

practicing feminist mothering 新人工

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Practicing Feminist Mothering

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FIONA JOY GREEN

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To my son Liam, who has taught me through his own brave and loving example how to live fully as oneself.

To Barry, my lifelong partner and father of Liam, who has so lovingly helped me in my feminist mothering.

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INTRODUCTION

Affirming the Marginalized Voices of Feminist Mothers

For as long as I can remember, I have been a feminist. Although I didn't have the language to call myself "feminist" as a girl growing up in the 1960s and through my teens in the 1970s, I was certainly in tune with the unfairness I felt because I was "just a girl." I was easily angered when I saw other people, especially other girls, being ignored, bullied, or treated badly. I was sure of my agency and believed I had the right to speak up against such injustices for myself and for others. My quick temper soon became my trademark, and I was known as a tough and feisty tomboy who would go to battle with anyone, over anything, at any time, for whatever I thought was unfair. I felt powerful and completely justified in challenging people who treated me, and others, unfairly.

When I entered university in the mid 1980s, having worked and travelled in the five years since graduating from high school, I soon learned that my understanding of the world was supported by my undergraduate studies in the areas of Anthropology and Sociology. I learned of theorists who viewed the situation and position of girls and women in similar ways; I was introduced to, and was soon using, a new vocabulary that helped name and explain my gendered experiences in the world. I thrived on knowing that I was becoming part of a collective

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of women that had a herstory of experience, knowledge, and analysis that explained the world in ways that made sense to me and offered practical ways of questioning, contesting, and disrupting the social system named patriarchy that perpetuated this unbalanced and indefensible situation.

During those first few years at university while in my early twenties I was generally critical of men, yet I fell in love with and married my husband. I finished my BA, and while my spouse was on sabbatical as a visiting scholar in England, I followed my interest in feminism and undertook an MA in Women's Studies. After attending an international homebirth conference in London shortly after we first arrived in the UK, and recognizing that homebirths were not legal or supported in Manitoba at that time, we tried to conceive. We were very fortunate, and I successfully birthed our son in England, a month after I handed in my thesis *The Development of a Mother-Centred Model of Childbirth*.

My MA research and ever-developing feminist consciousness profoundly influenced my understanding of the medicalization of pregnancy and its repercussions for women. It also strengthened my ability to make sense of my own pregnancy and birthing experience. Rather than being a passive patient, I was an active participant exercising agency with medical professionals regarding medical decisions about my body and fetus throughout my pregnancy, when I underwent an emergency caesarean section in hospital, and during my post surgery recovery.

The process of researching, writing, birthing my son and becoming a mother enabled me to make meaningful connections among my life experiences, feminist analysis, and theorizing. For example, my partner and I chose to hyphenate our son's last name to honour both his maternal and paternal ancestry. Like other feminist mothers, I enacted my feminism by refusing to support and reproduce the patriarchal practice of naming children solely after their paternal family line. Just as I have kept my "maiden" or given name upon getting married to