FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Black Women Bring Menopause Stories to the Screen in Grand Rapids Ahead of World Menopause Day

Oct. 17 BLVCK PAUSE experience features the premiere of The Stories We Carry and a community conversation centered on Black women and midlife

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (Oct. 9, 2026) – Black women's menopause stories will come to the screen in Grand Rapids on Oct. 17, when BLVCK PAUSE premieres *The Stories We Carry*, a documentary featuring four local women, one day before World Menopause Day.

The premiere is the centerpiece of BLVCK PAUSE: The Menopause Awareness Experience, an evening centered on the voices, experiences and wisdom of Black women navigating perimenopause, menopause and midlife. The event runs from 5 to 9 p.m. at Bamboo Grand Rapids, 2 W. Fulton St. in downtown Grand Rapids. Registration opens at 5 p.m., followed at 5:30 p.m. by a heavy reception featuring authentic West African cuisine from Famz Food.

In the film, the women share candid accounts of menopause, identity, change and experiences many women have historically navigated privately. *The Stories We Carry* was directed and produced by Amanda Rostic, MPH, a filmmaker and narrative epidemiologist, and shot by Joshua Harris, director of photography and cinematography. It will screen at 7 p.m.

Held during Menopause Awareness Month, the event responds to a clear need. Research shows that Black women tend to reach menopause earlier and experience more frequent, more severe and longer-lasting symptoms than White women. The Study of Women's Health Across the Nation (SWAN) found that frequent hot flashes and night sweats lasted a median of about 10 years for Black women, compared with about 6.5 years for White women.

The film will be followed at 7:30 p.m. by The Village Conversation, a community dialogue moderated by Dr. TaRita Johnson, MSW, Senior Vice President, Talent & Diversity at The Right Place. The conversation will invite the audience to reflect, respond, and share.

"Black women are experiencing menopause differently, yet our experiences remain underrepresented in the conversations, research and resources surrounding this stage of life," said Dr. Kimberly Slaikeu, founder of BLVCK PAUSE, executive director of *The Stories We Carry* and one of the women featured in the film. "The Stories We Carry gives Black women the

opportunity to see our experiences reflected, hear one another's stories and know that we do not have to navigate this transition alone."

"It was an honor to share my personal experience and contribute my experience in natural medicine to such an important conversation. I'm grateful for the opportunity to help bring greater awareness and understanding of perimenopause within the Black community," said Dr. Carrie Dennie, a naturopathic doctor featured in the film.

Slaikeu, a PhD-prepared nurse and researcher with more than three decades of healthcare leadership experience, is also a Menopause Coaching Specialist. She created BLVCK PAUSE to expand how Black women experience, understand and talk about menopause and midlife.

While Black women are intentionally centered, the event welcomes community members who want to listen, learn and better understand the menopause and midlife experiences of Black women.

MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Media are invited to attend. Dr. Slaikeu, Amanda Rostic, MPH, Dr. TaRita Johnson, MSW, Dr. Carrie Dennie and other cast members will be available for interviews during the opening reception from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Film stills and photos are available upon request.

EVENT DETAILS

What: BLVCK PAUSE: The Menopause Awareness Experience

When: Saturday, October 17, 2026, 5–9 p.m.

Schedule: 5 p.m. registration; 5:30 p.m. reception; 7 p.m. documentary premiere; 7:30 p.m. The Village Conversation

Where: Bamboo Grand Rapids, 2 W. Fulton St., Grand Rapids, MI

Tickets: $35, includes heavy reception with West African cuisine from Famz Food

Registration: https://blvckpause.com

Hosted by: BLVCK PAUSE

Grant support: Discover Tourism GR (Experience Grand Rapids)

Sponsors: Mercantile Bank, Our Mental Health Collective, Opnr

ABOUT BLVCK PAUSE

BLVCK PAUSE is a platform focused on the experiences of Black women navigating perimenopause, menopause and midlife. Through research, technology, storytelling, culturally relevant education and community experiences, BLVCK PAUSE creates opportunities for Black women to be seen, informed, connected and supported across mind, body and spirit.

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