

(introductory music)

**DISCLAIMER:** *Taking Back Birth* is a production of the Indie Birth Association and indiebirth.com. No material on this podcast should be considered medical advice. Birth is not a medical event.

**MARYN:** Welcome to Indie Birth's series of podcasts here on iTunes, *Taking Back Birth*. Maryn here, your creator and host of *Taking Back Birth* with a long overdue podcast on the story of Indie Birth. So this could be a long one. Settle in and take what you will from the tale I have to tell.

So before I begin, of course, there's always a pre beginning part of this podcast. I have told this story many times. Most recently to an incoming class of students for our midwifery school. It dawned on me that this is unknown to many although it's also known to many. But as our community grows, which we are very grateful for, there is, of course, a rising percentage every day of people that don't know my own personal story and don't know how Indie Birth got to be in the place we are today. Other places I have told this story over the last six, seven years have been at our first Indie Birth Midwifery Conference. This story opened the conference. And I think effectively gave the conference attendees context for this weekend that they were about to experience. I also regularly tell this story in abbreviated form at my free workshop. So before I can really launch into the politics and what an Indie Birth is, I feel that people need some background.

So it's kind of strange really that I've never presented this from start to finish on a podcast as this platform is where so many of our community reside. And it's where so many new people find Indie Birth. So I really do hope this becomes one of the most listened to podcasts. Not because I think my story is oh, so great, but I think it's an important story in the context of the work that we're doing and the support and interest that so many of you have. So the new community, of which you may be one, is an important part of reiterating this story in its length and entirety in whatever detail comes out of my mouth today. It always seems to be a little bit different. The story stays the same but different things come out just based on what I remember. I also just think again that this is a great podcast to have in the archives, and the next time somebody wants to know about why Indie Birth is the way it is or why we're set up as a PMA, which I'll go over, I can just easily point them to this podcast.

And finally, the truth is many of these podcasts are for my own processing, kind of like the mirror that I get to hold up. And like I said, I don't know how this story will be retold today. But my processing continues as life, hopefully, continues, and I continue to have new revelations around it. I also feel that the details of the story may or may not actually be important. I very much recognize this, and you'll see what I mean as I go through it.

But the more important story I think that I'm sharing with you is the shining of my own light. And we all have a light. So my light is no more special than yours. But simply offering my own story as a way of expressing my truth is important because I feel that is something we can all get in more touch with. And, of course, it overlaps with my truth being that of Indie Birth. So as I go through my story and explain this or that, it's obviously not meant as anything else. It's not meant as a way to convince people that Indie Birth is doing things right. Frankly, those people probably aren't listening to this podcast, so that's not at all the view that I have. But I'm hoping this provides more of a full picture view for our students, for our supporters, for midwives, for parents, for anybody that's been interested in what's happening. And I think that alone is probably resonant with so many.

So my story as it pertains to birth and midwifery the last six to eight years and Indie Birth's story overlaps. We're one and the same. I believe that this story is a story about honesty. It's about transparency and my own truth. So it doesn't bother me if it's not the story that resonates with everybody. It doesn't bother me if things I say seem crazy to some people. I don't really seek to please anybody. This is only to honor my own path and the vision and mission that we have with Indie Birth.

So like I said, it's just a story. And as humans, we all have these things we carry around in our memories and in our emotional memories. These things we call stories that we hang onto. And we tell. Like the way we read out of storybook to children almost. But I think there is such value in stories. They allow us to connect and communicate, and the story really isn't done because I'm still here. Indie Birth is still here. It's only a part of the journey.

So let's see. Those that are ready to dive in here can maybe settle in with—maybe you're going to take a walk. That's a great way to listen to a story. Or settle in with a cup of tea or coffee and just make what you will of what I have to say. I don't know how I'll weave together this tale this time only because every time I tell it it comes out a little bit different. And I think just depending on the way I'm feeling different parts gets highlighted. But let's see if I can pull it all together here.

So the story of Indie Birth begins about ten years ago. Quite a long time. So that might be something surprising to you, if you just came across this podcast. Now I haven't been doing podcasts for ten years. For sure. But Indie Birth began actually as a print magazine or not really a magazine. It certainly wasn't full size, glossy, anything like that. It was more of a zine, which is more like a pamphlet really. So Indie Birth began as a pamphlet about birth locally in northern Arizona. And before I came to Arizona and parts of this story, you've certainly heard I began a midwifery apprenticeship in Chicago, Illinois. And I was lucky enough to hold on to that apprenticeship for—let's see. Four to five years ish. And what went down there is a similar story to many places in the U.S.

and really around the world which is midwifery isn't regulated really. Meaning that if you're a direct entry midwife or a traditional midwife or even a CPM, you are not able to practice there legally. So the only kinds of midwives that can legally attend home births are CNMs or nurse midwives. It's a very hostile place.

However, at the time, 12, 13 years ago it was absolutely booming with people that wanted home births. So I was aware of this being part of an underground network. But at the same time, I was attending births regularly with an underground midwife, and I was blessed to see birth a lot and often and very naturally. This midwife was not medicalized or highly medicalized or really in the medical mindset at all. So I had this blessing of having my initiation into attending births be actually exactly what I believe, which is that women are capable. That most of the time birth works fine. There are things we can know, but less is more. So this was my apprenticeship. It went on for five years. And the midwife I worked with eventually got a cease and desist order in Illinois and, long story short, moved.

So kind of at the peak of all that drama it was emotionally upsetting to everyone, of course. But to me as a student, it was pretty traumatic. And so I was actively seeking an apprenticeship elsewhere where I could be legal, where I could be accepted, where I could be licensed, where I could be legitimate. All of those words meant the same thing to me. And I know many people feel that way. And I'm probably not going to go on and on about that because I feel like there's definitely podcasts already on all of this. And there are many stories, I guess, that weave together, but I've definitely spent time talking about that kind of stuff. Not so much my personal story.

So I came to Arizona and did another apprenticeship for a couple of years. And then very much was on the road to becoming licensed. Now here's a fact that many people don't know that I often forget to share. But as I was completing my training, getting all the numbers in order, and the paperwork, you have to or at least you did then—you have to submit things to the state kind of in order with certain fees to start the testing process. So there's a bunch of tests. I couldn't even recall them all now. But you go in for one, and it's written. And you have to pass that one, and then you go on to the next one. And the whole process culminates in an eight-hour skills exam. That was just me. So I got through the process. I passed with flying colors. I was told at one point that I had gotten the highest score of any midwife that had ever taken the test. An eight-hour skills assessment where I had to talk through and demonstrate every skill, everything knowledge based and emergency based in the book. So I did get through that process eventually.

But here's the part that I often forget to share. When I began the process, the state of Arizona told me that they didn't have money for testing. Now aside from licensing being ridiculous and all of that stuff, at the time, I was very invested in this process. You have

to understand that this is why I came here. This is what I wanted more than anything. Or so I thought. And so when the state told me, "We just simply don't have funds for you to become a midwife even though you have worked for the last seven years all together," it was very angering and frustrating. And I eventually had to obtain the services of a lawyer to call them on that. So the irony is striking, right? It is to me, of course. Here's the ticket, right? Deep down I wasn't convinced of this process. And here was the world trying to show me, trying to reflect back to me that maybe this wasn't the way to go. That maybe the stumbling blocks had some meaning.

But I didn't see that at the time and being very determined and, again, very frustrated and angry I proceeded. I kind of steamrolled ahead. On a more legal note, it wasn't legit that they could do that. That was actually a thing they can do for all a variety of reasons that they had already outlined in their own procedure. So it was fairly easy to, once I had a lawyer, get them to allow me to finish taking these exams, so that I could receive a license. So that's just funny to me in hindsight although I don't have any regrets about the rest of the story I'm going to tell you. So it's all perfect. But just saying that sometimes we have to be careful what we ask for. And when we ask for something, my lesson now is to really consider what I'm asking. Is that really what's in my heart? Or is that fear based?

And looking back, I can say that obtaining a license was fear based. That was based on me being afraid of having what happened to the midwife that I worked with happen to me. I didn't have the knowledge. I didn't have the understanding. I didn't have the experience or the maturity to know that a license actually doesn't protect you against much. But we're told that it does. I had been told this. I had seen supposedly this in action. And so I proceeded. So got through the testing process, which took the better part of a year. Again, passed the tests with flying colors. And lo and behold, I was licensed. In fact, I don't even remember my license number. I want to say it was 159. It might have been 169. I don't know. But you get this fancy paper in the mail. And they tell you that you're now licensed midwife number blah, blah, blah. And like, again, in hindsight, it's all kind of silly/funny/disturbing really that I had committed my heart, my practice. I had unknowingly committed women to this grand scheme of things.

So that kind of ties in with the story of Indie Birth because it was here in Arizona as I was finishing up my midwifery studies that I created Indie Birth. So funny enough, Indie Birth was created with where I was in life at that time. Although the print magazine—man, I've really gotten off track but not really. The print magazine really did reflect the deeper beliefs that I had. So I really was writing about birth and midwifery from this wise woman perspective even though I didn't have a name for it. I remember writing an article about encouraging women to be their own midwives, and this was, again, 10, 11 years ago. So very interesting dichotomy, I think, looking back at my own life that I was

kind of living one track and set of beliefs. But I knew somewhere in me, my deeper beliefs actually didn't align with the track that I was on at all.

So the universe has a funny way of working or actually a really, really perfect way of working. And the universe simply wasn't going to allow me to continue on not being true to myself. Now remember the universe had tried, right? To set some road blocks in my path. But I had ignored them. And so within the first year of being licensed, I was immediately—almost immediately in a situation where I would ultimately be asked to choose. So the story goes like this. There was a woman, local woman to me—actually, a friend. Became a close friend. Who was pregnant with her second baby. And her first had been a C-section for all the reasons that women have C-sections routinely. Wasn't really anything crazy. Just typical nobody had patience kind of thing. And so she wanted more than anything to have a vaginal birth after this cesarean.

Now the rules at the time in Arizona, which have since been changed due to what I went through actually—the rules at the time were that the licensed midwives could not legally attend any woman that had had uterine surgery. So yes. I knowingly attended this woman anyway because she had no other choice. Her choices were to drive two to three hours away to attempt a VBAC at a hospital or to walk into our local hospital and just be cut open. They don't offer VBACs. So it's not to say I wouldn't perhaps have done things differently. I mean if we're talking about the detail of the situation. Obviously, as I stated, this all happened very beautifully and perfectly. And I don't have any regrets.

Now when I'm in the other seat and I see licensed midwives doing things that aren't prohibited—or are prohibited, excuse me—I have a different take on it now which is follow the rules and regulations for heaven's sakes because if we don't all acknowledge that they're not working then how will there ever be change. So I did the best I could at the time. And that felt pretty honest to me in the sense that this is what this woman wanted. I wasn't coercing her or forcing her. And in the end, everything was fine. There was no bad outcome. However, she did wind up at the hospital per her request. And a doctor, at the local hospital, found out that I was her midwife and reported me to the Board of Licensing.

Now I say board but don't get the wrong idea. A board would indicate there are multiple people, probably some midwives, right? Isn't that what you're thinking? There's probably a couple midwives on the board. And if a licensed midwife has some kind of disciplinary issue then this board will try and figure out what's what. Well, it really wasn't a board. It was just one single man, who was also in charge of hearing aid specialist. So not a specialist in birth or midwifery. Actually knew nothing about what we did. This man is no longer employed there, but it was very revealing being involved in this situation and seeing the kind of decisions that are made by people in these positions who have no

idea. Like he knew more about hearing aids, I'm sure. And he didn't probably know much about that profession either. He knew absolutely nothing about birth.

So this was the guy kind of fielding the complaint. And the way it's treated, at least here, is that you're immediately on the defensive. A doctor or really anyone can file a report about a licensed practitioner for any reason. They can file something anonymously online. They never need to identify themselves. It can be 500% false. It can be half false. It can whatever. It doesn't matter. And then you're in a position of defending yourself. So the funny thing is I didn't try to necessarily defend myself. I didn't lie about attending her as a VBAC even though they had encouraged me to do so. It would have made everyone's life and job a lot easier had I just said, "I didn't know she had had a cesarean. She never showed me her scar." They gave me many opportunities to lie or to reverse the story. And I didn't.

So from the very beginning, I didn't have anything to hide. Yet, I was in this situation of having pledged my allegiance to their rules and regs. So there's definitely a conflict there, and I found myself, honestly, truly, just in the middle of this conflict I had created within myself and now that had manifested in the world which is we should be able to choose whoever we want for our births, if we're the woman. We don't need someone's approval. Women should be able to have anyone she wants there. All of these things that I've since identified as my own beliefs I very much believed. But here I was in the middle of this mess because I had also agreed, first and foremost, that I wasn't actually serving the woman. That she didn't have a say in these things, and that I didn't have a say in serving her.

So again, looking back, it's a little simpler. Just why was I there? And I remember the very first inkling of this whole incident, which by the way went on for two plus years—so the very first inkling was the state calling this woman I had served and not saying who they were. It was very sneaky and weird and trying to get information out of her. She, to her credit, was amazing and supportive of me, of her situation the whole time. And really would have been better for everyone, I suppose on some level—not the real honest, transparent level—but if we had lied, she encouraged me many times as well. Just tell them you didn't know. But I just couldn't do that. It felt like it wasn't even about me. And it wasn't even really about her. It was about something bigger than us which is how long are we going to let this patriarchy tell us what we should do. And we're going to lie about it to make it okay. So every day I got deeper, deeper, deeper into this mess and deeper philosophically and deeper emotionally. And it was an incredibly, incredibly hard time.

I was pregnant as well with my sixth baby. And so that will end up being part of the story. But this couple of years was very hard. And the threat, of course, on their end being the patriarchy was just that I conform to their expectations. Really their goal was

not to take my license because if they had wanted to they would have done that. And they would have done that in a lot quicker timeframe than two years. So a lot of money was spent on me and this case. I spent a lot of personal money on this case hiring another lawyer. So what was it? It was a battle of the wills. It was, again, this patriarchal institution telling me how it was going to be. And for two years, this went on.

So they tried to settle many times. I don't think it would have looked good, honestly, for them to take a license for whatever reason. There were moments where I thought that would happen and moments where I cared and moments where I didn't care. But ultimately, now that I look back, they weren't even trying to do that. What they wanted to do was to flatten me and flatten any woman that would speak up and stand up in such a way. And I wouldn't do it. So I didn't accept any of their settlements. Again, this went on for years. I was simultaneously attending births still with clients that I had all the while trying to explain this crazy situation. All the while fielding myths and rumors from all over really, not just here locally, but a couple hours south in Phoenix. All kinds of rumors circulating about what was going on And had there been a horrible outcome? Or what was the reason that I was on the hot seat?

Well, it would have made more sense, right? Had there been some kind of outcome that was undesirable. But the real harsh truth was there wasn't anything like that going on. It wasn't a matter of my skill as a midwife. It wasn't that I had provided poor care. It was absolutely nothing other than I had broken a rule, and then they didn't know what to do with me when I was honest about it. So through this time, of course, the blessing for me was that the emotional battle that I went through personally got me more in touch with what I really believed. And so here I am circling back to the bigger Indie Birth story. This is where I connected the dots, and Indie Birth became something more than this print magazine and this online website. In addition to the print magazine over the years, we did always—we have always had [indiebirth.com](http://indiebirth.com). It's now [indiebirth.org](http://indiebirth.org). But we've always had that website. However, back in the—ten years ago, even eight years ago, it wasn't really very bold. So didn't have a lot of personality. It was very bland. It was about pleasing all kinds of people. It was about not offending women. Not that we're about offending women now. But it just wasn't me. It didn't have a lot of personality. It didn't have a lot of truth or really integrity in the sense that pleasing everybody, I don't think, generally has a lot of integrity especially in birth. That's what we're all trying to do with the patriarchy, right? We're trying to just make them shut up and go away. But that's not how we're going to have change. That's not how women are going to find their power.

So I fully admit to Indie Birth being that kind of online site at the time. I'm sure none of you even remember. We didn't have very many subscribers. We would just post natural birth stories even at—natural birth in quotes. That's a huge, mainstream term. That's a huge mainstream market. And the long story short is just we weren't clear. I wasn't clear

on really what I was doing. And here I was in the midst of this actual legal battle trying to figure out who am I. And what do I believe? So through the course of this whole thing, I was pregnant. And as I was preparing for my own birth, I was learning all the time what these restrictions meant on licensed midwives. It's ridiculous that I accepted and fought for a state license when I didn't actually know what that meant. I thought that just meant I had permission to practice, but there were so many fine prints around that. Who I could serve, when I could serve. And serve really isn't even in their whole vocabulary. You are in charge. You are the medical professional as a licensed midwife.

And so the longer I went on even with a license, even as I was going through this whole thing, it became clear that I just couldn't do this anymore. It just wasn't resonant. And being pregnant myself I didn't even want any licensed midwives anywhere near me. I didn't want them reporting my information to the state whether it was my due date or how big my baby was when he was born or any of these things people don't know is actually property of the state when you hire a licensed professional. So I was continually just disgusted, frankly, and turned off by what I had agreed to unknowingly and apologized even to a lot of the clients that I was serving. Like, "I'm sorry that this is what I've agreed to. And I'm going to do my best to serve you." And honestly, I think that's impossible. That's another topic for another day. But women that think they really can do that I just don't think it's possible. It'll come back at some point where you will have to make a choice.

So anyway, I knew that I would probably give my license back. I was just waiting for this timing, right? It's all about timing. And so through the two years, for example, they kept trying to schedule an actual court date. It wasn't a criminal case. It was an administrative case, but still there was supposedly a judge. And I don't even know what was supposed to happen because it never happened. Every time I had a date set I would focus and meditate and continually every day I would just see in my mind's eye that this was not going to happen. I was not going to sit in front a judge, and, especially pregnant, I was not going to fight for something I didn't believe in. And I knew there would be some other kind of natural resolution. And I knew that—well, I can't say I knew 100% at the time. But I knew I wouldn't be doing it this way anymore. Let's put it that way. I didn't know how. I didn't know for sure there would be a way. And, of course, I was thinking all the things all of you have thought, if you're in this world. Like where can I move? Where can I go? Where can this—where can I be free from such a thing?

In reality, I don't think that exists. So that was another lesson. But at the time, I just knew I wouldn't probably continue being licensed. And if that meant that I would never be a midwife again, I shed many tears over that, but there was something that was truthful in that for me. And I realized if that was what needed to happen then that was what needed to happen. That I wouldn't continue being a liar. I wouldn't continue this false path. So this whole thing finally did culminate after two plus years after I had



birthed my own baby unassisted, which was a huge thing. And I have many podcasts on the power that that brought to me. That totally changed my life along with this whole thing. So his birth, True's birth, was part and parcel of this whole crazy licensing political story.

And it totally changed Indie Birth. So again, this may be new to you. This may be a story you've heard me tell many times. But I do think it's important that people don't necessarily think Indie Birth was just like whipped out of thin air a couple years ago because we're radicals. And we just had nothing better to do. This came out of manifestation and intention and a desire to live fully in what I believe I'm here to live for. Wow. That's pretty big. Huh. So I birthed this beautiful baby boy. And my life was changed. And he was born in May. And immediately after he was born, I told my lawyers that I was done. And they actually fired me. Isn't that hilarious? They fired me. They were like, "Well, you hired us to keep your license. So if you're saying you're done and you don't want your license, then I guess there's nothing we can do for you." Okay. Well, I was upset or sort of confused at the time. But ultimately, they were right. I mean what was there left for them to do. This whole quote on quote battle—which I sort of hate that word too. But this whole event was based on the assumption that I wanted what they had. That I wanted this relationship, right? Because that's what you're singing on the dotted line when you accept a license. You're saying you desire this relationship above all.

So again, everybody was confused. The state was confused. They were probably really angry that they had wasted all this money and two years on me and many meetings and, like I said, attempts at settlements to get me to conform and be the good girl that they wanted me to be. But I just couldn't do it. So a couple months later I formally released my license back to them. They never did take it which what does it matter, right? It might not matter if you're hearing this story. But it felt very powerful to me. I hadn't had it taken. And in some ways, what was there to take? It was me returning the sense of this relationship being important to me, being something I would honor. And so I did write them a letter. It's actually on the Indie Birth site, or you can Google it as well. It's called *An Open Letter to Women that Care About Their Birthing Rights*. That's on the indiebirth.org site, and that is a blog post. That's the actual letter that I sent to the state of Arizona. So you can read it there.

But I told them, "You don't have anything I want. You actually don't have anything that a lot of women want. You're trying to control something that can't be controlled. And I won't be a part of it. So I'm no longer calling myself a midwife. Take it. I don't want anything more to do with you. And thank you." And I honestly meant that. "And thank you. Thank you for showing me this truth." So that was the exciting end to me being a licensed midwife. But it certainly was only the beginning of Indie Birth probably as you know it. So this is where the story might become more interesting or relevant to you just

knowing what we're about. So before I gave the license back, I had, of course, been doing tons of research. Google all the time. Reading all the time. All kinds of research. Books I was ordering. Doctors. Actual licensed or formerly licensed doctors that I was able to dig up phone numbers for and call.

So what was I doing? I was trying to find a way that I would be able to serve women in the way I wanted to where I didn't have to respond to anybody above me, but I also wasn't willing to hide. I wasn't willing to be an underground midwife. I had seen that, remember? Many years ago. And it didn't work out well. Also I just think there is something energetic about that. And I'm not criticizing midwives that have chosen that route. I think that's been one of the most legitimate routes to keeping midwifery alive over the last bunch of decades. So I don't have judgment on that. I'm just saying for me it wasn't right. It felt like I wasn't being truthful with myself. And how would I make change in the world if I wasn't really standing up for what I believe and saying that I found a way to do this that is okay? And really shouldn't we all be able to do this? And that's my opinion on licensing in general. That the state really shouldn't have this thing they do where they charge people money just to get an approval. And it has nothing really to do with anything. Not ability. Not service. Not skill. Nothing. It's simply a money making thing and a way to control people. So if not now, when is what I was figuring?

So I did all this research. I discovered this concept called a Private Membership Association or a PMA. And the group that I found was probably the only group at the time. This was, again, six, seven years ago. So yes. I was skeptical. Yes. I was nervous. Yes. I had to trust if that was what I was going to do. And jump into this whole thing not knowing if it would quote on quote work. And honestly and this is a belief I still hold, understanding that there is no guarantee, right? Birth. There is no guarantee. There is no guarantee of safety, of protection. That we're all just doing the best we can. And that even Indie Birth—I'm not putting what we're doing out there as the way as this is fool proof. It's not. We've taken a risk. And we're following our truths. And that's about all I can say.

So anyway, this concept of a Private Membership Association is based on the fact that as U.S. citizens and there are similar constitutional wordings for other countries like Canada and I believe Australia. But obviously, I'm here in the U.S. And so that's my perspective and information. But we are as citizens using constitutional law we are entitled to private contract between people. So it's definitely more in depth than that. I would encourage reading and writing or asking us for resources, but that is the premise of a PMA, which is we can form a group. We can work with each other outside of public law. And it is lawful to do so.

So based on that premise, I hired this one firm that, again, was probably the only one setting up PMAs at the time. And they set up a contract and this organization in this

way. So yes. Again, it was sort of nerve wracking to go out on this limb. I'm pretty sure—I'm pretty sure that I was the first midwife in this country to do this, to set up a midwifery practice under a PMA in a state where there is mandatory licensing as an unlicensed person and go for it. So that's what I did. And Indie Birth became a Private Membership Association, which means that anybody that wants anything whether it's knowledge or hands on or birth attendance signs a very lengthy contract where they are essentially taking full responsibility for their own health. That member to member we are all equals. That there isn't a medical professional in charge of someone. That there is no ill harm meant, of course, but everybody is choosing in the health arena what they believe to be best for themselves. And they are creating this person to person private contract. State regulations, for example, around midwifery are built on public law.

So it's the simple difference of serving the public, which is what a licensed midwife does. So therefore, she is bound public law. Versus someone else who is serving the private sector who isn't bound to public law. So Indie Birth got set up as a Private Membership Association then six to seven years ago. So this is not a new idea for us. It's really fun and exciting having so many new members in the Indie Birth community. Like I said, a whole slew of new Indie Birth midwifery school students, which blows my mind. But these are people—you might be one of them—that hasn't heard this story. You might think this PMA is a new concept, or you're struggling to understand. Or you feel like, "Why are they doing it this way?" Six to seven years isn't the longest period of time ever, but it's longer than anyone else has done such a thing. So just to reiterate, this isn't a new thing that we're doing. If you've noticed the verbiage on our website. We've just gotten better about making it clear about trying to educate people what a Private Membership Association is and how it works. And if you're going to buy one of our classes or be part of our school or anything like that, then you too will sign this membership contract. And that is all it is. Is you are agreeing that you are creating something private between us and you. That the state doesn't have any say in what that is or what it's called and that you are taking responsibility for the information you're accessing or the birth support that you're requesting. Whatever it is.

So that's kind of the short story on PMAs. There is quite a few nowadays, quite a few friends of mine as well have adopted their own PMAs in various states. And so far so good. Outside of midwifery, of course, this has been being used for probably—I'd guess more than a decade. Maybe even two decades. Chiropractors, medical doctors, anybody that lays hands on someone and could potentially be worried about the government coming and saying, "You can't do that. You're not a doctor." So as I said, I talked to a couple of doctors, who had relinquished their licenses, and are practicing medicine as they see fit. Maybe it's because they're doing alternative treatments. Whatever it is that puts them outside of the confines of a medical license, and so they've set up PMAs. And so that is how they are going about being doctors. So again, this isn't

meant to convince anybody. Like I said, I feel like over the last couple months especially as Indie Birth has become something where people are talking about I've heard all sorts of things from, "Oh, a PMA is a bunch of shit, and that's crazy." That's fine.

People can totally think that. We've done our research and continue to learn every day. And we are actually under the guidance of a larger PMA. So if you look on our website, you'll see a couple of other names mentioned. And none of it's secret. None of it's weird. It's just the way PMAs work. And the kind of guidance that we've sought because we are not experts—so Green River PCA is one. And a PCA is a Private Contract Association, which is pretty much the same as a PMA. So Green River is my own personal Private Membership Association. And so if you're interested in learning about privatizing your entire personal life, which is a slew of other podcasts that honestly I wouldn't even be the person to do, then that's what that's about because you can actually privatize your whole entire life. Not just your midwifery practice or your doula practice. You actually can do that for your whole entire life. And so that's what Green River PCA is. That's our family's PCA.

And then Pantera is the really awesome organization that is kind of our father PMA. So as I mentioned, I had another organization set up my PMA six or seven years ago. And they're still in business, but I have moved on and learned more and seen where they could possibly improve or where I was personally uncomfortable with their set up. And so it's like anything, right? You're always learning. You're always growing. You're always coming in contact with new information and new people. And Pantera is our current reigning authority on Private Membership Associations. They are not birth related. They are not midwifery related. They are the masters of this domain in the amount of knowledge that they hold collectively. And so they are our father or mother, however you want to say, PMA. They are the ones that we go to when we are setting up contracts or wanting wording or any of these things.

So, again, that's all on the Indie Birth website. And that's been some of the inquiry that has come up recently, again, for new people. So if you're a new person, totally not holding that against you. Just this isn't new for us. This isn't new for the people that have been following us for many years. However, the verbiage on the website is more clear because we're striving for that. We're not trying to hide at all this structure. We think it's brilliant and revolutionary. And honestly, we want more of you to get on board. One of our hopes for this year with Indie Birth is to continue to expand globally in all the ways but also with this information and trainings along these lines which we probably won't do. Probably Pantera, our mother/father PMA, will be doing because they are the experts. But this is not something we want to keep as privileged information or some kind of weird secret society where we're going to take your first born child if you join. I mean that's all nonsense. And the really ridiculous kind of stuff that has come our way lately shows me that the old paradigm is still very much in play.

So it's okay to question. Definitely. If you're going to buy a class from us and you really want to see the contract, ask. It's not a secret. I don't think it's going to feel particularly relevant when you're buying a class because there's nothing more that we're agreeing to. It's not like you're asking someone to attend your birth. But this is not a secret. And it's not really even strange. And if it feels that way to anyone, then I would encourage you to really get into this and learn what you need to learn because this is one of—and I'm sure it's not the only one. But it is one of the only ways, at the moment, that we see Indie Birth really flourishing and bringing true midwifery to people. And this will be done through our school. And this will continue to be done by these podcasts and our blog posts and our many, many classes. But this is a self-protective structure we have. I used this example yesterday when we were talking to our new students. But the school of shamanic midwifery, a very brilliant school in Australia, suddenly was under attack last year, I believe. And they were told they could not call themselves the school of midwifery because Australia owns that public term. And the school is not a PMA. It's not privatized. And so they were ordered to change the name of the school. They were not allowed to use the word midwife in the school. Just like here. We can't use the word midwife publically. I'm not going to call myself a midwife that serves the public sector. In Australia, you must be a registered midwife.

So this is sweeping the globe. Both of these things. Both the patriarchy, which wants to tell us who we can use and what we can call ourselves, but then this other side—this new paradigm side, I think, where Indie Birth is really trying to humbly lead where we can. That we are free beings. All of us. That we have a right to decisions about our own health, about our own pregnancies, about our own babies. And there's nothing shady about that. Really. Investigate your own feelings around legitimacy and what you've been trained to think when something like a PMA brings up anxiety. Sure. Again, it's totally fine to not understand, to ask questions, to dig deeper, but the concept of a whole—as a whole is simply representing freedom. It's representing autonomy and choice and, honestly, it's doing more than representing those things. It is those things. It is one structure that I know about that can bring to light the goals and the mission that we have. And I know this is the mission that many of you share even in your own lives. Many of you don't want to be told how, when, where especially with birth.

And so that is the long story of Indie Birth. That is how we came to this PMA/PCA structure. Absolutely nothing to hide. We're a totally open book. And again, we'd love to educate you more. We'd love to start getting enough resources in order that we can really share those effectively. And so I feel in the most positive way that me being pushed to tell this story today, to record this today, to have this in the archives is also because we do need the push to start sharing this information more widely. And why haven't we shared? Well, because it's a lot of gobbly gook kind of stuff to put together. I gave you the basic outline, the simple structure today, but I'm not an expert on it either.

So I regularly have to consult people that know more than me to get the more refined answers around some of the terminology or things on the contract. But it's not to do with me not trusting it. It's just if I want more information. So we are being pushed to share this by the universe, by you, by the powers that be because it is, I think, one of the most exciting ways to think of making a difference in this world as far as birth goes.

Some cool things about a PMA or this structure—I was asking myself as I was preparing for this recording, "Is it a working model?" Now I taught a class called birth models in our midwifery school last year that was really fun. And that was based on Robbie Davis-Floyd's book called *Birth Models That Work*, which is a great book. Totally go read that book. And that was one of the questions that I posed to the class throughout the quarter. Is this model working? What does that mean? So I think a PMA is working. I think I have been living the example of that. And I'm not saying that to brag. Anything could happen at any time. But in the six years that I have been practicing as a midwife under a PMA and Indie Birth has been out there in the world we have been flourishing. And so I think it is a working model, and I would love to see midwives and students and maybe even doulas coming together to create these kinds of birth communities structured in this way so parents and families have true choice.

PMAs create community. So, again, it's another wake up call maybe to me when people are skeptical. Skepticism comes with new. Skepticism comes with things that people don't understand or are unknown. So I understand that. But a PMA creates community. So we have hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and probably even thousands of members of our PMA around the world. And some facets of being a member are equality. So even here when I have women that I serve, technically, they're not clients. They're members. We are all members. We are all equal. We're all just having private agreements with each other, and we all make our own choices. And we do rely perhaps on other members of the PMA for their guidance. So somebody might rely on me for midwifery guidance. But I might rely on another member of the PMA for something entirely different that they're able to share.

So we share a vision. We share beliefs, which is exactly what Indie Birth is about. So again, if you're somebody that's been curious or kind of skeptical or questioning of our legal structure, if you're enjoying our community, you're getting benefit of our PMA. You're experiencing what a PMA is which is shared vision, shared beliefs, and sisterhood and brotherhood. A PMA creates individual responsibility. And I feel like if there is one characteristic I talk about on nearly every podcast that I've done—100 and I don't know—20 or 30 at this point, it's individual responsibility. How can we all take up more of that? Whether we're the birthing women, whether we're the midwife, we all accept responsibility for ourselves. And so a PMA being built on that, to me, is just a perfectly resonant. And if I'm going to ask a woman that I'm serving to take full responsibility for her birth, then how can I not be asking it? And the only way I can take

it is in a situation like a PMA and in what I alluded to and referred to earlier, which is perhaps privatizing my own personal life.

So I don't understand how this doesn't make sense or maybe we haven't explained it well. And that's been another motivation for doing this podcast is just being super clear, super transparent. You don't understand. Ask us questions. We don't expect this to be resonant with everybody. Just like I don't expect Indie Birth to be resonant with everybody. This whole journey that I've shared today, again, it's not over. But from A to B, from A to D, isn't a story that a lot of people will care about. It won't mean anything to them. For those of you that do, then great. And that resonance is another really awesome thing that's created energetically within our PMA.

So we're building a new world here, people. We are building a new world. We are creating it based on freedom and autonomy and a new consciousness is built with everyone of you that is part of our community whether formally—you've literally signed into our PMA because you've bought something or you're just listening to these podcasts. You're still a member of our community, and we need you. And we love you. And we're so excited that Indie Birth has become what it is due to the desire of so many. And, of course, all of the personal workings that have gone into the details. So that is my exciting podcast for the day. I'm all pumped up now from having told that story from start to finish. It used to be a lot more upsetting telling that story. Kind of related to a birth story, right? If you had a birth story that felt kind of traumatic, it's hard to tell. And it can take a long time to be able to tell that story in a powerful way. And I feel like I'm getting there. Today was one of the better versions of really just highlighting, I think, the important parts and the parts that probably are relevant for you listening. And the parts that bring us together as to why we're here. Why you're even listening to this podcast today. I want us to rise up. I want us to know we're free. I want babies to be born in love and gentleness. And I want them to know that that's their birth right.

So I'll leave you with a quote because I love quotes. I was reading *The Mystic Mama* astrological update last week when we had a shift in astrology. And that's one of my favorite blogs. So go check her out if you haven't. *Mystic Mama*. And she had a quote that ended her reading last weekend. And it was, "We are the visionaries we have been waiting for." So on that note, have a wonderful day. And please get in touch with me, [maryn@indiebirth.org](mailto:maryn@indiebirth.org) or [margo@indiebirth.org](mailto:margo@indiebirth.org). Tell us that you're interested. Tell us that you want to know more about PMAs. Ask us questions. If we get enough of them, we can certainly just do a live video. And, again, kicking our butts into getting these resources together for those of you that do support and resonate with our mission. Have a great day. Thanks for listening.

(closing music)