

Introducing: *The Diaries of a Birthkeeper*

A glance into the unspoken truths about birth work,
from the perspective of the attendant.

By Raina Brown Jan 19, 2025



The Diary of a Birthkeeper series is finally launching...eeekk!!!

Preface

One day I was aimlessly scrolling through social media when I came across a post about how birth attendants shouldn't be telling birth stories from their own perspective, so as not to take away from the mother's true experience. At first glance I agreed with this poster's words, because nobody appreciates projection, and certainly a new mama doesn't need to carry the weight of someone else's feelings who was simply there to hold space. It all seemed to make sense to me at that moment. But then it got me thinking about all the ways in which the experience of the birthing mother could potentially differ from the birth attendant(s). The truth of the matter is; birth workers DO come home with their own thoughts and feelings and experience. I, for one, think we absolutely SHOULD be talking about it because we matter, too.

Let me be clear, this is not to suggest we should be going to the mothers we serve and dumping on them [we should not]... We should be listening, validating them and their experience and allowing them to process their birth the way they process it. Ultimately, a birth belongs only to the Mothers and babies and it is never about the attendant. That much I think we can all agree on. However, I also feel it is important for birth workers to have a safe space to also process their emotions around their experiences as well.

The number one most important role of a birthkeeper is holding space for the families we serve. What does that mean exactly, to hold space? Well, for me it means showing up fearlessly, confident and trusting of the physiological process that birth is. It means being fully present and alert, listening-observing-absorbing. It means creating a safe environment free of judgement, fear and unnecessary interference. Birth is such a sacred and momentous event in a woman's life, and we should be honoring that!

Here's my point... while it may seem like holding "space" is weightless, after a birth is over and all the oxytocin and adrenaline wears off, things can start to get pretty heavy and we need somewhere to set that down so that we don't carry it with us into the next birth.


Introduction



HIHI FRIENDS!!!

I'm Raina, Your Revolutionary Birthkeeper! And I am so darn excited to start this new journey of storytelling with you! If you aren't already someone who knows who I am or what I'm about, I'll tell ya!

Think of me as a bit of a rebel or renegade, if you will. I am a faith led, heart driven, "rule" breakin', God fearing, misfit. OH! And I really LOVE birth! I also really love empowering mothers. Furthermore, I find great pleasure in shaking things up a bit and challenging the status quo for what the average birth process looks like in America today.



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BIRTHKEEPER**

As soon as I finished intensive training and received my doula certification in 2020, I was eager to jump right in. I figured I would offer support to alllll the mamas - no matter their chosen place of birth. I had this idea in my head that the first birth I ever got to witness outside of my own was going to be magical and perfect with rainbows and butterflies. But alas, for me, it was anything but...

Writing and journaling has always been very therapeutic for me. Using a pen and paper is a way for me to organize my thoughts and rationalize my feelings. So, naturally I started a “Birth diary” following the labor of my very first ever client. I began my entries by outlining the sequence of events, and then I would note how the things I observed made me feel, whether good or bad. For a short time, this seemed to suffice as my sole outlet. Afterall, I couldn’t dare voice these things out loud for fear of being perceived as self-serving.

Then about a year and a half or so ago (mid 2023), after debriefing a difficult birth with my incredibly wise mentor, I came to realize how relieving it felt to verbalize the things only my diary knew. I felt this deep sense of

solidairty. I was met with so much support and validation that I felt safe enough to open up and just talk about it.

Sidenote: If there's one thing I do better than writing it's talking!! I'm not much one for small talk, but if you start me on something I am ferociously passionate about, or provide me with a judgement free zone, it becomes quite difficult to shut me up.

Anyway, I began wondering why so many birth workers aren't talking amongst each other about the things you can only learn through experience and walking this delicate journey. Things that aren't and can't be taught. For example but certainly not limited to things such as, how one will deal with being disrespected and dismissed by hospital providers when a client is transported from a planned home birth to captivity; or the grief and misplaced guilt when a birth didn't go exactly as planned. Or maybe you missed your child's birthday party because babies don't give a crap what your plans are. Rude, am I right?! [lol that's sarcasm, obvi] How about those perfect births following a birth with a less than ideal outcome. The adrenal fatigue, sleepless nights, hours of counseling, etc. Birth workers hold and carry so much more than just space.

Quite frankly, if you ask me, I think every doula should have their own doula in the same way therapists have therapists. WE ALL NEED A BIRTH BUDDY to just talk it out with.

Which kind of circles me around to the point and creation of this blog series.

One night, many months ago, I was laying in bed trying to sleep, and my brain doing what my brain does, conjured up this idea to publicly publish my journal entries as a way to unveil the untold stories, unspoken truths, hardships and blessings of this sacred work.

Upon giving it more thought, I questioned whether or not this was actually a good idea. The things I write in my diary are intimate, personal, raw and very easily could be taken out of context or perceived in an inadvertent manner. Surely, doing this would invite a great deal of unwanted flack.

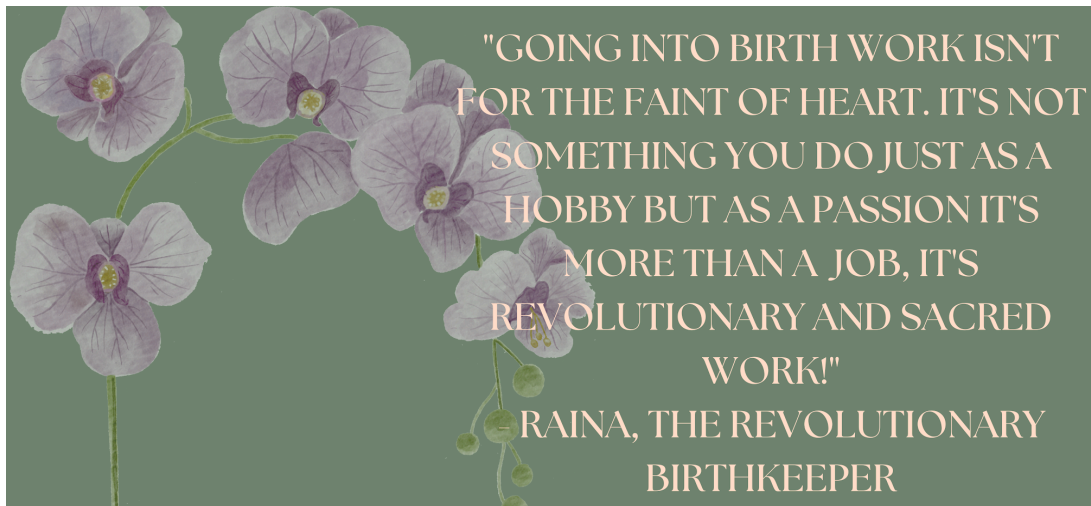
Rather than hoisting myself out of bed to start impulsively sharing every detail with the world, I decided to take a mental step back and ask God for guidance. I spent nearly a year chewing on this idea, praying over this desire to share, running it by my community sisters and even some past clients.

Being a birth worker is similar to that of being a mother in the way that it is one of the hardest jobs, yet one of my absolute greatest joys. I want to illuminate the fact that I unequivocally LOVE what I do. I was called to sit at the feet of women and I cannot imagine doing anything else with my life's work. Buuuuutttt, this work doesn't come without its difficulties.

So, with all of that said, the purpose of this online diary is to shed light on the days/nights in the life of a birthkeeper. Whether you are a new mom, past or present client, home birther, hospital birther, or just a woman exploring (and anything in between) you are all welcome here. However, my driving force behind this project is to speak to the doulas, birthkeepers, traditional attendants and all birth workers alike, to remind them they are not carrying the burden alone in hopes to slow down the burn out rate for our community.

I will share birth stories, raw emotions, rants, conflicts, trials, triumphs, redemptions, lessons learned, growth and more!! Personal details about my clients, such as names, birth dates and specific identifying details may be redacted in order to preserve the identity of the women I have served. Some mama's have given me permission to use full transparency.

In order not to discourage newly pregnant moms from hiring a birthkeeper, I do think it is a good idea to heed with caution. These entries may not be in the best interest for a vulnerable time such as pregnancy to read, as it is never my intention to burden families with the weight we carry. I LOVE this work and I WANT to serve you. In fact, it is my greatest honor.



The diary of a Birthkeeper offers a unique glimpse into the world of autonomous pregnancy and birth. These diaries will reveal the deep bond and connection that forms between the attendant (me) and the families I serve during one of life's most significant moments. Each entry captures the emotions, challenges, and joys experienced within the physiological birthing process through personal stories and insights. It highlights the importance of support, love, understanding and connection during this sacred and transformative journey. It is my hope that by embracing these stories, it will enhance how we view birth and the impact it has on our community. I want to thank the women who have taught me, supported me, mentored me and encouraged me. I truly wouldn't have made it this far without y'all. I want to thank my birth bestie for always giving me a safe landing, every time I feel like I'm going to crash and burn. I want to thank the families who have allowed me to walk alongside them during their pregnancies and births. Most of all, I want to thank God for bestowing my path with purpose and meaning.

Thank you for being a part of this very vulnerable journey with me.
Let's create a Revolution together. God Bless.

XOXO ~ With love, Raina
The Revolutionary Birthkeeper