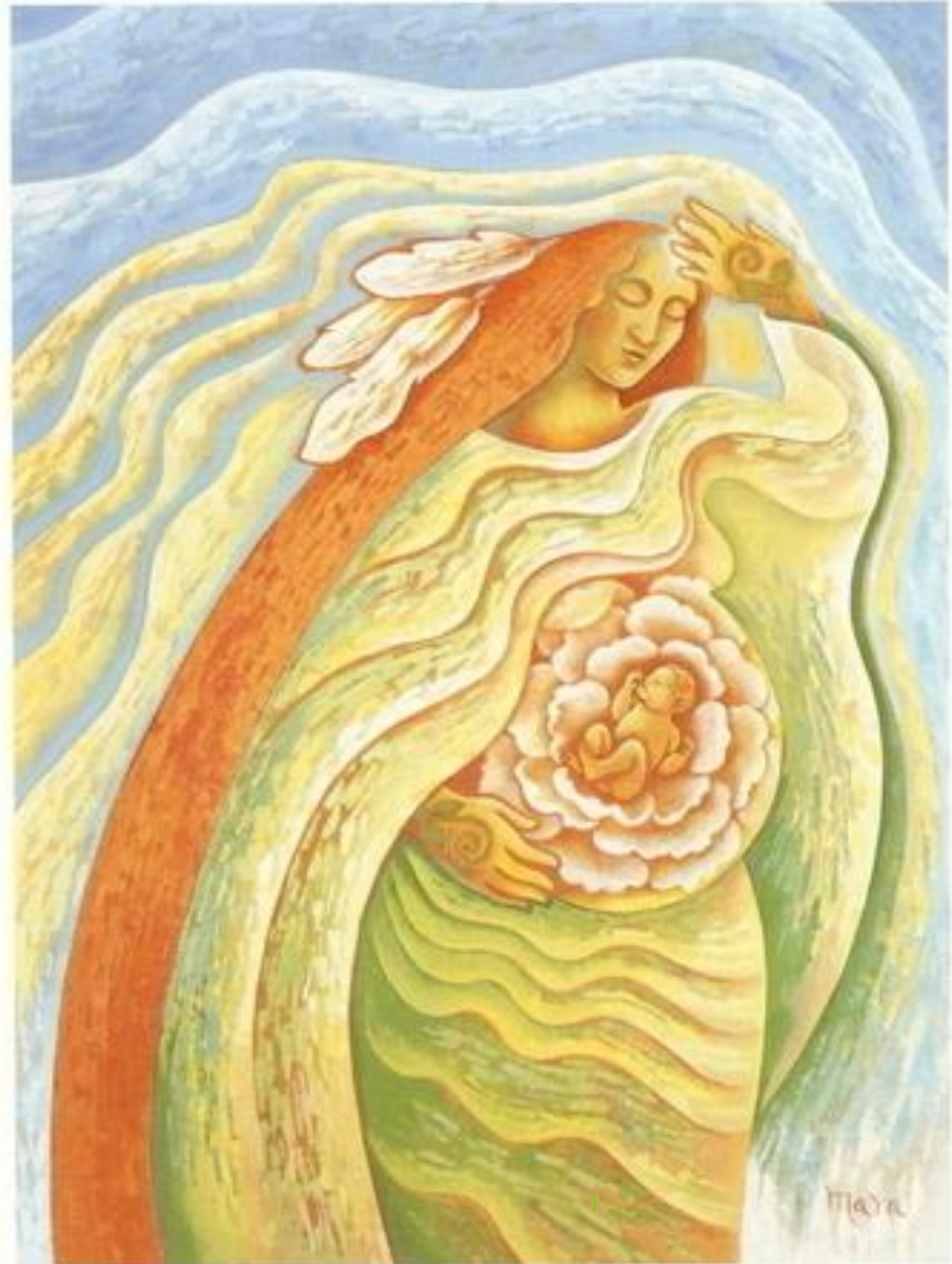


Birth Advocacy in the Time of COVID-19

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Who am I to speak about this?

Molly Deutschbein

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Licensed Massage Therapist
Craniosacral Therapist
Birth Doula
Fertility Doula
Independent childbirth educator

- ▶ 30 years of experience working with expecting families
- ▶ President, Doula Cooperative of Rochester
- ▶ Rochester Area Birth Network Steering Committee
- ▶ Sexual and Reproductive Justice Task Force member

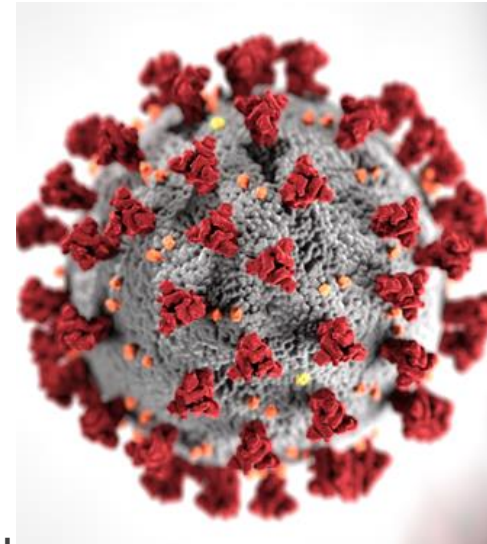
Centering birth in the time of a Pandemic



- ▶ What happens when hospitals are full?
- ▶ Not enough homebirth midwives
- ▶ No birth centers in Rochester
- ▶ Just two birth centers in Buffalo
- ▶ Protocols allow fewer (or no) birth support for laboring mother
- ▶ What happens if mom or partner are COVID-19 positive?
- ▶ Black birthing people are more likely to be risked out of “safer” alternatives
- ▶ What is postpartum like when we are all sheltering in place?
- ▶ Birthing people are conditioned to believe hospital is the safest birth place
- ▶ Birthing people are afraid to birth out of hospital
- ▶ Birthing people are afraid to birth where COVID-19 patients are being treated
- ▶ Birthing people are afraid to birth alone, partners are ill-equipped to be sole support
- ▶ Solutions favor low risk birthing persons
- ▶ How do we community support to new parents while practicing social distancing?

How did we get to current state?

- ▶ Italy and Iran crises - stories off laboring women turned away from full hospitals
- ▶ How do we prepare for full hospitals?
- ▶ Some areas have designated a COVID-19 only hospital
- ▶ Competition between medical corporations (local example: Rochester Regional Health and the University of Rochester Medical Center hospitals)
- ▶ Screening protocols including temperature checks when arriving at hospital were supposed to start two weeks before a labor partner was allowed in with a temperature and symptoms
- ▶ Governor Cuomo and the New York State Department of Health have restated the birthing person's human right to have a birth partner present
- ▶ We need to have compassion for partners who may not be allowed at their child's birth



COVID-19
CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019

The Preferred Solution

A dedicated space for birthing families to keep them from places with more COVID-19 cases

- Screen families as they arrive
- Provide full array of birth services (not just low-risk)
- Separated part of hospital/separate building on campus/field hospital
- Would require cooperation of multiple health care systems

OR

Separate hospital for COVID-19 cases

- Would require cooperation of multiple health care system
- Conversations with health officials have been fruitless



Homebirth/Birth Center

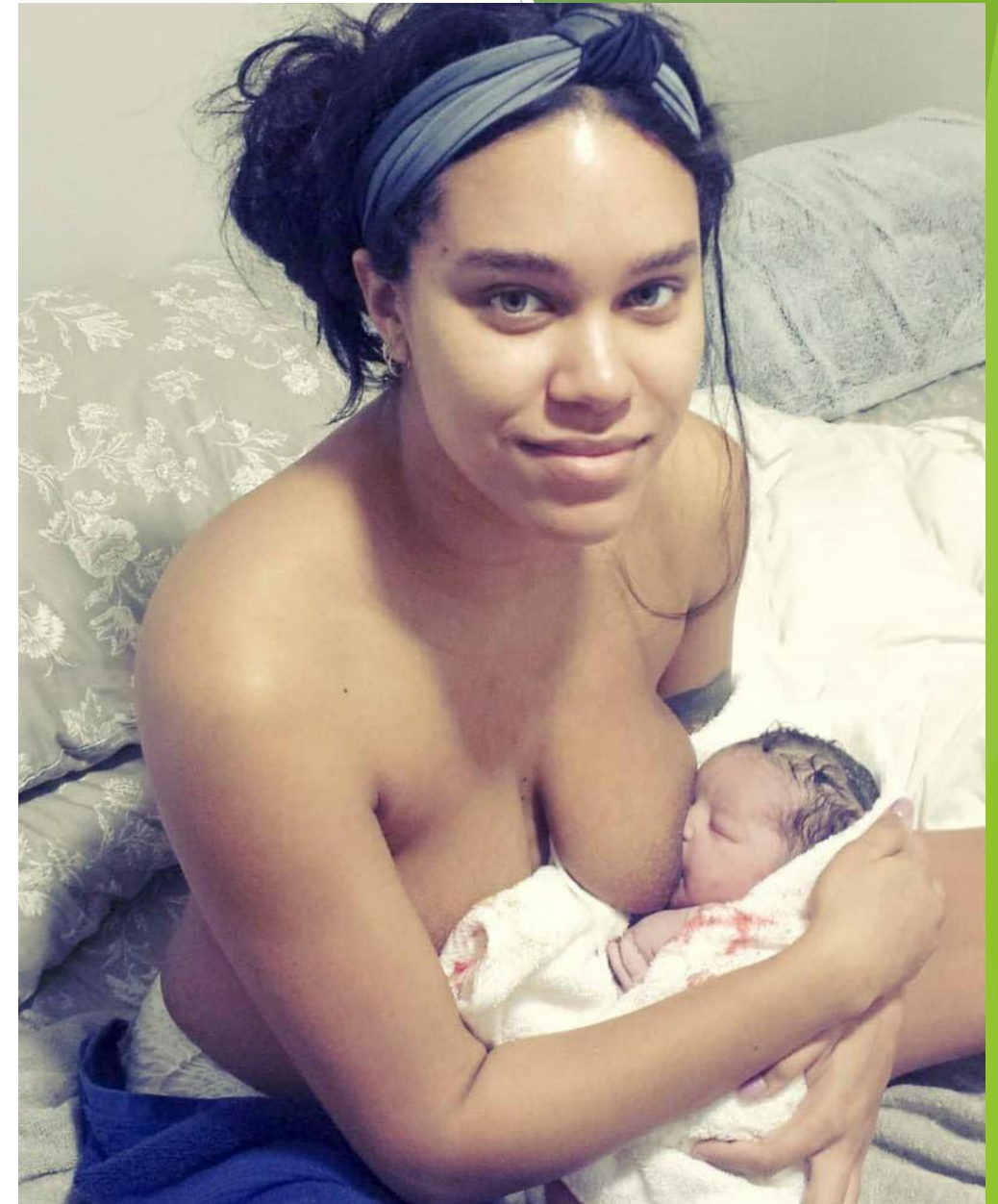
- ▶ Not enough birth centers
- ▶ Not enough homebirth midwives
- ▶ Meant for low risk
- ▶ Often expensive
- ▶ Not really meant for last minute switches based on fear



Birthing Unattended

“Free birthing”

- ▶ Facebook chatter “I’ll just do it at home alone”
- ▶ Places pressure on doulas -
“My doula will keep me safe” FALSE
- ▶ Less worry about separated from partner
- ▶ More support at home
- ▶ Not as costly for some
- ▶ May result in needless tragic outcomes without exquisite preparation
- ▶ What would you do if you got a call that a mama needed your help at a birth?



Preparing for hospital birth during COVID-19 pandemic

- ▶ Urge your clients to stay as healthy and low risk as possible given the stress constraints of the time
- ▶ Urge your clients to have frank conversations with their birth partner:
 - ▶ Does their job require them to be exposed to a large number of people?
 - ▶ Is it possible to stay isolated for 14 days prior to due date
 - ▶ Can they arrange for a couple of back up support people to be available if the primary support person cannot be there because of COVID-19 screening or any other reason?
- ▶ Does the birth partner understand that they will be confined to the labor room and unable to leave until after the baby is born?
 - ▶ Child and pet care arrangements? Food?
- ▶ The birth partner may need to leave shortly after baby is born

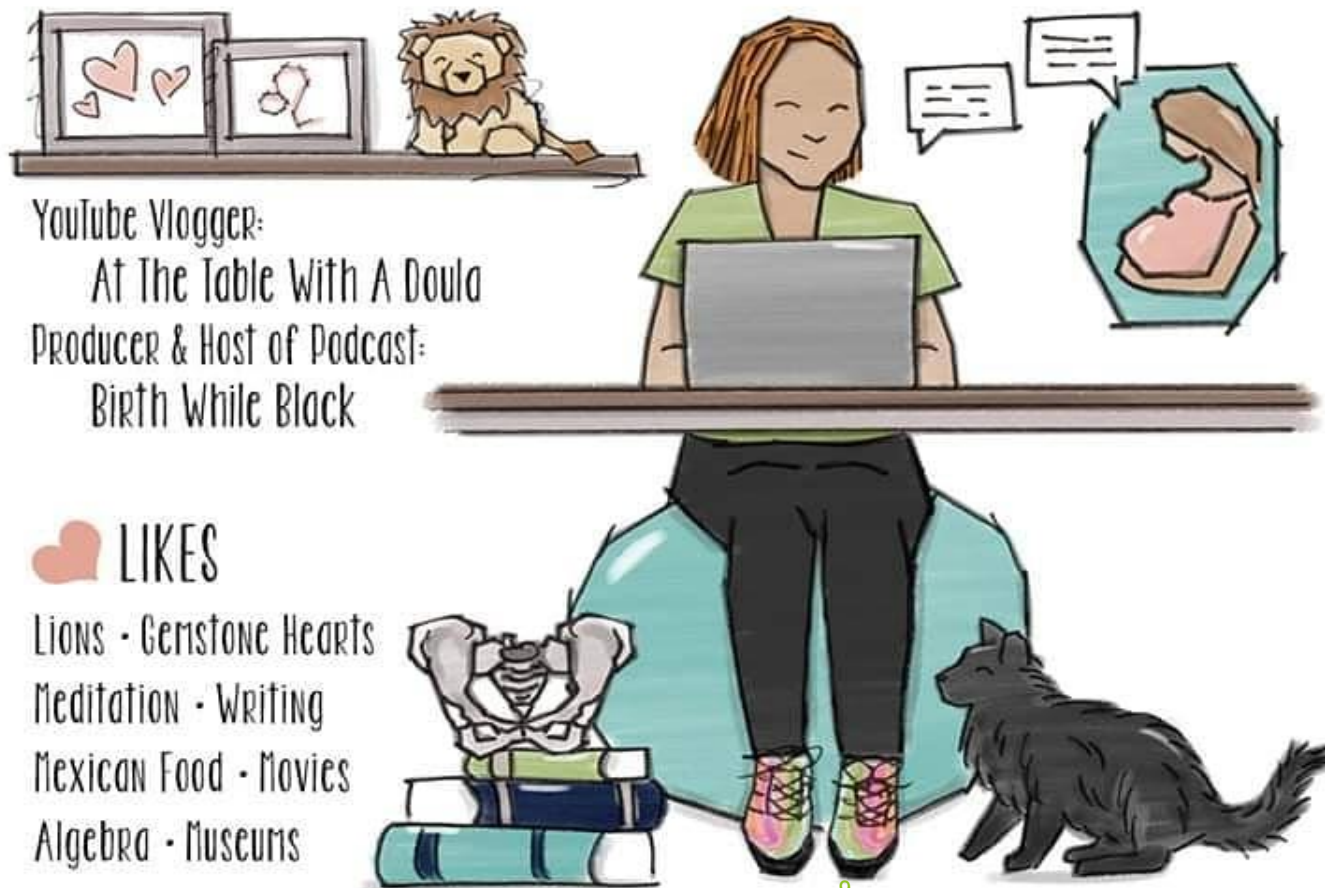


What is a virtual Doula?

- ▶ Provides support through phone/iPad/tablet
- ▶ Can support birthing person's chosen birth partner

Meet the Doula Denise Boldt

DONA CERTIFIED BIRTH DOULA • VIRTUAL DOULA, CLC, & CHILDBIRTH EDUCATOR



Youtube Vlogger:

At The Table With A Doula

Producer & Host of Podcast:

Birth While Black

LIKES

Lions • Gerstone Hearts

Meditation • Writing

Mexican Food • Movies

Algebra • Museums

Postpartum

- ▶ Community support in the fourth trimester
 - ▶ Infant feeding, suck/swallow/breathe challenges
 - ▶ Infant sleep (or lack of infant sleep)
 - ▶ Monitoring of the birthing person for postpartum complications
 - ▶ More common in black mothers
 - ▶ Increased frequency of PPA/PPD in isolated new parents



How can we create well-regulated nervous systems (perceived safety) during a pandemic?

- ▶ Physiologic birth
- ▶ Pre- and perinatal psychology

How will the babies born at this time hold their birth experience? How will their parents remember this?