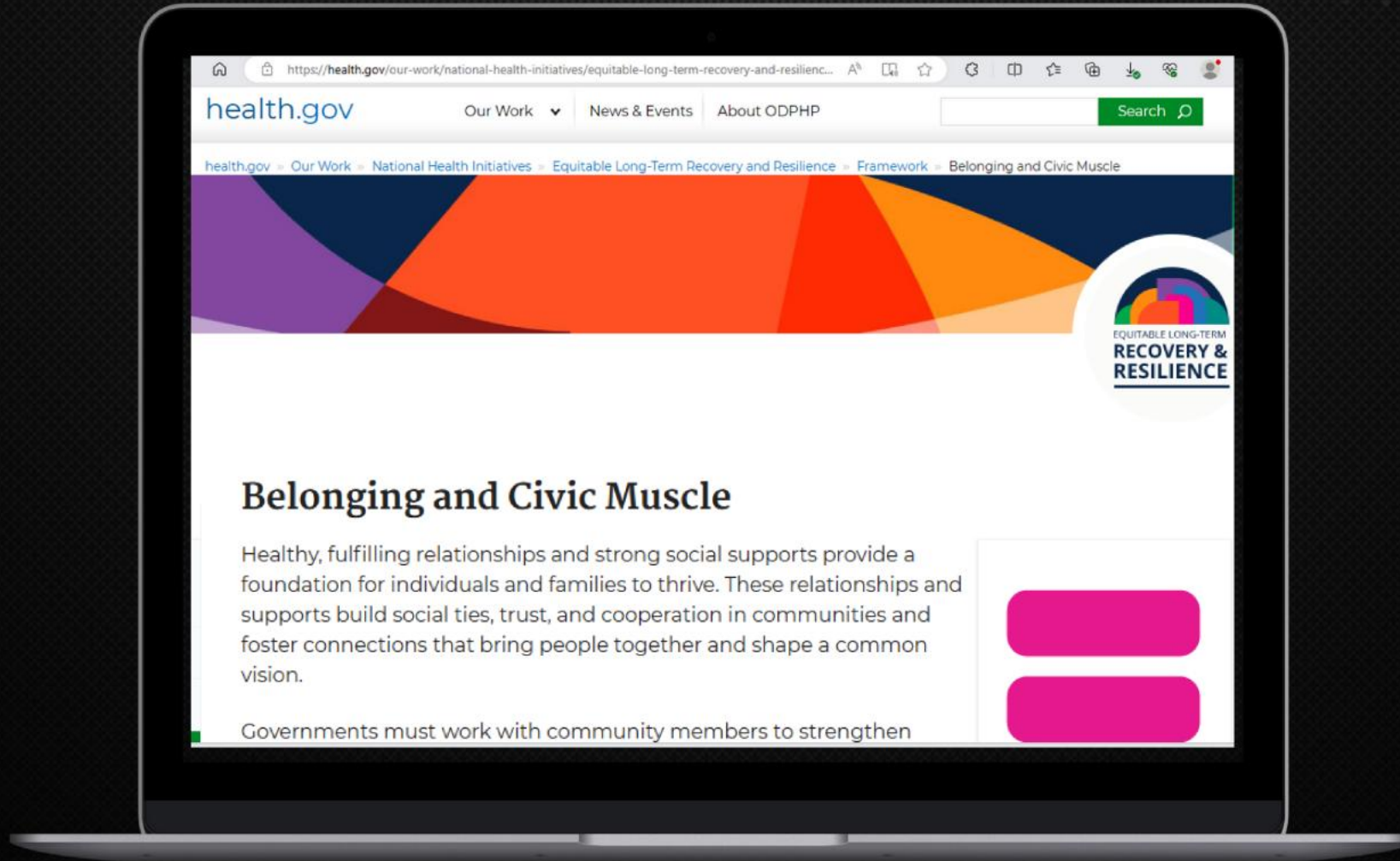
## Belonging to Socially Excluded Groups as a Predictor of Vaccine Hesitancy and Rejection

Yohanan Eshel<sup>1</sup>, Shaul Kimhi<sup>2</sup>, Hadas Marciano<sup>3</sup> and Bruria Adini<sup>4\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Stress and Resilience Research Center, Tel Hai and University of Haifa, Haifa, Israel, <sup>2</sup> Multinational Resilience and Well-Being Research Center, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel, <sup>3</sup> Stress and Resilience Research Center, Tel-Hai College, The Institute of Information Processing and Decision Making (IPDM), University of Haifa, Haifa, Israel, <sup>4</sup> Department of Emergency and Disaster Management, Multinational Resilience and Well-Being Research Center, School of Public Health, Sackler Faculty of Medicine, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel

The scientific call for vaccination against the COVID-19 pandemic has met hesitancy, postponement, and direct opposition of parts of the public in several countries. Mistrusting the COVID-19 vaccine, distrusting the authorities, and unrealistic optimism, are three major reasons employed in justifying vaccine hesitancy. The present study examines two major issues. First, it strives to identify individuals that are unwilling

# Belonging and Civic Muscle





# Belonging leads to increased social engagement, connectedness, and self- and community-advocacy



Connecting self to society : belonging in a changing world ★★★★★ [1 review](#)

Author: [Vanessa May](#)

Summary: 'Belonging' is often overlooked in its relationship to society and social change, and y  
bedrock of how we relate to the world around us. Through the work of Marx, Giddens and Goff

ORIGINAL ARTICLES

**Reflections on being a first generation self-advocate: Belonging, social connections, and doing things that matter**

Patsie Frawley & Christine Bigby

Restricted access | Other | First published online

Self, Belonging and Social Change

Political efficacy, public administration  
satisfaction and sense of belonging as drivers  
of citizens' intention



## Resilience and Belonging

Sarah V. Marsden

Chapter | First Online: 04 November 2016

476 Accesses | 1 Citations

### Abstract

Developing resilience to negative peer influence as well as to those political and social events that may inform the motivation to re-engage in extremism is vital to long-term desistance. In reviewing some of the methods tried by probation officers and community mentors to develop resilience, this chapter examines two issues: critical thinking and social

Belonging  
Builds  
Resilience.

09 Mar 2022

## Why belonging is important to organisational resilience and mental health

If we belong, we have acceptance and support. Given we spend so much time at work, belonging is important. As well as helping build loyalty, other benefits of belonging include:

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Arch Phys Med Rehabil. 2017 Dec;98(12):2422-2432. doi: 10.1016/j.apmr.2017.03.025. Epub 2017 Apr 26.

### Associations Between Resilience, Community Belonging, and Social Participation Among Community-Dwelling Older Adults: Results From the Population Health Survey

and Michallet<sup>3</sup>, France St-Hilaire<sup>4</sup>, Danielle Mattias<sup>5</sup>,

03.025

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DIVE BRIEF

## Belonging can spur resilience during a crisis, study says

Published June 24, 2020



Sheryl Estrada  
Reporter



# Belonging and Self-rated Health





# Belonging at Work: New Frontiers in Inclusion 2021 and Beyond

New research from BetterUp proves that belonging is good for business. Findings from our latest groundbreaking study show that workplace belonging leads to a 56% increase in job performance, a 50% reduction in turnover risk, and a 75% decrease in employee sick days. But what makes belonging so important?

New research from BetterUp proves that belonging is good for business. Findings from our latest groundbreaking study show that workplace belonging leads to a 56% increase in job performance, a 50% reduction in turnover risk, and a 75% decrease in employee sick days. But what makes belonging so important?

Be one of the first to read the report and learn:

- ✓ Why belonging matters, including highlights from our survey of 1,789 employees
- ✓ The hard costs of exclusion

56%

Increase in job performance

50%

Drop in turnover risk

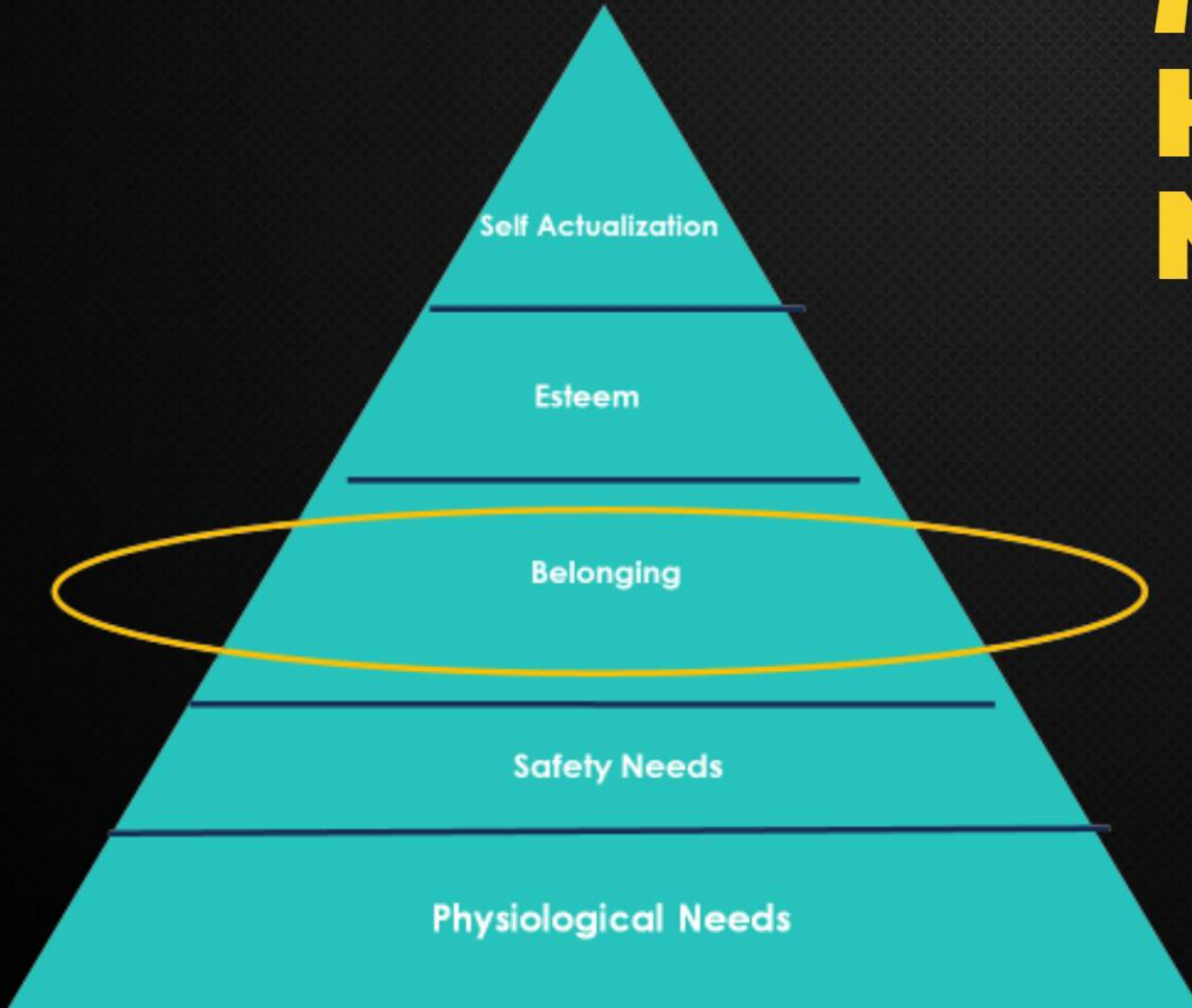
75%

Reduction in sick days





# Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



# belonging

WHAT DOES IT MEANT TO YOU?





“Fitting in is one of the greatest barriers to belonging. Fitting in is about assessing a situation and becoming who you need to be to be accepted. *Belonging, on the other hand, doesn't require us to change who we are; it requires us to be who we are.*”

Brené Brown





A close-up portrait of actor John Cho, looking slightly to the right with a subtle smile. He is wearing a light-colored suit jacket, a white shirt, and a dark tie. The background is dark and textured.

“

**..one moment we  
are Americans, and  
the next...we are all  
foreigners who  
brought the virus  
here.**

**-John Cho**



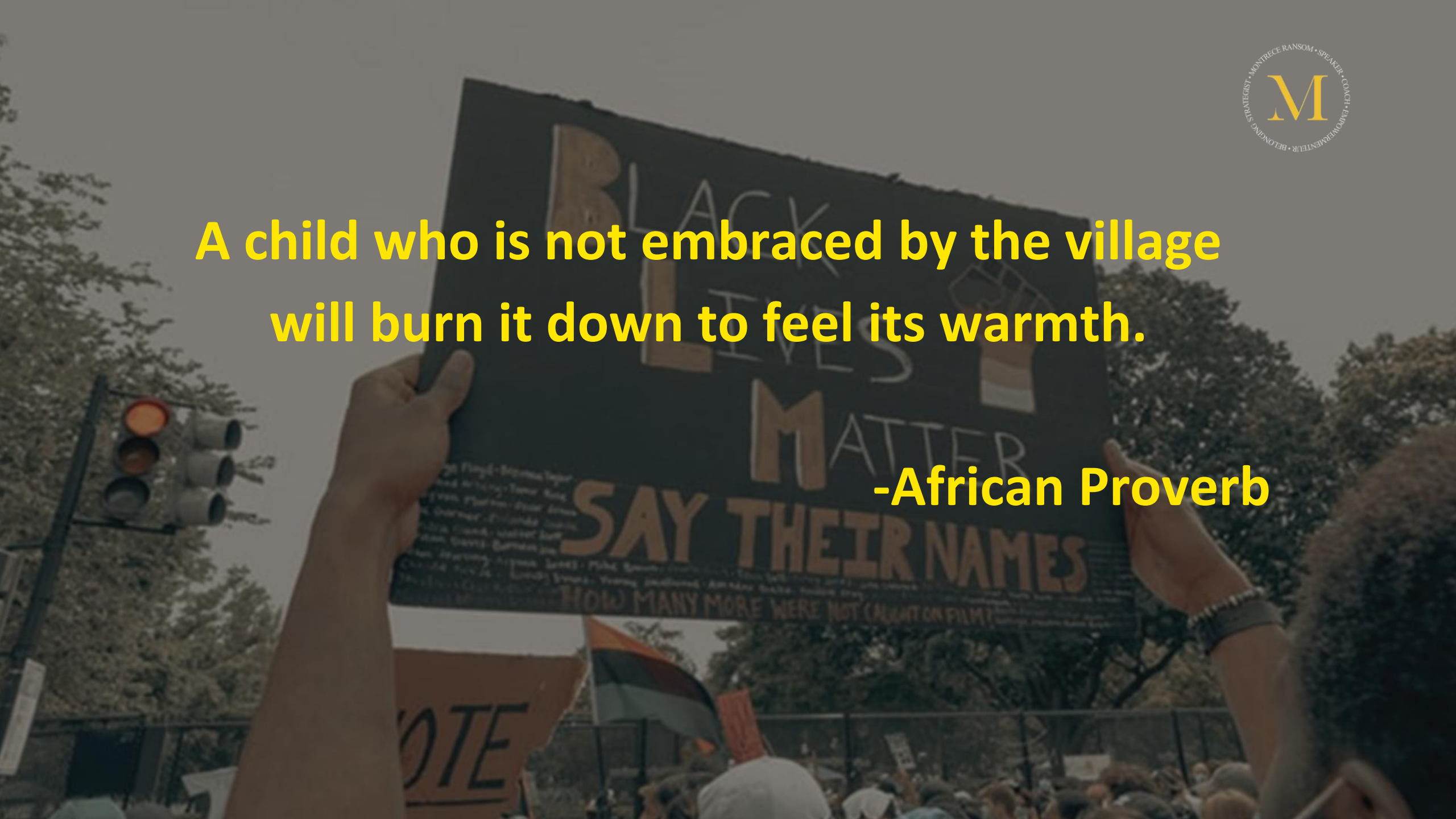


... an absence

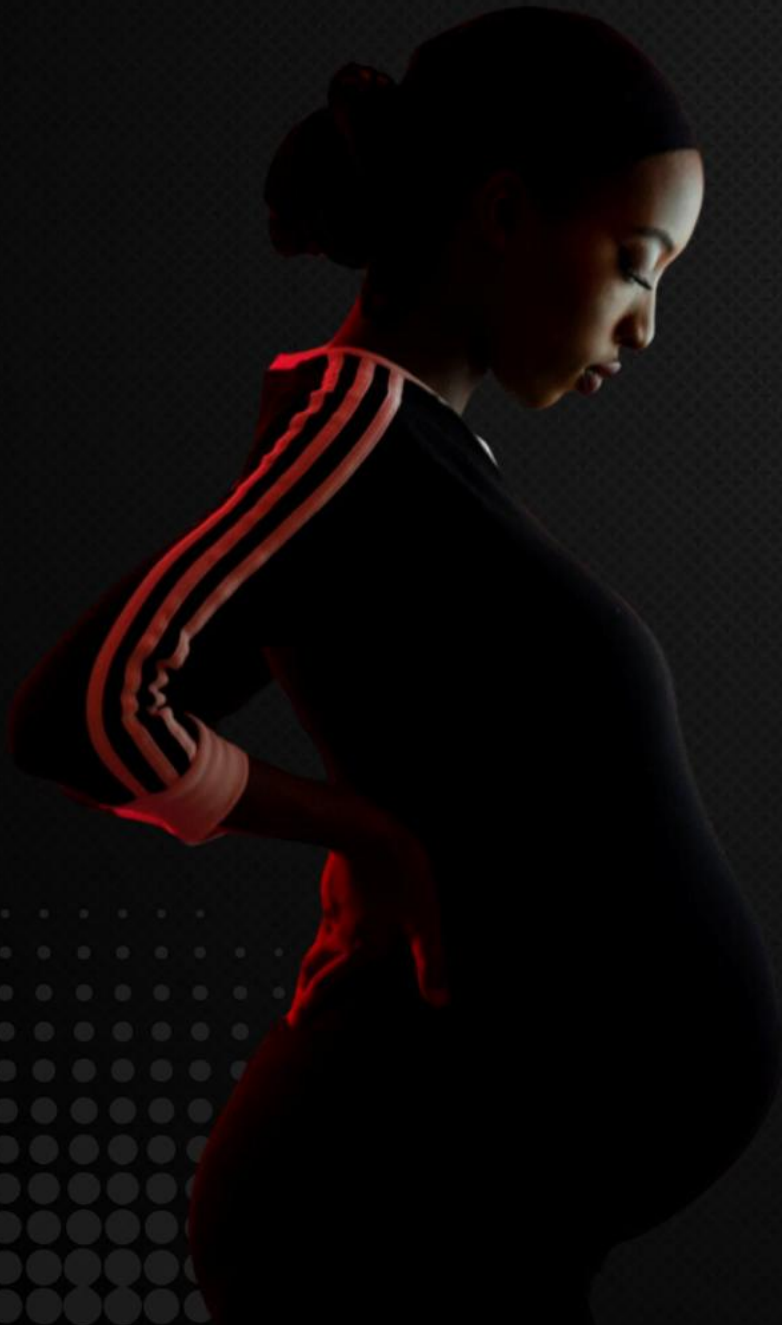


**A child who is not embraced by the village  
will burn it down to feel its warmth.**

**-African Proverb**







**Fewer non-Hispanic  
Black infants (74.1%)  
are ever breastfed  
compared with Asian  
infants (90.8%), non-  
Hispanic White infants  
(85.3%) and Hispanic  
infants (83.0%).**

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
<https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/data/facts.html>

According to the Los Angeles Times, in June 2020, an Ohio lawmaker and ER doctor asked if hygiene is why ‘colored’ people get COVID-19.

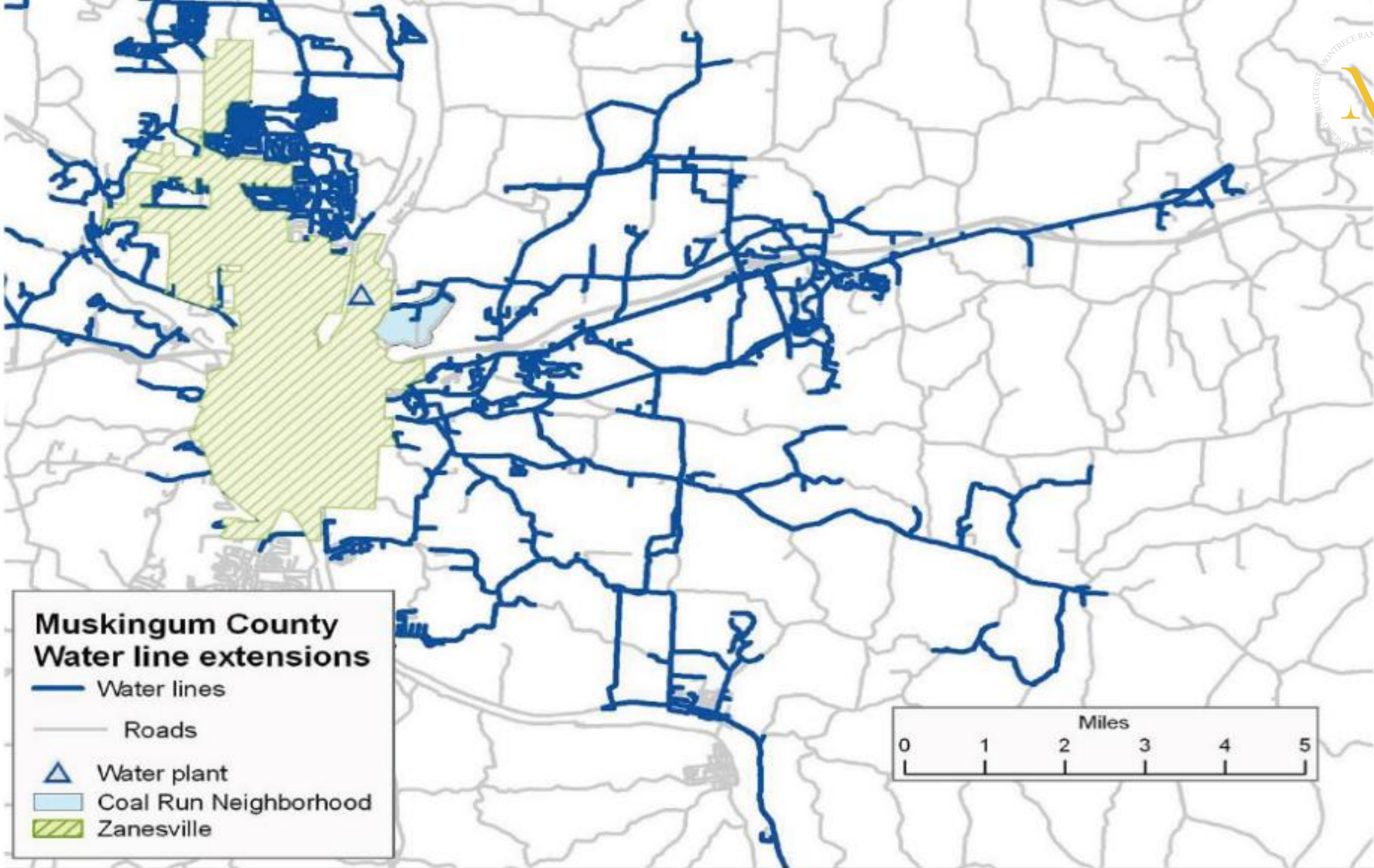
“

*A Republican lawmaker questioned on the Ohio Senate floor if “the colored population” is contracting coronavirus at disproportionate rates because they do not wash their hands “as well as other groups”...*



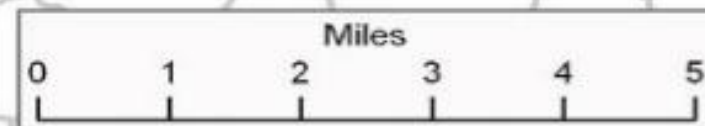






## Muskingum County Water line extensions

- Water lines
- Roads
- Water plant
- Coal Run Neighborhood
- Zanesville







## Kennedy v. City of Zanesville

505 F. Supp. 2d 456 (S.D. Ohio 2007)  
Decided Sep 7, 2007

Case No. 2:03-cv-1047.

457 September 7, 2007. \*457

Rachel Kimberly Robinson, Kimberly M. Skaggs,  
Equal Justice Foundation, Kerstin Sjoberg-Witt,  
Shawn J. Organ, Jones Day, Stefan J. Schmidt,  
Stephanie R. Bostos Demers, Ohio Attorney  
General, Columbus, OH, Stephen M. Dane,  
Relman Dane PLLC, Perrysburg, OH, Beth A.  
Wilson, Jennifer W. Steves, Cooper Walinski LPA,  
Toledo, OH, Isabelle M. Thabault, U.S.

Judgment of Defendants Washington Township,  
Clint W. Cameron, Paul R. Bunting and Douglas  
Culbertson ("Township Defendants"); (3) Motion  
for Summary Judgment of Defendants  
Muskingum County, Don Madden, Ed Kenily, and  
Dorothy Montgomery ("County Defendants"); and  
(4) Plaintiffs' Motion for Partial Summary  
Judgment on the Liability of Muskingum County  
for the East Muskingum Water Authority. After  
thorough review, this Court **GRANTS** Plaintiffs'  
Motion for Partial Summary Judgment: **GRANTS**







WORKFORCE





**First, I see a workforce that is competent in applying principles of equity and social and racial justice (and BELONGING) across public health policies and practice.**





# The Belonging-Based Leadership Spark Model



1. Make **SPACE** for authenticity –it takes commitment, intention, and courage for leaders and organizations to create environments that are conducive to authenticity and humanity—do it anyway.
2. Learn to be **PC**: Professionally Competent, People Centered, Personally Compassionate, Purposely Civil, and Power & Privilege Conscious.
3. Develop an **ACCEPTANCE** mindset – Remember, no one wants to be tolerated, othered or tokenized.
4. Sponsor and encourage **REPRESENTATION** – purposely include more people from historically excluded populations at the table and in positions of power; this is one of the best ways to recruit more diverse candidates across the board.
5. **KNOW** your biases, both covert and overt—we all have them. Learn what yours are and do the work to overcome them.

# The Belonging-Based Leadership SPARK Model



**BELONGING-BASED LEADERSHIP™**  
**THE S.P.A.R.K MODEL CHECKLIST**  
...because the flame of change starts with the tiniest SPARK.

**S** *Make Space for Authenticity*

- ☐ Ask yourself, "if it's a difference that doesn't make a difference, then what's the difference?"
- ☐ Reject conformity and group thinking.
- ☐ Use the nominal group technique.

**P** *Be P.C.*

- ☐ Be People Centered, Professionally Competent, and Personally Compassionate.
- ☐ Actively listen to others without judging them.
- ☐ Show empathy at all levels of your professional life.

**A** *Develop an Acceptance Mindset*

- ☐ Remember, no one wants to be tolerated, othered or tokenized.
- ☐ Consider how you feel when another person accepts you completely.
- ☐ Mix up your teams to share diversity in voices, experiences, values, and cultures.

**R** *Recognize the importance of Representation*

- ☐ Listen to and center the experiences of historically excluded groups.
- ☐ Assess the gender and racial makeup of those around the table.
- ☐ Explicitly name power dynamics.

**K** *Know your biases*

- ☐ Communicate that "if you are breathing, you are biased."
- ☐ Review, question, and analyze your own personal biases and assumptions.
- ☐ Broaden your viewpoint and educate others.

My Commitment

Ready to unleash human potential and advance equity through the power of BELONGING?  
Connect with me at  
MontreiceSpeaks@TheEmpowermenteur.com





# The Racial Justice Competency Model



**A collaboration between the Public Health Training Center Network and the National Network of Public Health Institutes, the RJCM gives public health practitioners a tool to challenge organizational policies and equity initiatives that may uphold institutional and structural racism.**





**Second, I see a workforce  
that can work across  
disciplines and sectors to  
address the social  
determinants of health,  
including law and policy.**







**“...whether embodied in constitutions, statutes, regulations, executive orders, administrative agency decisions, or court decisions, the law plays a profound role in shaping life circumstances and, in turn, health.”**

**—OBK Dingake**



**Third, I see a workforce  
that is prepared to serve  
as advocates for public  
health.**







The basis for advocacy is *not limited to what we count and the statistics* we derive. If successful health improvement were based only on these “facts,” we would be freed from the enduring controversies that surround efforts to alter ways in which people eat, drink, and smoke. Public health is also personal—the family member or friend who died from a preventable cause, *the human story that underlies the statistics* we cite. *Public health takes place in boardrooms, on street corners, in our homes, and in the legislature.* So, too, does public health advocacy.

-Mary T. Bassett, MD, MPH





# what is

THE CODE?





# The International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes **(The Code)**



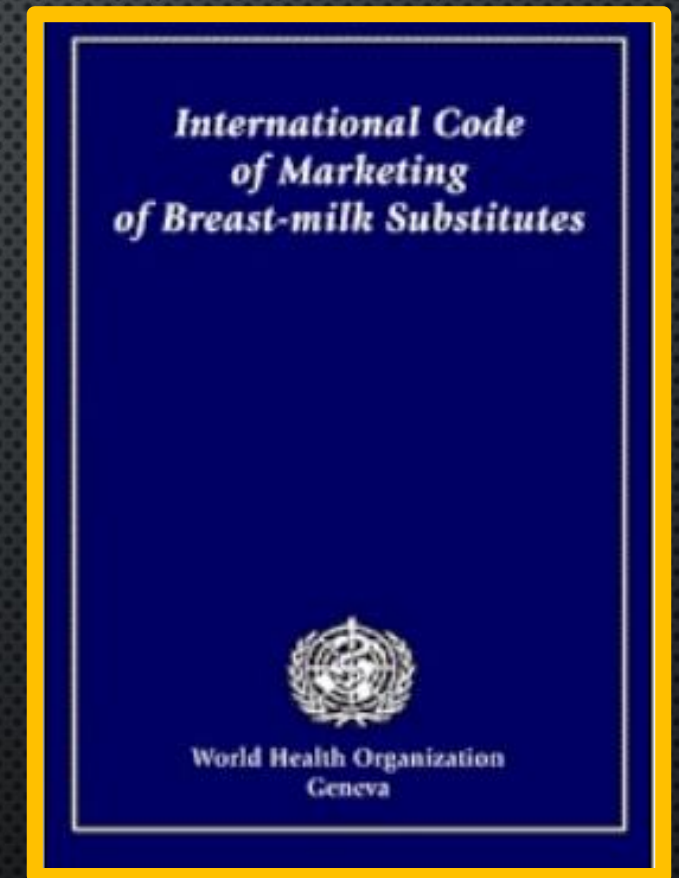
- The Code *prohibits all promotion of milk substitutes* and equipment related to bottle feeding and sets out requirements for labeling and information on infant feeding.
- Any activity that *undermines breastfeeding* also violates the aim and spirit of the Code.
- Any facility seeking *Baby-Friendly accreditation* must adhere to the requirements of the Code and any subsequent resolutions relating to the Code.



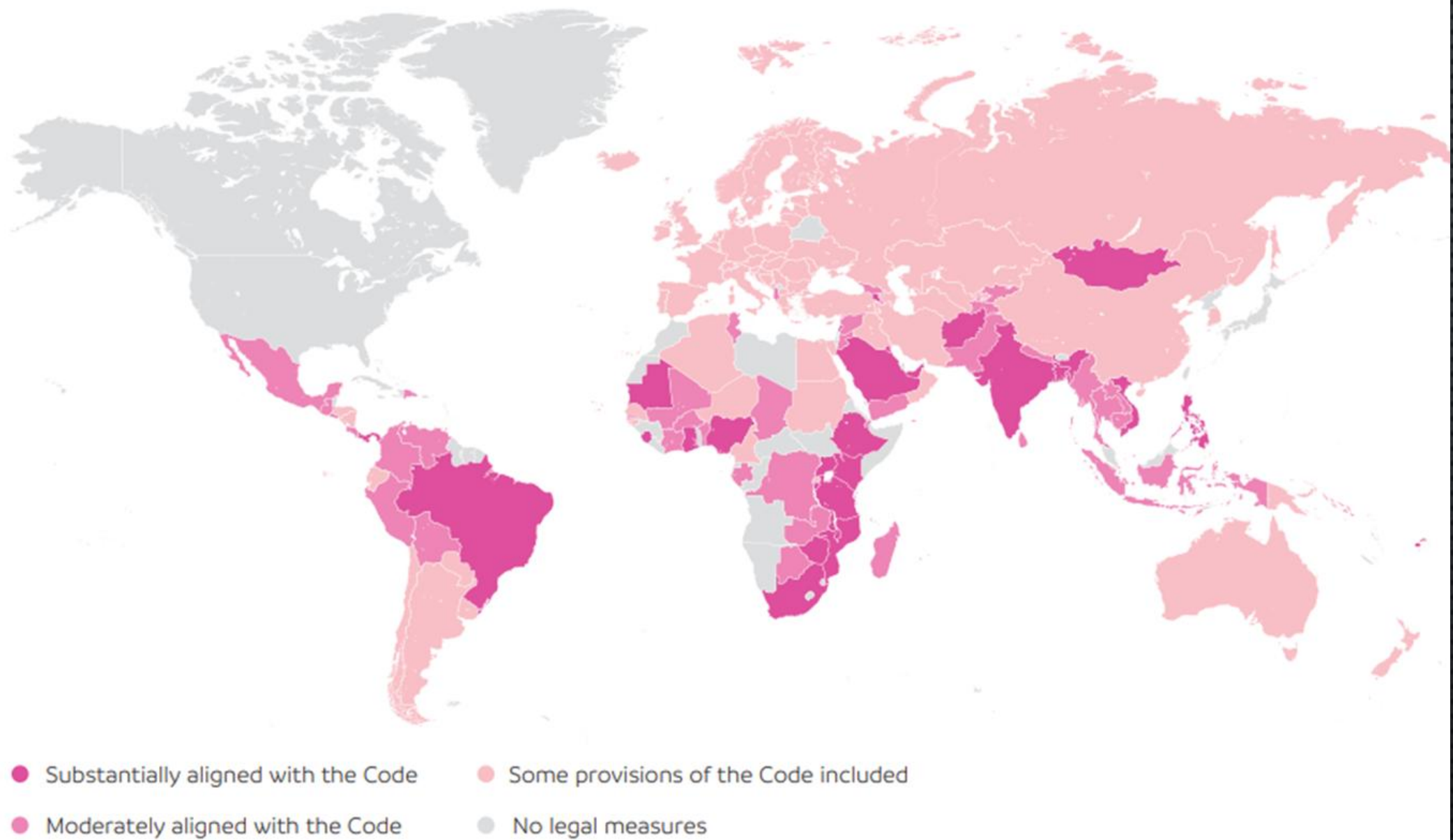
You can read the full Code here:  
<http://bit.ly/1O9Syh1>

The International Code aims to...

“contribute to the provision of safe and adequate nutrition for infants, by the **protection and promotion of breastfeeding and by ensuring the proper use of breast-milk substitutes**, when these are necessary, on the basis of **adequate information and through appropriate marketing and distribution.**”







**Figure 2.** National legal status of the Code, 2022

**Black mothers** use formula much more than White mothers.



Image Credit: FlutterBy Photography

In one study,  
**AFRICAN AMERICAN INFANTS  
WERE MORE THAN NINE  
TIMES MORE LIKELY THAN  
WHITE BABIES TO BE GIVEN  
FORMULA IN THE HOSPITAL.**

PEDIATRICS, OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE  
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS, 2012  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2011-3552>



...what has been missing  
so far in evidence-based  
advocacy is ‘a unified  
voice positioning  
breastfeeding as a health  
equity issue.’”

**Michele Griswold**  
President of the International Lactation Consultant Association







**“I’m an  
endangered  
species. I am a  
woman, I am an  
artist and I know  
where my voice  
belongs.”**

**Sheryl Lee Ralph**

**Repeat after me!**

**I am a proud advocate for  
breastfeeding and  
breastfeeding parents.**

**I am a creator of belonging.**

***And I know where my voice belongs.***







# THANK YOU!

Montrece McNeill Ransom, JD, MPH, PCC, BCC

