

TRIAL OF LABOR

THE DOCUMENTARY

TERTIUM QUID MEDIA AND RHEE PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS "TRIAL OF LABOR" EXECUTIVE PRODUCER ELLIOT BERLIN

ORIGINAL SCORE BY KIM AND KATHRYN KLUGE EDITED BY ALLIE HIRSCH DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY ANDRE LASCARIS AND

YAMIT SHIMONOVITZ PRODUCED, WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY ROBERT HUMPHREYS

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NATURAL BIRTH OVER REPEAT C-SECTIONS

TITLE

When four Californian women who'd had previous cesarean deliveries opt to try for a vaginal birth in consequent pregnancies, they face a difficult journey to find the care providers and support they needed to birth the way nature intended.

Many hospitals and doctors no longer allow vaginal birth after a cesarean, making a repeat cesarean the only option available for many women. This is true even though the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) now says "Attempting a VBAC is a safe and appropriate choice for most women who have had a prior cesarean delivery, including for some women who have had two previous cesareans."

In effect, "VBAC bans" are cornering women into surgeries they may not need – surgeries that come with risks, complications, and a much more difficult recovery than one can expect from a natural birth. This is true even though the National Institutes of Health says "Overall, the major benefit of trial of labor is the 74 percent likelihood of VBAC and avoidance of multiple cesarean deliveries."

The film, Trial of Labor, follows the four women on their quest to have a VBAC. The women came from all walks of life, but all had one thing in common – the determination not to be forced into unnecessary surgery.

Each woman in the film chose her own path to natural birth: some chose a formal hospital setting - one chose to labor at home with a doula- and another chose a home birth with a midwife. Irrespective of outcome they all found healing in truly informing themselves, making their own decisions, and fighting for a "trial of labor."

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ORIGINAL SCORE [KIM AND KATHRYN KLUGE](#)
RUNNING TIME [67 MINS](#)
PRODUCTION YEAR [2015](#)
FORMAT [HIGH DEF - NTSC](#)
LANGUAGE [ENGLISH](#)
COUNTRY [USA](#)
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Robert Humphreys, Producer – Director/Writer

Rob began his filmmaking career freelancing in the development media world of his hometown of Harare, Zimbabwe, where he worked on films focused on social and political issues. These covered a variety of subjects including the drought of the early 1990's, worker's rights and the end of apartheid.

After moving to the United States, Rob focused his attention on broader issues challenging systemized belief and behavior. Most notably, he lensed the environmentally conscious *Design:e2* series for PBS during which time he traveled the world extensively for four years, meeting many of the great innovators of the modern environmental movement.

His passions and interests cover everything from drawing and sculpture to science and myth. Though far from being a Luddite he loves to question any claims that modern equates to sophistication and is fascinated by ancient technologies while fully embracing the enabling ability of modern tech.

He is currently researching documentary projects 'Boom and Bust' on the dysfunction of modern economics and 'En-ability' seeing functioning disabilities as an asset to society.

.Dr. Elliot Berlin, DC, Executive Producer

Since his early days of chiropractic ten years ago, Dr. Berlin has established himself as an innovative out-of-the-box thinker seeking and discovering natural solutions for some of the most difficult and mystifying ailments that people suffer with.

His persistent exploration has led him to focus on symptoms caused by the body's natural response to internal stress. In developing techniques to reverse the harmful effects of this nerve tension, he has successfully helped hundreds of people overcome the most difficult cases of female infertility, migraine headache, chronic fatigue, chronic neck or back pain, irritable bowel, panic attacks, insomnia, and fibromyalgia. The success of his alternative infertility program led to the need for a comprehensive prenatal and postpartum care program. He has become so specialized in prenatal wellness care that upwards of 80% of his patients are now pre or postnatal.

Dr. Berlin is a member of the American Pregnancy Association, Holistic Pediatric Association, International Chiropractic Pediatric Association, Doula Association of Southern California, California Association of Midwives, American Chiropractic Association, and California Chiropractic Association.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

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In September 2007, I became a father. It is one of those moments one never forgets. The birth itself was perfect, in fact there is such a thing as a perfect birth. The pregnancy was without any painkillers and the birth was natural; no complications, no interventions, and no tearing. 'APGAR 10:10!' as they say. It was profound to witness the various stages of pregnancy and labor knowing that I was powerless to do anything other than love and support.

My curiosity about birth had started years before I knew that I would one day have kids of my own. I, like many men, was intrigued by the powers at play. After many years I have come away with this; giving birth is possibly the most solitary event a human can go through aside from being born or dying. Yet, giving birth is different as it is a conscious act of giving. It is the gifting of life and possibly nature's greatest act of selflessness. It is sanctity and pure. In a world where so little is held sacred, this act embodies godliness as it is our connection with the source of life. The laboring mother is complete and singular, and as for the rest of us we are outsiders, charged to love and support her through her journey knowing that this journey is hers and hers alone. It is the mother who carries the torch of life as well as the triumphs and scars of birth and these are hers to bear.

In the months following my son's birth, I found myself bonding with other parents and sharing anecdotes about parenthood, sleeping patterns, diaper creams, and all the small talk of the newly initiated. But as time drew on it became apparent that the one topic better left aside was that of the birth itself. Many people seemed to avoid the subject, as it was unsettling. I soon understood that not all births were equal and not all memories were as fond as mine.

This peaked my interest and a long series of conversations ensued with friends, relatives, and strangers alike. Though birth was something that I was never going to experience, if I lent myself to the stories I heard, perhaps I could better understand the complexities of it more deeply. I wanted to know more about birth. I wanted to make a film about it.

There were a few things that stood out in these conversations. One of them was that birth is now being graded. It is not intentional but a bi-product of the modern discourse on birth. As a result, women who have C-sections often come away with feelings of failure and guilt. In many birth classes there is little mention of C-sections other than their downsides and very little advice for that eventuality. Because of this, many mothers come away feeling less of themselves for not birthing the way 'nature intended'.

Despite the scientific evidence put forward to help mothers weigh their options and assess their risks during birth, many mothers come away from birth confused by the outcome, and feeling that something didn't add up, especially if they have had surgery. This confusion can amount to feelings of violation and regret when faced with the same options in subsequent pregnancies. I also heard many stories of the hurdles and triumphs of pregnancy, labor, and delivery, many of them joyful. The emotions behind giving birth run the gamut from sadness to ecstasy, from fear to love, and they all run very deep.

As my passion grew I started to look for a story that might be inclusive of the many dynamics of birth. After reading *Born in The USA* by Marsden Wagner the yearning to explore birthing practices found its focus on VBACs and the stories of women pursuing them. I had never heard of VBAC but I realized that behind this strange acronym for natural birth was a chance to explore these ideas on camera. The result is Trial of Labor, an inquiry into birth from the mother's perspective.

Robert Humphreys, Richmond CA, 2015
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EXECUTIVE PRODUCER STATEMENT

Working as a prenatal chiropractor (and now a birth doula) I am surrounded by birth, and hear thousands of individual birth stories and plans. Practicing in Hollywood, I meet a lot of people who know how to tell compelling stories. These two factors combined led me to join with Robert Humphreys for something I hadn't exactly planned to do – executive produce a full-length documentary film about Vaginal Birth After Cesarean (VBAC.)

Once we had our makeshift team together, however, things went amazingly well. We captured the emotional journey of each woman who chose to share her story in our film, as well as their very personal journeys into (or almost into!) the delivery room. I am forever grateful to the four brave women who volunteered to become faces of VBAC awareness through our film, Trial of Labor.

It's a film that is long overdue. With "VBAC bans" still in place all over the country, we don't have a nation where the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) can say, "Attempting a VBAC is a safe and appropriate choice for most women who have had a prior cesarean delivery, including for some women who have had two previous cesareans" and all the "VBAC bans" are magically overturned.

Even with the National Institutes of Health saying, "Overall, the major benefit of trial of labor is the 74 percent likelihood of VBAC and avoidance of multiple cesarean deliveries", there are hospitals and doctors who will not perform a VBAC.

We decided to find out what happens when empowered women take on the "VBAC bans". As you'll find out in the film, quite a lot can happen!

Making this film was an emotional rollercoaster at times, but I'm incredibly proud of the end result. I'm proud we gave these women, who represent so many millions of women, the opportunity to tell their stories in their own words, and kept the "talking heads" out of the film. I'm glad that this will be a resource for birth classes, VBAC support groups, and individual women who find it online... and I also want it to be a resource for hospital administrators, legislators, doctors, and other birth practitioners. It's about a very important issue and it tells the stories of four remarkable women who had the strength to say they'd had enough with the maternal care system as it stands today.

Speaking of today, I still have patients in my office searching for VBAC-friendly doctors all the time, and sometimes it feels as if nothing is changing. But things will change when mothers, en masse, start asking for more. When they find the courage of the four women in the film and demand birth choices for them and every other woman out there. One day, we will see real and lasting change, and a 'trial of labor' will become the standard. Our small contribution to this change was an honor to produce, and I hope it continues to inform and educate women and their partners about the truths about VBAC.

Elliot Berlin, Los Angeles CA, 2015
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