



**Living in Print: Hip Mama Magazine** By Marya Errin Jones for New Mexico Compass

— Dead trees, skinned, dried and pressed into sheets. Cut to size, tattooed with words that leave imprints on us. Writers become our teachers and our talismans. Stories become incantations.

It's difficult to imagine incanting over an electronic book or being transported by the numbing, arctic glare of a touch screen—some kind of dry, electric wafer that serves up data whenever we want. That's just modernity: a lonely, 24-hour automat of the mind.

A life out of print? I don't want it, and neither does Ariel Gore, founding editor of the alt parenting quarterly *Hip Mama Zine*. "I love all my media. I'm not killing my computer," Gore says. "Print is just different, and the brain processes print differently. It's a tactile, intimate experience."

Where there are babies, there are cool women who birthed them, and it seemed *Hip Mama* would go on indefinitely. After decades, it was no longer a baby zine, but a 20-year-old radical feminist with a good head on her shoulders. A homemade, independent, reader-written, multicultural alternative to the gender-locked, pink-and-blue-emotional terrorism many parenting magazines promote.

Gore started the zine in 1993 as a college student and a young, single mom in Oakland. She stepped away to care for her mother five years ago, raise another new baby and follow other literary pursuits. The day-to-day operations passed into the hands of a dedicated worker collective led by Oregonian Kerlin Richter. Today, Gore lives in Santa Fe.

After 53 issues, publishing awards and *Hip Mama* books, she wasn't expecting her zine to have to move back in with her. But it's also en trend for great publications to hit hard times, and it doesn't take much to

upset the balance. Some of the most widely read independent publications have succumbed to low subscription rates. Others have fallen prey to the deadly ratio of advertisement versus good content.

If Gore has something to do with it, Hip Mama will not be going out like that. When she discovered *Hip Mama's* publishers were planning to go 100 percent digital, she swooped in to save her publication. It sounds superhero-y, and it kind of is. Her point of view can be heard echoing across the rooftops of the Internet: "Look! It's a magazine! No! It's a zine! Print's not dead!"

### **What Do We Love?**

Paper cuts are the worst—they're sharp, there's hardly any time to bleed. But you feel it, and no Band-Aid can take away that pain. We've all watched as newspaper after newspaper was gutted, leaving hollowed-out newsrooms dependent on the AP Wire. The notion of *Hip Mama* folding has sparked a grassroots effort to keep the zine going, and a refusal to accept the steamroller of progress that has crushed so many independent information sources.

"It's hard to make a print endeavor work," Gore says. "We're indie writers; we have to remember why we came here. No one is getting rich here, so we have to ask ourselves, What do we love?" Gore has taken over as editor, and quarterly issues of the zine resume in October. There are also plans to expand coverage of politics, social justice, arts and food. The relaunch will involve few sacrifices, the main change being no more full-color covers.

Gore also launched a Kickstarter campaign to help underwrite initial production costs and alert worldwide *Hip Mama* readers to the magazine's revival. If readers invest in the campaign, the rewards are guilt-free, non-sweatshop items. Some of the incentive levels include a one-year subscription to *Hip Mama*. With 18 days to go, the campaign has already surpassed its goal.

Gore says monies above and beyond the goal will go toward paying contributors more. "Artists should be paid for their work."

## For Non-Moms

It's reassuring—even life-affirming—to know that mothers, children and families are coming together to help revitalize the magazine they love.

At the same time, you don't see your average single woman sparking up a *Hip Mama* for her reading pleasure in the park or coffee shop. What's in it for those feminists that have “been to paradise but have never been to me?” What's in it for women who are childless and, like me, living on the brink of infertility, unlikely to produce biological offspring?

If we're being honest, this society has little use for a single, childless woman, no matter what she gives back to planet Earth. If she's not managed to replicate herself, she is of little use at a play date. Sometimes single women whose friends have children become unnecessary extremities, part of the space shuttle that breaks away when the launch is complete. Our beacons of, “Let's hang out sometime” rarely echoed back.

We've suddenly become alien as we drift away from family life, orbiting the edges of space. The effort to reconnect seems too great to attempt.

“It's really easy to leave our friends behind,” Gore adds. In favor of diverse models for parenting, Gore says the zine supports the inter-generational development of family time, rather than the lockdown of the nuclear family model. The old paradigm can seem like a 24-hour theme park world of obsessions. “There's a horrible tendency to make everything excessively kid friendly,” she says. “That annoying, mainstream parenting that can suck you in, having to share every time your kid takes a shit.”

In the *Hip Mama* universe, old models and structures of parenting give way to new methods of child rearing that can include friends, domestic partners, godmothers—a family of one's choosing. “It's not about a specific family structure,” Gore says. She intends to continue to help *Hip Mama* readers build their own blueprints for parenting that reflect feminist ideals. The zine pushes against the sterility of an insidious, digital future in favor of a tactile, intimate, inky, sometimes messy community.

“Mothering is really hard, and you’re going to perpetuate what you’ve come from, but we can retrain ourselves,” she says. It does indeed take a village of radicals—and her beloved print zine—to raise a child.

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