



TRANSFORMING WOMEN'S LIVES AROUND THE WORLD

## Our Bodies, Our Future: Advancing Health and Human Rights for Women and Girls

**O**n Saturday, October 1, Our Bodies Ourselves will host a day-long symposium, "**Our Bodies, Our Future: Advancing Health and Human Rights for Women and Girls,**" featuring women's groups from around the world that have developed health resources for their own communities based on the groundbreaking book *Our Bodies, Ourselves*.

**On that same day, Simon & Schuster will release the ninth U.S. edition of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*.** Revised with the help of more than 200 contributors, this edition features many new voices and perspectives along with updated information on women's reproductive health and sexuality. Copies will be available for purchase at the symposium, and attendees will have the opportunity to mingle with contributors during the reception that follows.

**The symposium is free,** and we strongly encourage people to register as soon as possible, either online at [ourbodiesourselves.eventbrite.com](http://ourbodiesourselves.eventbrite.com) or by calling 617-245-0200 x10. Tickets include entry to the evening reception. For more information, visit [ourbodiesourselves.org/40thanniversary.asp](http://ourbodiesourselves.org/40thanniversary.asp).



Photo: Tom Fitzsimmons

*First Lady Michelle Obama pictured with Dr. Paula Johnson, OBOS Advisory Board Member and 40th Anniversary Honorary Committee member, and Dr. Robert Sands. In July, Dr. Johnson, who heads the Connors Center for Women's Health and Gender Biology at Brigham and Women's Hospital, and the First Lady met in Boston to discuss policies to improve the health of women and girls.*

This historic event will celebrate 40 years of collective activism. Together with contributors to the new edition of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and a long list of special guests, we will explore the extraordinary journeys women's groups have taken to transform this revolutionary text and the status of women's health and human rights worldwide.

Mark your planners, book your tickets and join us for reflection and celebration as we launch the next chapter of our work – all across the globe. Hope to see you in Boston this October!

What: **Our Bodies Ourselves 40th Anniversary Symposium**  
When: **Saturday, October 1, 2011, 9am to 5pm**  
Where: **Boston University, Tsai Center for Performing Arts**

## Coming Soon: The Newly Revised *Our Bodies, Ourselves*

**A**fter many months in production, the long-awaited ninth edition of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* will be released in October. The new edition focuses on women's reproductive health and sexuality and includes dozens of personal stories and essential, up-to-date information about gender identity, sexual orientation, birth control, abortion, pregnancy and birth, perimenopause, menopause, health issues such as breast and ovarian cancers, and sexuality and sexual health as we age.

The book also addresses:

**Changes in the healthcare system** — especially how health care reform affects women and how to get the care you need.

**Safer sex** — how to engage in pleasurable, satisfying sexual experiences while protecting your health and the health of your partner.

**Environmental health risks** — including minimizing exposure to everyday pollutants that endanger our bodies and reproductive health.

**Body image** — resisting negative media stereotypes and embracing healthier approaches to looking and feeling good.

**Local and global activism** — using social media and community organizing tactics to build alliances and advocate for policies that improve women's lives.

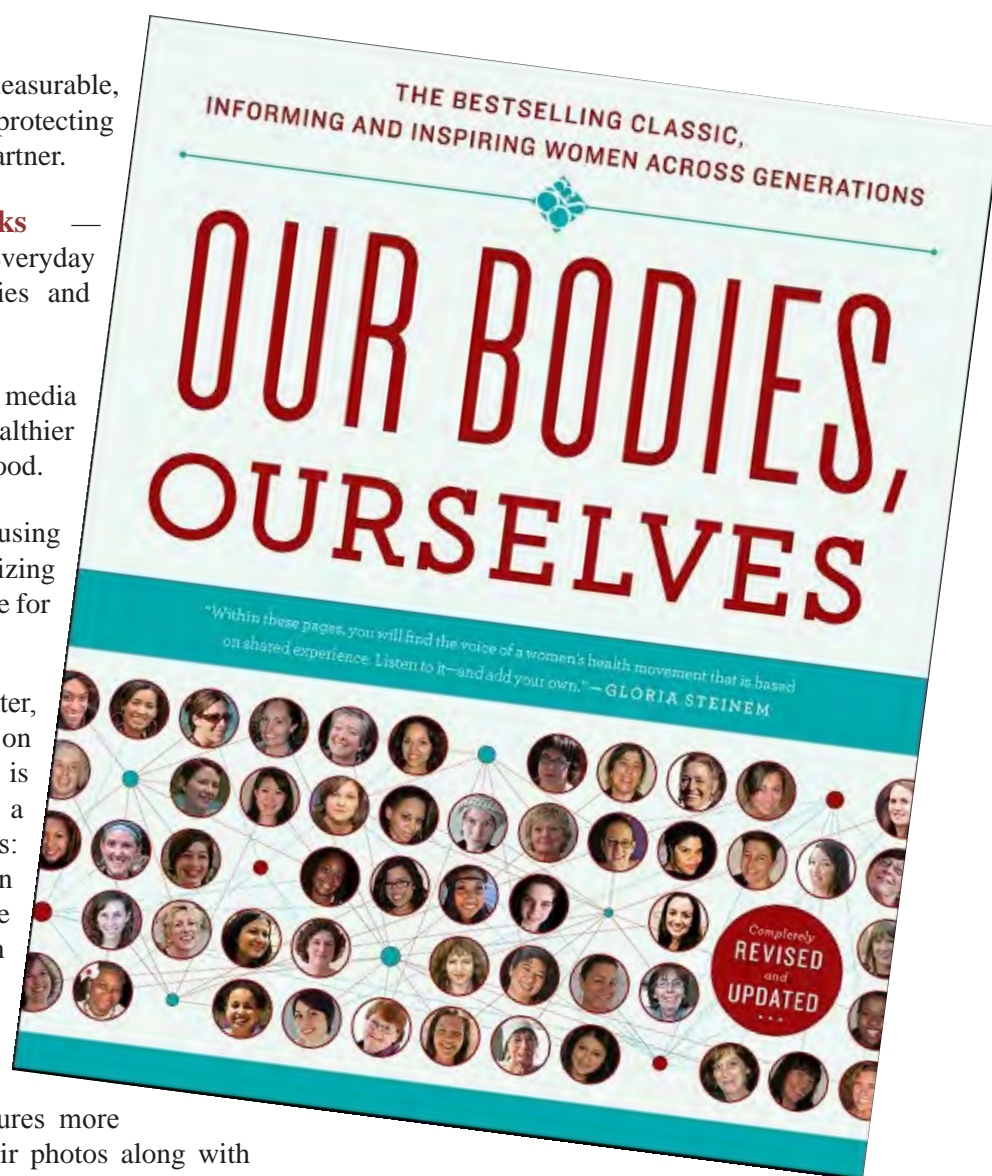
For the first time ever, an entire chapter, "Relationships," is based mainly on women's candid conversations. It is both an ode to OBOS's roots and a reflection of today's technologies: the chapter is a condensed version of a month-long, online dialogue involving more than three dozen women who asked and answered questions of each other with wisdom, encouragement and support.

Other firsts: the book's cover features more than 50 readers who submitted their photos along with reflections on what they've learned from *Our Bodies,*

*Ourselves* over the years. The new edition also includes profiles of our global network partners who have adapted *Our Bodies, Ourselves* for their own communities.

Hundreds of reviewers and writers donated their time and expertise to ensure the book's accuracy and comprehensiveness. Working with the *Our Bodies, Ourselves* editorial team, they collaborated to produce a text that provides evidence-based information and addresses the political, economic and social forces that shape women's health today.

We will celebrate the release of the new edition at the 40th Anniversary Symposium at Boston University.



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# MEET THE 2011 Women's Health Heroes

**T**wo years ago, in 2009, OUR BODIES OURSELVES (OBOS) launched our first-ever Women's Health Heroes Awards to honor women and men who have made championing women's health their life's work. Since then, 40 individuals and groups have been inducted into OBOS's Women's Health Hall of Fame, selected from hundreds of nominations. You can view the inductees at [ourbodiesourblog.org/womens-health-heroes-hall-of-fame](http://ourbodiesourblog.org/womens-health-heroes-hall-of-fame).

2011 is a special year for OBOS. It marks 40 years of activism in the United States and the evolution of OBOS into a vibrant international network of social change activists. Our network partners in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and Europe bring health resources based on *Our Bodies, Ourselves* to their communities and fearlessly advance the health and human rights of women and girls in their countries. They often do so at grave personal risk in some of the most socially and politically charged regions of the world.

**They are our heroes**, and they are the newest inductees into the Women's Health Heroes Hall of Fame. We'll post more about each group at [OurBodiesOurBlog.org](http://OurBodiesOurBlog.org) in August. Until then, here's a brief look at why we celebrate them.

**ALTERNATIVE CULTURE PUBLISHING** in Korea for leading public discourse on

sexuality and prioritizing the needs of young Koreans.

**ANVESH** in India for reminding us that solutions to the health crisis in that country must be situated within a unique and complex fabric of family, caste, class, community, and state.

**"FOR FAMILY AND HEALTH" PAN-ARMENIAN ASSOCIATION** for bringing affordable – and free – reproductive care to women and girls across Armenia.

*Our heroes are building activist networks in Turkey and Poland, and they are challenging the language around sex in Japan and Thailand.*

**CAIRO WOMEN'S HEALTH BOOK COLLECTIVE** for going where few have gone with the first Arabic edition of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, taking on issues taboo in conservative Egyptian society.

**CHINESE WOMEN'S HEALTH NETWORK** in China for standing up to government regulation with an underground adaptation of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* after its first edition was censored.

**GENDER ALLIANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT CENTER** in Albania for reaching youth with information and skills they can use to make safe reproductive and sexual choices.

**GROUPE DE RECHERCHE SUR LES FEMMES ET LES LOIS AU SENEGAL** for empowering

women to understand and care for their natural bodies in Senegal, a country where beauty is often defined by largeness and fair skin.

**MAVI KALEM** in Turkey for ingeniously using in-person and online platforms to engage and mentor young activists in the region.

**NATIONAL WOMEN'S STUDIES AND INFORMATION CENTRE** in Moldova for envisioning and helping lay the groundwork for a national struggle for human rights.

**NETWORK OF EAST-WEST WOMEN** in Poland for nurturing one of the largest and most respected networks of human rights activists in the region.

**THE NUESTROS CUERPOS, NUESTRAS VIDAS COLLABORATION** for articulating unique and common ground in the experiences of Latinas across the Caribbean and North, Central and South America.

**SANLAAP** in India and Manavi in the United States for responding to violence in South Asian communities in both countries and creating a Bangla *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. This is a first for Bengali literature.

**SHOKADO** in Japan for reclaiming language and sexuality for all Japanese women and girls by coining new terms for body parts previously written with Chinese characters that convey shame.

**TANZANIA HOME ECONOMICS ASSOCIATION** for developing a Kiswahili resource based on *Our Bodies, Ourselves* that will reach the entire East Africa region.

**TIBETAN NUNS PROJECT** for protecting, educating and empowering Tibetan nuns fleeing persecution and living in exile (and poverty) in India.

**WOMEN AND THEIR BODIES** in Israel for pioneering a peace-building initiative between Palestinian and Israeli women that is publishing Arabic and Hebrew adaptations of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*.

**WOMEN FOR EMPOWERMENT, DEVELOPMENT, AND GENDER REFORM** in Nigeria for bringing health information based on *Our Bodies, Ourselves* to 1.5 million women, girls and men.

**WOMEN'S HEALTH EDUCATION NETWORK** in Thailand for noting there is no word for "sexuality" in Thai and having the courage to talk about it.

**WOMEN'S HEALTH PROJECT** in South Africa for boldly tackling the impact of apartheid on women and girls in its *Women's Health Handbook*.

**WOMEN'S HEALTH PROMOTION CENTER** in Serbia for giving voice and visibility to women and girls brutalized by ethnic conflict and sexual violence.

**WOMEN'S HEALTH INITIATIVE IN BULGARIA** for confronting stigma associated with childlessness in a pronatalist society and demanding supportive infertility treatment for women who desire children.

**WOMEN'S HEALTH IN ST. PETERSBURG** for helping to establish the first family planning center in Russia and youth clinics that use the Russian adaptation of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* as a key resource.

**WOMEN'S REHABILITATION CENTER** in Nepal for refusing to back down on its demand for reproductive rights in the recently democratized country's new constitution.

**WOMEN UNLIMITED** in India for being one of only a few South Asian feminist publishers and for publishing an *Our Bodies, Ourselves* edition for women and girls across the region.

It is impossible to capture the diversity of our network partners, the richness of their vision and the magnitude of their impact. **We invite you to meet some of these courageous women at the free symposium on October 1, celebrating OBOS's 40th anniversary and honoring our network partners.** Visit [ourbodiesourselves.org/40thanniversary.asp](http://ourbodiesourselves.org/40thanniversary.asp) for event details.

*Women's health heroes are using OBOS as a resource of health information for women and girls in India, Russia, Israel, Nigeria, East Africa, Egypt and China.*

## Advocacy Updates:

### Reproductive and Genetic Technologies, Access to Midwifery and Breast Implant Safety

In addition to all the work on the new edition of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and collaborations with our global partners, the Our Bodies Ourselves organization continues to advocate for change in multiple arenas. Here are a few examples:

**Reproductive and Genetic Technologies:** Sally Whelan, program manager of the OBOS Global Initiative, and Judy Norsigian, executive director of OBOS, have been working closely with the Center for Genetics and Society on the second of three annual "Tarrytown Meetings," to be held July 25-27 in Tarrytown, N.Y. These meetings bring together "people and organizations working to ensure that human biotechnologies and related emerging technologies support rather than undermine social justice, equality, human rights, ecological integrity and the common good."

About 125 civil society leaders, scholars, advocates and others will confer this summer on topics and action agendas that address such pressing issues as gene patenting, assisted reproductive technologies, human genetic modification, consumer genetic testing and personalized medicine, the storage and use of human biologic tissues and genetic privacy. Visit [thetarrytownmeetings.org](http://thetarrytownmeetings.org) for more details.

OBOS also has been especially involved in efforts to better educate young women about the risks of donating eggs for in-vitro fertilization and has served as a co-plaintiff in the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) lawsuit against the Utah-based Myriad Genetics, Inc. This suit argues that patents on two human genes associated with breast and ovarian cancer are unconstitutional and invalid. For more information, read "ACLU Challenges Patents On Breast Cancer Genes" (<http://bit.ly/ki4fuM>).

**Midwifery Advocacy:** OBOS continues to advocate strongly for expanded access to both Certified Nurse-Midwives as well as Certified Professional Midwives.

In a country where the cesarean section rate has been rising steadily (with worsening outcomes in many regions, both in terms of infant and maternal mortality), midwives offer important alternatives to conventional obstetrical care. One reason women seek midwifery care is to avoid the growing problem of labor induction outside of evidence-based medical indications. Such labor inductions increase prematurity and low-birth weight babies. The March of Dimes has launched a new campaign, "Healthy Babies Are Worth The Wait," to draw attention to this issue (<http://bit.ly/lFr3ga>).

Our 13-minute DVD on the topic, "Why Choose a Midwife," has been viewed by more than 9,000 people at various online sites and continues to educate policy makers trying to address major cost and quality-of-care challenges in maternity care (view here: <http://bit.ly/m7TF0q>). In addition, hundreds of maternity care providers have signed our statement, "Choices in Childbirth: A Statement by Physicians, Midwives and Women's Health Advocates Who Support Safe Choices in Childbirth" (<http://bit.ly/k0Mds1>).

**Education About the Risks of Breast Implants:** Two small grants have supported community screenings and discussions of "Absolutely Safe," a documentary about breast implant safety by filmmaker Carol Ciancutti-Leyva. Judy Norsigian has joined Ciancutti-Leyva to lead discussions and encourage community-based activism in Los Angeles, Albuquerque, San Francisco, Portland, Oregon, and other locales. This coming fall, film events are scheduled at Arizona State University, University of Nevada-Las Vegas, University of Missouri, the National Women's Studies Association conference in Atlanta, and elsewhere.



Questionnaires filled out at these events make clear that most women are poorly informed about the risks of breast implants and that a documentary such as "Absolutely Safe" can be a valuable tool for those working on community-based educational efforts. Offsetting the misinformation and misleading pictures of women's bodies now widely available on the internet is a major challenge that many younger women are taking on, especially as they grow to appreciate the widespread failure of plastic and reconstructive surgeons to provide adequate counseling.

OBOS offers support to these educators and activists, including providing copies of the film for viewing at college dormitories, religious organizations and other community-based settings where women discuss body image issues and potential health dangers associated with risky cosmetic surgical procedures.

All of the above advocacy work could not happen without our hard-working summer intern/volunteers who donate their time and skills including: Eliza Duggan, Sailaja Neel-Ganti Joshi, Julia Bronstein and Kasey Klavelle. Many thanks to all of you!





# OUR BODIES OURSELVES

5 Upland Road #3  
Cambridge, MA 02140

Non Profit  
Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Boston, MA  
Permit No. 54162

Phone: 617.245.0200

Fax: 617.245.0201

E-mail: [office@bwhbc.org](mailto:office@bwhbc.org)

Web: [www.ourbodiesourselves.org](http://www.ourbodiesourselves.org)

## **OBOS Staff/Primary Consultants**

Zobeida Bonilla

*Latina Health Initiative Advisor*

Ayesha Chatterjee

*Assistant Program Manager*

Christine Cupaiuolo

*Blogger/OBOS 2011 Managing Editor*

Judy Norsigian

*Executive Director*

Anne Sweeney

*Operations Manager*

Rachel Walden

*Blogger*

Sally Whelan

*Program Manager*

Kiki Zeldes

*Web Manager*

Diane Carasik Dion

*Volunteer newsletter editor*

Sailaja Neel-Ganti Joshi

*Volunteer newsletter designer*

## OBOS NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT!

*Dear Friends of OBOS:*

*Please consider a special contribution this summer to support the unique work of Our Bodies Ourselves and our global partners. With foundation funding more difficult to secure now, the personal support of loyal friends like you is more crucial than ever. Visit [ourbodiesourselves.org/about/support.asp](http://ourbodiesourselves.org/about/support.asp) to learn how you can help OBOS today.*

*Sincerely,*

*Marcia Brown and Bea Bezmalinovic, OBOS Board Co-chairs  
Judy Norsigian, OBOS Executive Director*