

Takiya & Janei's Story

A long time ago (i.e. 2014) in a galaxy far far away...also known as Tumblr, we connected over our shared interests. After messaging back and forth for one week, we decided that we had so much in common and wanted to meet in person. We spent the day exploring sights in DC including the Museum of Natural History and Chinatown. Over the next few months, we were pretty much inseparable and our bond grew stronger. We got married on the fourth anniversary of the day we met. We had a nice and intimate ceremony in Washington D.C. with our closest family and friends.

About a year into our relationship, we began having conversations regarding our future and children. We talked about how we wanted to expand our family. Janei brought up adoption because it was something that she thought about prior to being in a relationship. After doing very extensive research, we realized that private adoption was too costly. We talked about our desire to carry children. Honestly, in the beginning, neither of us had a strong desire to carry a child, but those feelings evolved over time (years). We ultimately decided that we would each carry.

After deciding how to expand our family, we took over two years researching sperm banks and looking up donors. We

examined many banks and many donors. We settled on a nonprofit bank that has a lower family limit for donors and has a long history of working with LGBTQ individuals. After finding a bank, we researched sperm donors from that bank that had characteristics that were important to us both (race, education, family history, interests). We wanted a Black donor that had characteristics that we both share. The race of the donor was important because we want a shared cultural experience with our child. We also talked about other physical and personality characteristics. Janei is tall and likes to read. Takiya is athletic and enjoys music. The donor we chose had all of the characteristics, which was important because we both plan to carry using the same donor.

After we got married in 2018, we knew we wanted to start the process of trying to conceive within two years. It just so happened that during Pride month in 2019, a local fertility clinic held an open house that provided information on fertility treatment options geared towards the LGBTQ+ community. We were able to get a free consultation with a fertility doctor. Prior to our consultation, we both filled out a lengthy document about personal and family medical information that may impact fertility. Takiya was more nervous going in because she was going to be carrying first. Being in a same sex relationship, it wasn't until the consultation that we were worried about our ability to

conceive. It was just something that we had not thought that much about before. The doctor was optimistic with our overall health and age. The front desk staff used gender neutral language. The nurse that we met with after our consultation was fantastic with answering all of our questions and making sure that she addressed both of us when discussing our concerns regarding the process. We were given a long list of things we had to complete to start the process to conception. To be honest, we were a little overwhelmed by the list.

Since Takiya would be the first to carry, she had to be poked and prodded a lot more than Janei. There were some hiccups along the way and due to our CMV status, we had a more limited pool of donors to choose from. We also were required by our fertility clinic to meet with a therapist to discuss using donor sperm. Initially, going into the session we felt like we were being tested and if we failed the process ended there. However, the session was more educational in nature and the therapist had some really good tips and insights that we hadn't previously considered. She told us how important it was to write our story as a couple prior to deciding to have children. She shared that our story of how we became parents should not focus solely on the donor. For example, she suggested a book that we could purchase where we could document the story of us before we had children and our journey through conceiving and having our child. She

gave us some really good things to consider regarding donor registries. She shared that the consent of our child is important when seeking information related to their donor (or his potential offspring). We talked about the difference between a donor and a parent. She told us that parents have a shared intent to have a child, they know about the child's existence, and have a bond with the child. Whereas a donor is a person that gives genetic material to help create a child, but does not necessarily know the child or have an intention to be a parent.

We can't believe how fast this year has flown. After the initial consultation, we decided to start in the Summer of 2020 and now it's almost here. We are both excited and nervous about the next stage in the process. We decided on intra-uterine insemination (IUI), and will begin inseminations in late June/early July. Luckily, we had all of our testing done prior to closures due to COVID-19. There was about a month where our fertility clinic was not doing any new IUIs, and we were nervous that it would impact our ability to start. However, our fertility clinic is fully operational now.

We are hopeful that we have a successful pregnancy and delivery. When we think about our future children, we have so many hopes and dreams for them but we mostly want our children to be happy, healthy, and fulfilled in life!