AIMS For a better birth...

Film Review

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Reviewed by Julie Dawd

Title: The Business of Being Born
Director : Abby Epstein
Executive Producer : Ricki Lake
87 min

Find the DVD on Amazon

Despite its title, this sensitive documentary made by and featuring America's 'white Oprah' does not focus on the economic aspect of birth in the USA today. Rather it explores a variety of issues to do with birthing in a nonthreatening, articulate and evocative manner, making it a valuable educational resource for use with those who are not well informed around birth.

Such viewers will learn a great deal about hospital births, drugs, the cascade of intervention, bonding, the safety, convenience and low cost of midwifery-led care and, perhaps most importantly, the incredible transformative empowering experience birth can be: information familiar to most professionals working holistically around birth. But for all viewers the film offers the chance to witness, on the big screen, women giving birth in a manner rarely seen on film - with dignity and support. On screen, as in life, it is simply beautiful. The film works because it is not overly biased, nor does it overtly attempt to convert anyone: as with any portrayal of the 'facts' about the safety and desirability of natural birth versus delivery, the facts simply speak for themselves. So we have a fresh, human, coherent documentary which transfers very well to the British birth context and is not 'too American' in being overlysentimental or dramatic.

The main midwife featured is inspiring, the minimal use of statistics and research findings is very effective, the mix of 'experts' opinions and those of women and their partners is well balanced, even the OB/GYNs who are obviously very ignorant in matters outside their own practice are offered the chance to show they have some sense in them! A less sensitive editor would have portrayed them as more black-and-white. Instead, OB/GYNs are portrayed as professionals with their own specialism which, when used appropriately, is necessary and fantastic.

The film is not due to be released in cinema, although private screenings can be arranged. For information on how to view it online or via DVD, as well as about the film itself, go to www.thebusinessofbeingborn.com