

I gave birth to my daughter, my first child, in Manhattan's Lenox Hill hospital which is considered to be the best birthing hospital in New York City. A statement that both Chelsea Clinton and Beyonce can attest as they also gave birth there. While I had an uncomplicated birth, my experience there was lacking.

Starting with a gaggle of healthcare professionals hanging out in my room because they had never witnessed an unmedicated birth before. People that I had never met before, bore witness to my most private and precious moments. People not of my choosing witnessed my greatest pain and my absolute joy. I then shared a recovery room with another mother, my half of the recovery room being so small that my husband wasn't able to stay overnight with me. The person of my choosing had to leave me 'alone' after the most grueling day of my life. When I say 'alone', I mean I was surrounded by healthcare staff that awoke me every two hours to check-in. So although I was desperate for rest and sleep, I was denied that because that's how hospitals do business. I arrived home two days later utterly sleep deprived and feeling very vulnerable.

When I became pregnant for a second time, I knew I needed a midwife and home birth. And although I had great health insurance at the time, I had to save up a not unsubstancial sum of money for this option. I gave birth to my son at home with only the people of my choosing... my husband, mother and two beautiful midwives. It was easily the most joyous day of my life. And if it weren't for my husband's vasectomy, I'd do it again. After it was all over, I took my son upstairs and slept peacefully.

While my story isn't of great import, I think it highlights the very minimum that we can offer new mothers... choice, privacy, dignity, as well as, alleviating financial burden. All new mothers deserve that start.

Sincerely,

Vanessa Todd-Holmes