Introduction: Childbirth preparation may include healthcare provider visits, information seeking from family, friends, and media, and attendance at childbirth classes. Studies of birth preparation have focused primarily on middle class white women with little inclusion of blacks. Instead, research with black women often highlights pregnancy problems in low income populations. Therefore, nursing practice knowledge lacks an understanding of processes black women use to prepare for birthing within their social context. The aim of this qualitative study was to identify a theory that described processes used by urban black women to prepare for childbirth.

Method(s): Women in the last four months of pregnancy were recruited through churches, hair salons, newspapers, radio and internet web sites. Data were collected from five focus groups and two individual interviews (n=22). More than half the women reported income adequate for daily needs, were partnered or married, were employed, had at least a high school education and were younger than 23 years. Data analysis followed the grounded theory methods advocated by Strauss and Corbin (1998).

Results: The theory describing the processes used by the participants was weighing the impact on me. The processes used for birth preparation were divided into four: discovering pregnancy, managing pregnancy, preparing for delivery, and experiencing personal change. Participants were found to be actively engaged in determining the best course of action for themselves. They weighed and considered advice from others, what relationships were crucial, what information was most important to them, and many other issues. Woven throughout were the importance of relationships and the social context in which the women lived. Many women reported experiences of, or worries about, racism within and without the healthcare system.
**Discussion & Conclusions:** The processes used by black women to prepare for childbirth were not sequential but represented the dynamic and constant need to assess and decide the best choices. A theory emerged that explained these processes. Building on this theory, future research should identify ways in which black women, within the context of racism, can more readily access the quality healthcare and services they so desire.

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No, I (or a member of my immediate family) have not received something of value* from or own stock (or stock options) in a commercial company or institution related directly or indirectly to the subject of my presentation.

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