

# BEBOLD

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### **Play Sparks Global Movement to Improve Maternity Care**

Using a theatre-for-social-change model, local communities organize worldwide

**July 18, 2007, New York, NY** – What do mothers want? What do mothers deserve? These and other tough questions are explored in *Birth*– the *Vagina Monologues* of childbirth. Throughout September, more than 100 benefit performances of the critically acclaimed play by Karen Brody, *Birth*, will take center stage as part of Birth On Labor Day (BOLD), a global movement to make maternity care mother-friendly.

Similar to *The Vagina Monologues*' success around the world in its efforts to end violence against women, BOLD performances of Brody's play, which have more than doubled in number since last year, are being performed in communities around the world as part of a movement to improve birthing options and safety for mothers. In 2006, BOLD's first year, performances of *Birth* raised over \$10,000 for local maternity care groups. This year BOLD expects that number to more than triple.

Created by mother, BOLD co-founder, and playwright Karen Brody, *Birth* has been called "the naked truth about childbirth" by City Lights Theatre Company in San Jose, California. The story of eight women, *Birth* delivers a theatrical experience that melds the unbridled hilarity, the unexpected poignancy, and the tragic truth about power in maternity care today.

The cast represents the birthing spectrum from liberal, "My body rocks!"-bleating Amanda to strong-willed, no-nonsense Vanessa to career-driven Beth, violated Natalie and even angry, somewhat deflated Lisa. But at the cornerstone of each story lies personal choice. And Janet's epidural, Jillian's home birth, and Sandy's cesarean section are all on display without judgment.

More than 30 cities have embraced the play as part of BOLD's mission to make maternity care mother-friendly. In September *Birth* will be performed at venues around the world in cities including Amsterdam, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Maui, Ontario, San Diego and Seattle. Proceeds will benefit local charities working to improve maternity care.

The work those charities do is essential: in a global maternal mortality crisis, one woman dies every minute from pregnancy and childbirth-related causes. There is a 30.2 percent cesarean rate

in the United States, and there are rampant VBAC (vaginal birth after cesarean) misconceptions: most women in the United States today who have had one c-section aren't aware they can choose not to have another.

“Maternity care today simply isn't mother-friendly,” Brody says. “In many communities, pregnant mothers are faced with few options that support low or no-intervention birth choices; in other communities, women feel they went with the standard medical care and were treated poorly. BOLD encourages all people attending performances to learn the truth about childbirth, understand where power lurks in their maternity care system and make informed birth choices.”

Brody adds, “Can a play improve maternity care? It not only can—it *is*.”

It's time to start changing maternity care so it works for mothers. BOLD is leading the way.

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