

(introductory music)

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**MARYN:** Welcome to Indie Birth's series of podcasts here on iTunes, *Taking Back Birth*. Hi, everyone. This is Maryn. And we have another conference preview interview chat for you today. I'm so excited to be talking with Rachelle Garcia Seliga. And she is coming to us from Oregon and is going to be presenting on the postpartum period, which I know so many of you agree with me in believing and knowing that that is one of the most neglected periods of our lives. So I want Rachelle to give a little intro here, so you can get to know her. And then we're going to chat a little bit about what she's offering at this conference and why it's going to be so amazing. So welcome, Rachelle.

**RACHELLE:** Thank you, Maryn. Thank you for having me. I'm super honored and excited and—yeah. It's just a really fantastic feeling, so thank you.

**MARYN:** You are so welcome. So yeah. Tell us a little bit about yourself as a woman, how you got into midwifery. People always love to hear that. Anything that you think will allow people to get a peek into your life a little bit.

**RACHELLE:** Okay. So I spent the early portion of my twenties in revolutionary politics. So I was the woman on the street with the bullhorn organizing rallies and marches and conferences and all this kind of stuff. There came a point in time when I started to think about if I really wanted to spend the rest of my life fighting against something that I didn't believe in. And I just started to kind of reevaluate my life and myself really at that time and realized that I wanted to spend my life creating a system, creating a way of life that I did believe in. And really I feel like it must have been within a week or two of having those understandings that I met a woman who was a professor, a Chicana studies, a professor. And she and I were talking one day, and she was telling me how about ten years before—so I think it was actually in the 1990s there had been a law that was passed in California that had denied health care to quote on quote illegal immigrants.

**MARYN:** Mm-hmm.

**RACHELLE:** And so that was really affecting the Mexican community there and especially for women to give birth. It was like, "Well, if they're legally not allowed to go to the hospital to birth, well, where are they going to birth? And how is that going to look?" And so they had formed, in their community, a birth circle where midwives and healers just began to re-teach to women the art of midwifery and the way to support each other at birth because it was like, "Well, if there is no other option for us, then this

is what we're going to do." And it was at that time—when she said midwife, I hadn't even heard the word midwife, but I was like, "Midwife. That's what I'm supposed to do." It was just that was it. And then, literally, probably within two weeks after that, I met the first ever friend really that I had at that point in my life who was pregnant and expecting her second child. And she asked me to come to her birth. And I had just met her, and I was like, "Wow." I just met her. And we don't really know each other, but she just really liked my energy. And she invited me to her birth. And I was honored. And I went. And then that just sent me off. And at her birth, she had a beautiful healthy home birth and like that. But she had a big process around it because even though it was—it looked like there was not intervention, she actually felt like the midwives got in her way a lot. And so that was my first birth experience. And then I got to hear her process through it. And then I just started to think about how midwifery had to be revived in this country. It was cut off at some point in time really, and there hasn't really been a revival of it. And I've always felt connected to the ways of our ancestors because there is so much wisdom in what all of our bloodlines and what all of our lineages have known since time immemorial. And so I just felt like really clear that I was going to Mexico. And I was going to go learn with midwives in Mexico because I wanted to start studying and begin my studies, at least, from a place where the lineage hadn't been broken and learn in that way. And so then I spent the next seven or eight years back and forth between Mexico and the United States working with traditional midwives throughout Mexico and then traditional midwives in the United States. And I worked at birth clinics in Mexico, and I worked at birth clinics in the United States until I just knew that I was done with my apprenticeship to midwifery. And then it was really when my community started to ask me to be their midwife is when I started to be a midwife. Not because I felt like I was ready, but because that's what the women started to ask of me. And so that is a little bit of how I came into midwifery.

**MARYN:** Yeah. That's a beautiful story. I just love hearing people's stories of how they get into this and why. And I love that from the beginning you were so aware of the traditional model and the traditional midwives. That's so rare now. People are, I think, completely separated from this history, and, in a general sense, it's just become more about the numbers and the papers and the this and the that. And yeah. I'm with you. I wonder often what happened to that being somebody's primary source of entry although that wasn't mine. Although the midwife I apprenticed with was very hands off, so I suppose there was a little bit. But yeah. So much different, I think, than what a lot of midwifery students are seeing nowadays.

**RACHELLE:** Totally. No doubt. And I was really blessed. Even when I came back to the United States, I just got really clear. I didn't have the words that I might have now to explain what it was that I was looking for. But my prayer at the time was, "I really want to learn from a midwife who is practicing in integrity with the tradition of midwifery." And

so that was my prayer. And so the midwife that I actually apprenticed with when I lived in Massachusetts for a point in my life she was originally from Kentucky. And as far as I know, it's still a felony in Kentucky to attend home births. And so the women that she had learned from in Kentucky—I mean they were just super hands off. And they really took care of everything at home because you didn't want to have any kind of involvement with the law at all really.

**MARYN:** Sure. Sure.

**RACHELLE:** And so I learned from her so much of trusting in our natural abilities. Our body's capabilities because they just took care of most things at home so that they were protected. So even when I was learning in the States, I feel really fortunate to have met that midwife that I apprenticed with in Massachusetts.

**MARYN:** Yeah. Yeah. I had a similar experience in my apprenticeship in the Midwest, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois. The midwives kind of having to do home birth at all costs. And I think there is a lot of wisdom in being really autonomous and having that work and learning methods that kind of help you out in that regard, but I think I see it coming back around. If I really can imagine my midwifery dream, it's all of that knowledge coming back around with having access to everything.

**RACHELLE:** Totally.

**MARYN:** It's hard being in one of those places. And yeah. It's hard being even here in Arizona, and home birth isn't very accepted. And yeah. Women aren't having access to that full spectrum of care. So yeah. It's such an interesting blend, I think. At least what I picture. But it sounds similar to what you're saying.

**RACHELLE:** Yes. I totally agree with you.

**MARYN:** So let's talk a little bit about what you'll be teaching about. I was pretty general. I wanted you to give the full detailed description or, at least, more detailed than the postpartum period. But tell us a little bit about what you're offering. And I just love to hear how you focused on that and how that became your passion.

**RACHELLE:** Yeah. Totally. So let me see where I go with that. So my daughter is about to be five. And so really the first three years of her life, I was at home and with her. And I'm still at home and with her. But I mean just my energy and my mind and everything was at home and with her. And just in the past couple years, I've just started coming out of that. And I just am still not wanting to go to births mostly because I'm still not wanting to be on call. I tried going back to birth after she was born. And my nervous system was just urh—wired. And so I don't know if I will pick that up again. But as I thought with, "Well, what do I do with all of this information and wisdom and

knowledge that I've been passed that I really just spent all of those years doing all of this work for nothing," and I was like, "I have to be able to really look at what I've been taught and value who I am and what I know and then place importance on everything that my elders in the midwifery world and outside of the midwifery world have shared with me. And surely, it's not for nothing."

**MARYN:** Surely.

**RACHELLE:** And so when I got to that—yeah. And so when I got to that understanding, I'm like, "Okay. So well, what do I do with it then?" Because I don't want to go to births. And so okay. I have received all of this. And so then what? And really, for me, it was about getting out of my own way. And just putting it out there to spirits and asking spirits what needed to come through me and what needed to come through me was this class that I have put together. Maryn, I need to drink some water. I'm sorry. Hold on.

**MARYN:** Yeah. Sure. Sure. Go ahead. Yeah. It sounds a lot like birth, huh? Just allowing yourself to move out of the way and—yeah.

**RACHELLE:** Right. Totally. And so it was really over the summer that a woman asked if she could interview me for her postpartum blog. And I was like, "Wow. If I really want to reach out to the world, what is it that I want to share?" And I got this whole download. And it was really a mixture of all of my midwifery teachings and then all of the spiritual teachings I've received from my elders. And it was this perfect blending of the scientific world with the spiritual world for this understanding that came through as physiologic postpartum care. In the birth world now, I feel like most women in the birth world have heard about physiologic birth. And people have heard of Michel Odent, and people have heard of undisturbed birth. And people have heard of unassisted birth. And there's this understanding that we need to have certain things at birth for the optimal situation. The optimal situation is the healthy passage of mother and baby where they both feel fulfilled. And they feel that the birth process is complete. And whatever the birth outcome is and however it looks, that's not the matter as long as the mother is in integrity with herself in that process and feels supported in the way that she wants to be supported is how I see it. And so I was like well, the same thing applies to the postpartum period. We have actually—we—our biology actually mandates certain things from us in the postpartum period. And why is that—why are we not paying attention to that? And so I just started to really look at all of the information. And all of the old teachings whether it's ayurvedic or the traditional Chinese medicine or—wherever you're sourcing the old information from, they all talk about the postpartum period as being the foundation for a woman's health all the way through menopause. And they talk about the postpartum period as being a period that can either totally revitalize a woman or can totally deplete a woman. And all the postpartum traditions

are kind of virtually the same. They're all extended resting period. They're all talking about the importance of warmth. They're all talking about the importance of warm, easily digestible food. They're all talking about—there are just these common thread through all of them. They all have their different cultural flavors depending on where they're traditions from, but essentially, if you look at postpartum traditions throughout the world, they're the same. And so then I just started looking at that, and it was like, "Well, where does that come from? How is that possible that postpartum traditions from the entire planet are the same?" With their cultural context, with their cultural flavoring. But based on the same teachings. And then what came to me was what my elders have taught me is that at one point on this planet there was actually one race, one culture, of people. It is what we think of when we think of as humanity. And they say that what happened was that at one point in time because of breaches of commitment that people had with spirit humanity broke apart into different cultures and into different groups, which became different races and different languages. They say if you look at all of the old teachings, all of the old languages, that you will find the common threads between all of them. I'm sorry. I'm totally moved just as it comes together and comes out to the world because it's quite powerful really.

**MARYN:** Yeah. Yeah. It's a very beautiful thought. And I think it's a very sobering thought. And it's really what knits us all together, which I think is the core of these sorts of issues. That we do know what we used to know. Somewhere in us, we do know the truth. And people like you are changing our modern history by reminding us. And so that is the most important role, I think, that one can have is being that reminder and that teacher as you are doing. So it is sacred work. That's the truth.

**RACHELLE:** Yeah. Totally.

**MARYN:** Yeah. It is very sacred work. Yeah.

**RACHELLE:** And so what it is is that however different people want to look at it and whatever different people's beliefs systems are the truth is is that no matter where our ancestors come from, no matter what continent people are on, overall, we all have the same biologic or physiologic design as humans. And so the wisdom that comes through these postpartum traditions is that there is an understanding of our design really. Of our biological design. When these traditions were created. And the reason that these traditions are all the same is because all of our ancestors—no matter where we come from—had an understanding of this brilliance of this perfection of our human form really. And so as I started to piece all those things together, I was like, "Well, I really want to understand the science behind this," because that Japanese scientist who came and made that book, *The Messages from the Water*. And he took the pictures of the water crystals. Have you seen that?

**MARYN:** Mm-hmm. Yeah.

**RACHELLE:** Yeah. And so what that information was, I think, to a lot of people—it's like traditional people have always prayed over the water. Traditional people have always taken care of the water because there is an understanding that water is life. But somehow we've forgotten that in the modern world. And so to me, what that information did was it put into this western oriented context, "Look it. This is what happens to the water. This is what water crystals look like when we are loving, when we are hating, when we are angry, when we are in all these different states of being." And I was like that, to me, is so powerful because you can bring the old wisdom into modern times with that formula.

**MARYN:** Sure. Sure. Yeah. And that's just as brilliant, in a way. I mean just to be able to reach people now. That's the formula.

**RACHELLE:** Right. Totally. And so, I was like gosh. I'm so—I want to know what that is. It was this curiosity that came through, and I just started putting—it was like putting a huge puzzle together. Gathering the science and putting the science to the postpartum traditions. And it's like out of that was born this class, this course, that I'm now going to be teaching to train women on offering truly holistic comprehensive postpartum care. And just this whole body of information has come through me. And so yes. That is what I can say about the whole process of that.

**MARYN:** I am so excited to learn even the little bit at the conference because you have so much knowledge. So we're only going to get a piece, but it's going to be a great piece. And I think that it is so encouraging to think of women getting this knowledge and then us, as midwives who are going to be at this conference, having enough knowledge to want to get it out into our communities because I'm sure I'm not alone in feeling like the postpartum period is so big. It's so overwhelming. And the truth is one midwife isn't enough for one woman. We need the village. We need the community to understand. So I think that's what you're talking about too. And I love that you're going to get this information out there because it's going to change the world. It's going to.

**RACHELLE:** Totally. Totally.

**MARYN:** That's amazing. So, again, we can't really boil down all of your knowledge and research. We're just trying to give people a taste. What do you think is—I hate to say the most exciting. But the part of this class that will touch the midwives most deeply, what do you think that is? Whether it's a piece of knowledge or just a philosophy.

**RACHELLE:** I think that the piece that's going to touch everyone the most is to really come away with an understanding of that the postpartum care really is not a luxury but a

necessity. And to have bits of understandings of why it's actually a necessity. And so I'll speak to a couple of those pieces right now. And one of them is—so something that I've done out of my offshoot of midwifery is I've developed a well woman care practice. And in that practice, I do holistic well women care. And so it's my abdominal therapy and holistic pelvic care and holistic breast care and all these things. And there is kind of a certain thread just how, in this country, there is so many women with disharmonious relationships with their monthly bleeding cycle. And there's so much pain. There's just so much dis-ease and really dysfunction of our feminine landscape as women. And the same is true for the menopause time in this country. And I feel like menopause has such a bad rap in this country, in general. And it's like well, why is it that menopause is so hard? And is menopause actually that hard? And if you actually start talking with women who have passed through menopause healthy in their bodies and in their minds and in their emotions and their spirits, it's challenging, and it's beautiful like how birth is. And so just in my exploration of things and what I have seen in my practice is that there's certain issues that start to surface for women during menopause. And one of those is pelvic issues. So women will come in having just gone through menopause. And they'll say things like, "I have never had pelvic issues my entire life until I went through menopause, and now I'm feeling prolapse. Or I'm feeling this pain." And there's the vaginal dryness. And there's just all these pelvic things that they didn't have an awareness of before that just wasn't part of their reality. And what I've found in piecing things together in terms of postpartum care for women especially pelvic postpartum care for women is that what happens is that the estrogen that we have in our bodies as women during our childbearing years actually masks mass pelvic symptoms because what estrogen does is it keeps those juicy. It keeps everything lubricated. It's that juicy kind of hormone. And when estrogen starts to drop as we go through menopause and progesterone starts to drop as well, all of these sensations and imbalances in the pelvic area actually that were there all along can just finally be felt. And it kind of comes to the surface. And so then what happens, if you start imagining then, "Well, how would it be if we all were receiving this pelvic care just in itself after birth?" How would that experience then be for all of our childbearing years and then going through menopause? And then you just start looking at the rates of things. It's like one in three women in this country over the age of 60 no longer has a uterus. And it's like, "Well, why is that?" And it's because there is so many things that are not attended to during our childbearing years that our bodies can kind of just handle because we're in our youth and because we have this whole flow of hormones. And then once we go get into menopause, all of these things come to the surface. And western medicine is really not set up right now to be able to take care of these matters that are coming up for women. So that's a piece of it. The piece of it is the importance of pelvic care because we can handle it. And we can survive. And we can push

through in our childbearing years. And as we go through menopause, there's a big shift there.

**MARYN:** Yeah. Yeah. I can see how that would be so valuable. And, again, it's valuable for women. And then I think it's just really rethinking midwifery too to consider that this is the midwife's role. It is for us to understand the entire life cycle and to be attentive and to know as much as we can whether it's new knowledge or old knowledge. Yeah. And really keep up with that so that we can best serve our communities. I mean that's, I think, what you're offering that is just so needed is that real holistic approach to the entire life cycle and being of a midwife, not just the birth part.

**RACHELLE:** Totally. Yeah.

**MARYN:** Well, it sounds amazing. I know it will be. We can't wait to have you here. And just hope that everybody listening can come and hear Rachelle share about this amazing research and traditional knowledge that she has compiled to share with all of us so that we can better serve women and be more well rounded midwives, who care about every part of what's going on. So any last words of wisdom, Rachelle, before we see you here in January?

**RACHELLE:** Let me think. Well, I'm just really, again, honored to be able to come to the conference and to be able to share. And yeah. Just thank you for having me here today, Maryn.

**MARYN:** Oh yes. Our pleasure. And I know you feel the same. I just love that we connected having similar visions and just kind of found each other and knowing that it's just the right thing to have you come and teach and for us all to be together and connect really. So thank you.

**RACHELLE:** Yeah. Thank you for doing this. Thank you for the birth in this whole new paradigm, which is really, I feel like, a big—it's a shift from surviving as humans to thriving. And I feel like that's what the earth is asking of us right now. And I feel like that's what this conference that you have designed is really doing. It's asking us to step up into who we are as people so that we can thrive and not just survive.

**MARYN:** Yes. Yes. That is a beautiful way of putting it. I could not have said it better. And I agree. All of the teachers, I think, the women attending, of course—the right people are always there. And I think that is definitely the theme that everybody very much cares about sharing what they have in authenticity and integrity knowing that everything that's shared there is so much bigger than what it even is. Yeah. It's just—yeah. It's a worldview. And it's how we're going to go home and be better people and be better midwives because we're able to all connect and be together. So that is true. That is the new paradigm of life to enjoy that part.



**RACHELLE:** Mm-hmm. Yes.

**MARYN:** Very much. All right. Well, thanks for listening, everybody. Be sure to visit [indiebirth.com/conference](http://indiebirth.com/conference) to learn more about specific conference events. And we hope to see you in January 2016.

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