

## THE VALUE AND PURPOSE OF LABOR SUPPORT

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Throughout history, females have faced difficulty in making their voices heard publicly. For years, society has classified women as being the inferior gender. As Karylñ Kohrs Campbell states in her book, *Man Cannot Speak For Her*, "Men have an ancient and honorable rhetorical history. Their speeches and writings, from antiquity to present are studied and analyzed by historians and rhetoricians...Women have no parallel rhetorical history. Indeed, for much of their history, women have been prohibited from speaking, a prohibition reinforced by such powerful cultural authorities as Homer, Aristotle, and Scripture..." (1989).

So, without this rhetorical history, women's stories have been told in other ways: through attendance and participation at fertility rites, menarche celebrations, and childbirth. Thus, women supporting other women in labor and birth is important to recall and support in the canon of our history. Anita Diamant's bestselling novel of early midwives and doulas, *The Red Tent*, captures the voice of childbearing women, and served as an inspiration to me during my pregnancy and as I studied to become a doula myself. In the beginning, Dinah (the main character) tells us, "We have been lost to each other for so long. My name means nothing to you. My memory is dust. This is not your fault, or mine. The chain connecting mother to daughter was broken and the word passed to the keeping of men, who had no way of knowing. That is why I became a footnote...." Her fictional history becomes our history as women, a reminder of the voices we no longer hear.