

That Takes Ovaries!

Bold Females and Their Brazen Acts

***GUIDELINES FOR ORGANIZING
A THAT TAKES OVARIES! OPEN MIKE
IN YOUR COMMUNITY***

FULL VERSION

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PRE-NOTE: Summarized vs. Full Versions

In the back of the book (and on the book's website www.thattakesovaries.org), readers can find *summarized* guidelines for how to lead their own open mikes. This document, however, is the *full* version of the guidelines.

Full Version of the Guidelines

Why bother to read the *full* version instead of just the *summarized* version of the guidelines? Well, if you want to lead a "bigger, public" open mike—that is, something where more than just your friends and your friends' friends are invited—you *have* to read this *full* version before you can register to lead the event (see website or Appendix A to register).

***THAT TAKES OVARIES!* OPEN MIKES** (How cool is that?)

The That Takes Ovaries! open mike strategy grew out of the main idea and primary goal behind this book: the empowerment of females. So each Ovaries! Open Mike is about encouraging women and girls to organize and speak out for themselves. Each individual event is linked to a larger grassroots movement of raising awareness and (hopefully) funds for girls' needs, concerns and human rights. Go get 'em, grrrlz! – Rivka

This book is important because of the voices in it—women and girls proudly shouting from the rooftops how they acted boldly in the world. Their stories are celebrations of womanly brazenness. But, *surprise!*, women and girls everywhere have triumphant stories to tell. So wouldn't it be exciting for the vibrant, feisty female voices in *your* community to be heard, too?

Enter the *That Takes Ovaries!* Open Mike.

There are two ways to make this happen. One is small, intimate, and held in your living room; suggestions for how to set this up are included below. The other is bigger, public, and held anywhere larger than your living room—a bookstore, coffee shop, university campus, poetry reading spot, auditorium. The guidelines for how to organize this second, bigger, public-type of open mike are also below, in the full, not summarized, version (for the summarized version, see the paperback book or the website www.thattakesovaries.org). Either type of event, small & intimate or larger & public, will give women and girls in your area an exhilarating chance to inspire and be inspired.

The topics can vary. General theme open mikes might draw the biggest crowds. Specific themes—sports, traveling, fighting back against racism or violence—might draw more dedicated, focused groups.

Whatever type of open mike you hold, it is modeled after the book. If you organize one, please support the book and its goals, and encourage people to take the message of empowerment home with them by having the paperback available (translation: for sale) at your event. Yes, this is a plug for the book—and for spreading the word about the audacious, outrageous, and courageous way women and girls live their lives.

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Ovaries in Your Living Room

It's easy. Invite friends over, as you would for any other party, and tell them to bring their friends, too—new blood makes things more fun. If you want, use this e-mail invitation (below) that the book editor (that's me!) sent out when she held her own Living Room Open Mike.

**Please join (your name) for a way cool
THAT TAKES OVARIES!TM
Living Room Open Mike**

Come tell & hear real-life stories about being a brazen babe. Stories can cover anything YOU have **ever** done—little or big—that was bold, gutsy, outrageous, audacious, courageous, or inspirational. It can be playful, serious, spontaneous, calculated, smart, sexy, and/or an example of leadership. It could be an act that defies racism, sexism, ableism, classism & homophobia...or not. Anything that when you think about it today, makes you nod your head with **pride** or even semi-disbelief and think, "*Wow! I did that!*"

Stories should be true and short, 1-7 minutes. (Helpful to time your story aloud beforehand.) Come ready to read your written story—or share one off the top of your head.

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DATE/TIME: Anyday, Anytime
PLACE: (Your name)'s cozy, hopefully crowded, living room
ADDRESS: Anystreet, Anytown, Anycountry
DIRECTIONS: Take a right, then a left, blah, blah, blah
QUESTIONS & RSVP: Call (Your name, phone, e-mail)
COST: Free (Or collect donations for some good causes!)
WHO: All ages/genders invited
(Optional lingo: Guys, come share stories about moms, sisters, daughters)

Before your Living Room Open Mike, please contact the book website at eventslivingroom@thattakesovaries.org simply to indicate you are hosting one. This is encouraged, not required. It just helps me to know where and how many living-room soirees are being held. If you'd like to support the book and have it available to sell at your event you have options: One, buy a bunch of copies from a bookstore (go local, go independent! www.booksense.com), recoup costs when you sell them at your party, and return the ones you don't sell. Check the store's return policy first, and *save that sales receipt*. Another option is to have the book's publisher ship copies to your door. Bookstores are the best way to go, but if you simply can't make arrangements with one, you can order books directly from Random House: Call Wanda Knight in New York: 800-200-3552, ext. 9686. (Email info@thattakesovaries.org if you encounter difficulties.) Again, you pay for them in advance; again, you

can likely return unsold copies, this time to the publisher (ask Wanda if this will be true in your case). Your event, Ms. Hostess, will rouse women and girls to raise their voices and will give them a chance to look at their own lives and identify their courage; taking the book home will keep them inspired long after the evening has ended.

When at last your living room is brimming with people, here's what I suggest: Bring out the chips and dip, read aloud the book's preface, called **Rivka's Note to All Readers** (see Appendix B) (which sets the tone), plus a couple of stories (which model the storytelling style), then go around the room and have everyone share her (or his) own true stories. It is a homey, sofa-pillows type of comfortable, and it's entertaining and inspirational—all rolled into one. Feel free to use any activities from the **At the Event Itself** section found below. Make sure everyone who wants to speak gets a chance. Tell folks in advance to keep their stories short: maybe one to seven minutes? You don't want any one person hogging the floor (oink, oink). If someone does, don't be shy: Interrupt and announce their allotted time is about up. Then make sure it is. Being a Benign Dictator is easier than you might think. Or use an oven timer, the Instrument of Neutral Democracy.

It's a girl thing, so likely not a lot of guys will come. If some do, make them feel welcome (we can always use good men in the revolution, and at parties) and remind them that they can tell stories about the ovaries in their lives—female friends and family members. Some actually might, and then you are in for a treat; it is a treasure to hear men appreciate women's boldness.

Before anyone leaves, tell your girl-guests that if they want their stories considered for any subsequent *Ovaries!* books they should check the website for submission info.

Male-bashing, and Why It Won't Be Helpful At Your *Ovaries!* Event

Yes, we still live in a patriarchal society. Yes, the majority of people who hurt (harass, abuse, rape, murder) women and girls are men. For this reason, some stories heard at your event may be about how women and girls fought back. These stories are important; we need to tell them, people need to hear them. But if we want things to change—truly, radically change—we need to understand the full complexity of how a society steeped in sexism hurts *all* involved. How it tries to turn inherently strong girls into women who hesitate to use their power, and inherently compassionate boys into men with an inclination to dominate or hurt. For any one group to be free of these harmful effects of institutionalized sexism, we *all* need access to our full range of emotions and abilities; we *all* need to escape the gender roles and rules our culture declares definitive.

There are many tactics we can use to achieve this goal. Some include anger. Anger is often an appropriate response to being hurt and sometimes a necessary first step to reclaiming one's power (and ability to fight back against assault). But it won't be helpful to direct anger at men who attend your open mike. They came to support women. Besides, if our ultimate goal is to "reach" someone, change their heart and mind, then anger, and certainly bashing, will likely trigger their defense mechanisms. And then those we'd specifically hoped would learn and grow can't even hear how their attitude and behavior affect us.

Happily, there are other tactics we can employ: education, guidance, perspective sharing, and simply telling the truth about our lives. Hearing the truth, for the first time or the hundredth time, can be transformational. Given that, set a tone at your open mike where the truth about how women and girls have been hurt and how they fought back can be told, without simultaneously asserting that *all* men participate in the hurting. If needed, remind your audience that good men have always stood side by side with women in our mutual struggles to be free.

May your *Ovaries!* event be made up of the transformative stuff that tears down walls, not raises them. Good luck!

Organizing a (Bigger, Public) That Takes Ovaries! Open Mike

If you want to have more than just a few friends over; if you want to see strangers (who are only friends you have not yet met) excitedly milling around, talking about doing audacious things; if you want to bring women and girls together to listen, clap, and cheer with huge grins on their faces; if you want to feel powerful, smart, and in charge, like *you* can plan and pull off a great time for lots of folks—and raise their consciousness to boot—then you want to organize a bigger, public *That Takes Ovaries!* Open Mike. Good for you.

Luckily for everyone, the book's control-freaky editor cannot be involved with most events. So instead, there are these guidelines for open mike organizers, like you, to use.

What? You say you have never organized a public event before?

Well, hey, now's your chance. You never know, this might start your new career in organizing for women's empowerment. Or it could just be a lot of fun—once.

You can work as an individual, or under the auspices of an established organization. You can hold a stand-alone event, or include the open mike as a fun, audience participatory component to an already-scheduled larger conference (big advantages: comes with a site and pre-made audience). Or you can hold it in a bookstore. Options galore! Be creative.

Unlike a smaller Living Room Open Mike, where I have suggestions but no requirements, if you want to organize a bigger, public open mike you will have to do Certain Things. I list them below. But first, a definition of what exactly a "bigger, public" *That Takes Ovaries!* Open Mike is. It is any gathering that uses "That Takes Ovaries" or any like-wording in its promotion and: (1) is open to the public or local community—such as your city, neighborhood, or school; (2) includes more than just your friends and your friends' friends; (3) is publicized, perhaps with a publicly posted flyer or listing in a newspaper, school, or community events calendar; and/or (4) may be covered by the media. Lastly, if you expect more than thirty people, whoever they are, consider your open mike "bigger, public."

**So the open mike you want to organize meets
the above "bigger, public" definition?
And now you are wondering,
"What are these *Certain Things* I'll have to do?"**

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Thing 1. On the website, register your intention to organize an open mike. (This is simple. Don't let having to do it be a hindrance.)

Thing 2. When you register, you agree to follow the full version of the **Guidelines for Organizing an Ovaries! Open Mike in Your Community** guidelines (in other words, what you are reading right now). As you read these guidelines you will see they are fairly flexible. You can alter and adapt them to your specific community's needs.

Thing 3. Wait to hear back from the website before beginning to organize.

There are good reasons for Things 1-3. I need to coordinate and keep track of what is going on around the country. We wouldn't want two open mikes in the same city on the same week, now would we? Also, if you want, we can electronically list on the website's calendar of events your upcoming event for all to see—and attend. Besides,

contact with the website means you'll have someone who cares as much as you do about the event. And someone to whom you can brag when it goes swimmingly.

Fund-raiser, Too!

In keeping with the philosophy that it is important to give back to our communities, I encourage each (bigger, public) open mike organizer to make her event a fund-raiser, and to split the proceeds between two causes: one local, one international. We females are scattered far and wide; by dividing up our resources locally and internationally, we cover all bases.

Some of the money collected can go to covering costs (though it is hoped that sponsors or in-kind donations will take care of that), and, if necessary, to paying the organizer something. But regardless of costs, most of the proceeds should go to the beneficiaries of the fund-raiser.

It is my suggestion and hope that a portion of the money raised go to a local girls' program—whichever one you like in your community. (If you need an idea, consider your nearest chapter of Girls Inc. (www.girlsinc.org), one of the nation's preeminent girls' organizations. They help girls with everything from self-defense to economic empowerment to preventing adolescent pregnancy.) If you search high and low but cannot find a local girls' group that seems right for an *Ovaries!* fund-raiser, pick a women's group.

It is my further hope that another portion of the money your event raises will be dedicated to stopping two of the most appalling international human rights abuses perpetrated against women and girls—sexual enslavement and, separately, female genital mutilation (FGM) (for info on these two horrific violations of girls' rights and sexual freedom see below). To this end, *That Takes Ovaries!* established a relationship with Equality Now (www.equalitynow.org), a New York-based international women's organization that, among other things, works with grassroots groups around the globe to eradicate FGM as well as the sex trafficking of girls. Some of the writers in this book have already generously donated their contributor's honorarium to Equality Now. Imagine if every open mike distributed information and made a donation, too. We could make a real difference in the crucial goal of educating the public and ending both sexual slavery and FGM. And we would be sending a strong message that women in the so-called First World, a world of privilege, care about all women around the globe. (Note: If there is another international women's cause you'd prefer to donate to, that is also an option. Donating to Equality Now is strongly encouraged but not required.)

For those of you who have never organized for a cause or never before seen yourselves as social change activists—Welcome! Please use this event to get your feet (and knees and tush) wet. There is nothing like the high that comes from making a difference.

Multi-Culti is Good

Have your event reflect the diversity around you. Invite, leaflet, and advertise in a variety of cultural communities. Be imaginative. Reach out to Asian resource centers, Black sororities, disability rights groups, battered women's shelters, gay/straight alliances, girls' associations, Latino advocacy centers, Native American youth groups, LGBT listservs, senior citizen programs, and the like. Encourage women and girls from various backgrounds to take the lead as organizers, publicists, MCs. Diversity makes us stronger. Coalitions make us more effective.

Pre-Event Organizing Checklist

- _ On the website www.thattakesovaries.org, register your intention to organize a (bigger, public) *That Takes Ovaries!* Open Mike. Wait until you hear back before proceeding further.
- _ Prepare yourself for a bunch of fun and a good bit of work: Depending on how big you want it to be, the event could take one to three months to pull off.
- _ Find a co-organizer or loyal servants, umm, assistants, who will help.
- _ Find a free/absurdly cheap, wheelchair accessible, close-to-public-transit site. Try a bookstore, coffee shop, university campus, poetry reading spot, club, auditorium, beauty parlor waiting room, bowling alley parking lot, someone's big house, whatever. (Or piggyback onto another organization's already scheduled conference. Its organizers might love an audience participatory activity. And this way your site and crowd are already secured. Yippee!)
- _ Invite local girls' and women's organizations to join the fun by having them co-organize, sponsor, publicize, and/or attend the event. Some may be willing to contribute to costs, especially if it is a fundraiser for them or another worthy girlie cause. Ask each organization to bring its following (the folks on its mailing list) to the event itself.
- _ If possible, find local businesses to sponsor the event or make a donation. That way all costs won't end up on you. Some businesses, like a photocopying store, may donate services in exchange for including their name as a sponsor on the publicity flyer.
- _ Consider inviting local celebrities, leaders or bands. They will bring their fans, and can read from the book, tell their own personal stories, or MC. Which gets us to...
- _ Secure a Mistress of Ceremonies (MC). She should be vibrant and bold (like the book!), and, most important, able to make crowds comfortable enough to share personal stories aloud. *Maybe she is you?* But remember, it can be difficult to both organize *and* lead an event. You can also have more than one organizer or MC. *FYI: Men are welcome to co-MC with a woman.*
- _ If the site is large or the crowd will be big, buy/borrow/rent/steal from a friend/school/library/store chairs and a mike—or hold your event at a site already equipped with that stuff.
- _ If you are not already holding the open mike at a bookstore, invite one to attend your event to sell the book. This helps promote the paperback—thank you!—and further legitimizes your open mike by linking it to the book. (P.S. Don't forget to support your local *independent* bookstores. Find one in your area here: www.booksense.com.) If you want to order and sell books yourself, without the help of a bookstore, call Wanda Knight at Random House in New York: 800-200-3552, ext. 9686. (Email info@thattakesovaries.org if you encounter difficulties.) You can likely return unsold copies, but ask Wanda if this will be true in your case.
- _ Ask me (via info@thattakesovaries.org) for the *Ovaries!* book contributors who live closest to you. Maybe one can come, read her story aloud, and sign copies of the books.
- _ Equality Now will send brochures to each event organizer who wants to pass out info on female genital mutilation and sex trafficking at her event. Contact them weeks in advance to get the brochures (phone: 212-586-0906 // email: info@equalitynow.org).
- _ Read the two shaded boxes above and below that address the issues of **Male Bashing** and **Political Discussion**.
- _ Schedule an up-to-two hour agenda. Choose activities from the **At the Event Itself** section found below.

✓ Pre-Event Publicity Checklist

- _ Find out if the place you are holding the open mike, the groups you got to sponsor the event, or the local fundraiser recipient have their own established publicity machines. If so, use them. But don't rely on them. No one cares more about your event than you. So if you want a good turn out, consider the suggestions below.
- _ Get a nifty *Ovaries!* publicity packet off the website (found on the website's homepage).
- _ Make an eye-catching (hot pink?) hardcopy flyer about the event, and an e-mail flyer, too. Find samples of both in the publicity packet on the website homepage and/or below, in Appendix C.
- _ E-mail and snailmail flyers to all potentially interested individuals and groups, like local women's centers, YWCA, N.O.W., Girls Inc., and Girl Scouts chapters.
- _ Pass out flyers at poetry slams, clubs, knitting conventions, pro-choice demos, and any public gathering of one or more people. Post on windows and community bulletin boards in libraries, bookstores, coffee shops, beauty salons, gynecologists' offices—anywhere you'd find women chillin'.
- _ Get the open mike listed in the calendar section of local publications. It's easy. Just call the publication and ask them how to list it. Some need a month's advance notice. Others only eight days.
- _ If you want more publicity, like your fifteen seconds of fame, two to four weeks before the open mike, contact your local TV stations and city newspapers. Look on their websites, or call and ask, for their: 1) entertainment/events editor or reporter, 2) "around town/style/living/fluff" editor or reporter, 3) book section editor or book reviewer. Just call the newspaper and ask for all the names and phone extensions for each of these. Then talk to each directly or pitch the idea to their e-mail or voicemail—and *leave your phone number*. They will love *That Takes Ovaries!*; it is both playful and depthful, and has just enough "edge" to draw them in. Here's a possible grrl power pitch to spark their interest:

Hi, my name is Tiddlywinks Hinklebaum (or whatever name you use), a local _____ (What? Girls' advocate? Women's activist? Writer? Say your real work title, too, if it carries weight). I am calling to see if you'd like to _____ (Fill in the blank with one or all of these: "Do a pre-event story on a fundraiser we are holding; cover an exciting and unusual open mike event; write a book review and mention our related event"). (Note: As the organizer, you'd prefer a *pre*-event story so more folks come to your shindig.) It is an event I am organizing in conjunction with the publication of a new book -- a collection of stories from women and girls about bold, gutsy, brazen, outrageous, audacious, courageous things they have done. The book and the event are both called *That Takes Ovaries!* (Note: Pause a sec to let their brain synapses compute. Most folks giggle or half-laugh-half-snort upon realization of what the phrase means.) *That Takes Ovaries!* Open Mikes are being held all around the country. At them, women and girls will publicly share their true tales of times they were particularly gutsy, bold, or audacious. (Note: If you are making it a fundraiser along my suggestions, explain: "It is a fundraiser for the local girls' group _____ (state which), and for groups working to end female genital mutilation and sex trafficking, two of the most horrific human rights abuses perpetrated against women in the world." The local groups and celebrities sponsoring and attending this event are _____. (Note: Mention only those you *definitely* secured.) Can we interest you in doing a story? Perhaps I could send you an e-mail or fax on all this? (Note: Get their coveted e-mail address, if possible.) Or I'd be happy to meet with you, send a publicity packet, a copy of the book, or have the book's editor, Rivka Solomon, available for an interview.

If anyone is interested, immediately e-mail or fax (snail mail only as a last resort) an event flyer—or anything with the key info *and your phone number* on it. This is your press release (see sample in Appendix C), so write that at the top. Next, contact the website info@thattakesovaries.org; we'll mail them a publicity packet and/or freebie book *if we can*. If any of them want to interview Rivka, contact her at rivka@thattakesovaries.org. Remember, you are competing with 1000 other events for that editor or reporter's attention. So it is okay to do a follow up phone call. But if you sense they are annoyed, back off by repeatedly bowing your way out of the room. Now, after informing the media about your gig, you have to be Zen about it and let it go. They will either come or not.

Political Discussion

There are times for political discussions. Sitting around coffee tables with friends, at holiday dinners with the family, on the street at a protest rally. Your open mike is not one of those times. But the stories women share at your gathering may raise political issues. Issues that different people feel differently about: Like the role of pornography in our lives, like whether a woman should retaliate for being done wrong, like whether a girl should use violence to fend off violence done to her. Those are just a few examples; who knows what political and social contention could come up at your event. But this is not the place to start a big debate about complex concerns. We can't solve them in one night anyway. What this night is about is something totally different. It is about feeling triumphant, positive, happy at hearing how yet another woman pushed past societal imposed boundaries or internally adhered-to constraints. It's about providing a safe space for women and girls to share their stories and experiences. This is a time to put political differences aside and instead focus on supporting yet another girl who, at least when she did her deed, felt she was taking some kind of action to somehow free herself. This is a time to celebrate daring dames, gutsy gals, feisty females...even if you don't agree with them politically.

If a political debate starts, have the MC gently but firmly squash it. Tell the crowd to continue their debate *after* the open mike. Right here, right now, we want to focus on the positive.

As Folks Walk Into the Event

- Welcome them.
- Consider playing toe-tapping, happy music (and there are always the old school classics, like Cyndi Lauper's *Girls Just Wanna Have Fun*, Aretha Franklin's *Respect*, Helen Reddy's *I Am Woman...*).
- If it is a fundraiser, have someone collect money (for security reasons, periodically remove the money from the door). Post a sign stating where the proceeds will go.
- Some organizers might want to use a sign-up sheet at the door for those who intend to share a story. This is optional, but if you do, make sure all attendees know about it as they walk in. With this, you'll know in advance how many plan to participate in the spoken word part of the night. You could also use the list for who goes first, second... Remember though, you may also want folks to *spontaneously* share stories. That is where the real excitement could be.

At the Event Itself : *Summary*

Activities you can use at your event are summarized in the next three paragraphs. For the more detailed description of each activity, see below. Pick the activities you think would work best with the community you are inviting. A bare-bones open mike consists of only three components: first, the *Introduction*, when the Mistress of Ceremonies reads aloud the book's preface (aka **Rivka's Note to All Readers**; find it in Appendix B below or in the website's About the Book section) and discusses the importance of women and girls publicly sharing their brazen, outrageous, audacious, courageous acts; second, *Modeling the Storytelling Style*, when someone role-models the types of stories we hope to hear at the event (i.e. true, short, and, of course, gutsy), perhaps by reading aloud examples from the book; and last, the actual *Open Mike Time*, when women and girls who came with a story already prepared share them with the whole room, thereby motivating others to spontaneously share stories, too. With just those three components, you will have a great event!

However, you also have other activities you could do, such as *Celebrity Readings*, when well-known, crowd-drawing locals tell stories from their own lives or read from the book; the *Golden Ovaries Award Ceremony*, when community-based women and girls who have acted boldly are honored and then

tell their specific act of brazenness to the audience; the *Greater Audience Involvement* exercise, when all who attend have a chance to share their stories in a small group setting, and then later, if they want, with the whole room. The exercise is a fun way to help bring shy people out and build their self-esteem.

No matter how you proceed with your open mike, the clapping, cheering, supportive yelps and congratulatory pats on the back at the end of every story will encourage each woman and girl to keep being gutsy, keep taking risks in her day-to-day life. And when the electrified crowd finally dances its way out the door, you can be sure they'll know that being *Women With Ovaries* enhances their own lives and serves as a fine example to others of what a woman can be.

Reminder

Before the gathering, have the MC read the *Male Bashing* and *Political Discussion* shaded boxes found above. If hurtful male bashing or a contentious political discussion erupts at your event, the MC should gently interrupt it by sharing with the audience the basic ideas behind either or both boxes. Remember, this is a fun event—a celebration of women's and girls' sassy stories. Keep the overall mood and energy positive and upbeat!

At the Event Itself: *Details*

What follows below are the detailed descriptions of the above mentioned activities. Not all of these have to happen at your open mike. Pick the ones you think will work best for your community. Adolescents may want something different than beautifully-aging crones. Again, a bare-bones open mike would consist of simply three components, the *Introduction*, *Model the Storytelling Style*, and the actual *Open Mike Time*; and with just those three activities, participants will leave uplifted and excited. Enjoy!

Introduction

The facilitator of the evening, the Mistress of Ceremonies (if you're lucky, this MC will be the local leader/celebrity you invited weeks or months earlier), welcomes everyone, goes over the evening's agenda, and if it is a fundraiser, explains who the recipients are. She introduces the idea behind the open mike and why it is important for women and girls to share their "bold, gutsy, brazen, outrageous, audacious, courageous, in-your-face" acts (these words best describe what "having ovaries" is about). The MC does this by sharing her own thoughts and also reading aloud the short preface to the book called **Rivka's Note To All Readers** (also found on the website's About the Book section, and in Appendix B below). This is the only required reading at your *Ovaries!* event. You can shorten or summarize some of it, if you feel it is too long. But it is required to read at least some of it, so please do that -- out loud. This sets an inspirational *You-go-girl* tone and gives context to the story-telling that follows. And it links your event to the book. Yippee!!

Model the Storytelling Style

Find some way to model the storytelling style. The style is short—one to seven minutes per story, to the point, and, of course, gutsy, audacious or courageous. Consider any of these options for modeling the style: 1) a contributor to the book is present and reads her story; 2) pre-selected local actresses read pre-selected stories from the book (stories you gave them at least a week in advance so they can rehearse/practice); 3) any volunteers, pre-selected or found on the spot, read one or two stories from the book; 4) everyday women and girls share their own (not from the book) stories of brazenness; 5) the MC or celebrities present give examples from *their* lives. This last one could double as the *Celebrity Reading* activity (see below).

Whatever stories you use to model the storytelling style should be cleared *beforehand* by the event organizer to make sure they are appropriate and best match the expected audience. For example, read a teen's story if the audience will be mostly teens and don't read a real sexual story if there are elementary school kids present. The model stories should vary in topic, tone (both playful *and* serious stories), and culture (diversity is best). But they should be consistent in style: brief, bold, and to the point.

Celebrity Readings

If celebrities or community leaders attend, at some point during the first half of the event have them share stories from their own lives (if one is MCing she may have already done this), or have them read sample stories from the book (chosen by them but cleared in advance by you). It is possible these celeb stories can also serve to *Model the Storytelling Style* (see above). If no celebs attend, proceed to the next activity.

Golden Ovaries Award

If you do not want to honor anyone at this event, skip this paragraph. However, if you decide to also use the event as a time to honor specific local women and girls who have acted boldly, have each of the honorees (who would have been nominated and chosen in advance somehow, perhaps by you or members of the community) come up to the mike, accept their "Golden Ovary Award," and share their specific act of brazenness with the crowd. (Where will you get such an award? Make one yourself out of paper and glitter. Or better yet, buy something egg shaped and spray paint it gold!)

Greater Audience Involvement

You could skip this section and happily go straight to the *Open Mike Time* below. On the other hand, if you want more audience involvement than a typical open mike may offer, consider doing this exercise instead.

Ask everyone to turn to one to three people sitting nearby. Once the whole room has formed small groups tell them they have five or so minutes to have each person share with their group a true, short story of anything they have ever done that *took ovaries*—maybe offer this list of synonyms again: "bold, gutsy, brazen, outrageous, audacious, courageous, or in-your-face." After the small groups are done the MC can ask the whole room, "Who has a story to tell? Who in your group told a story that should be shared?" This will begin the open mike phase of the *Greater Audience Involvement* exercise.

Now, after what was essentially a small-group warm-up session, women and girls from the audience can stand up and share with the larger room either the stories they just practiced telling, or brand new ones. The MC can explain that they are also encouraged to relay the stories they just heard *others* share in their small group, too—but *only if they first get the original storyteller's permission, of course*. The MC can also playfully state, "And if the person relaying your story doesn't happen to be getting the facts right, just start flapping your arms, and interrupt by saying, 'Actually, it really went like *this*...'"

This exercise is good for a few reasons. First, it allows *everyone* who came an opportunity to share a story, even if only in the small group. Second, if someone is shy about telling her story to the whole room, and likely many will be, another person can tell it for her. This way the shy storyteller's gutsy act will not simply end with the act itself, it will live on, serving as an inspiration for other women. Third, for the timid storyteller, just hearing her story publicly told and appreciated is an empowering, affirming experience that will help her to be bold again in the future. Fourth, there is a chance, and again, it should be encouraged, that the shy storyteller will indeed wave her arms about and interrupt the person relaying her story with a: "No, no, it actually went like *this*..." Before she knows it she will be stepping through fear and nervousness to share her own story with the larger room. This is a good thing for the

shy girl's own self-esteem and a great thing for others in the audience to witness. At the end of each story, encourage clapping and cheering, yipping and hollering.

Note: Using this above technique of audience involvement will likely render irrelevant any sign up sheet you might have had at the door.

Open Mike Time

If you did not choose to do the *Greater Audience Involvement* activity above, now is the time for women and girls who eagerly came with a story already prepared, or at least partially-prepared, to share their stories with the whole room. Now is the time for those who did not even know they had a story to share to suddenly be moved to contribute. Now comes the best part of the night! Fun *and* inspirational.

You have already led up to this activity by doing at least the *Introduction* and likely the *Model the Storytelling Style* component, too. Now simply remind the audience that the stories must be true and not more than one to seven minutes (and that you will gently interrupt if they go on too long).

If the audience is shy, the MC might remind them: 1) whereas they might feel nervous about sharing in front of a group, they can take this opportunity in this supportive environment to walk through fear and experience doing something that "takes ovaries;" and 2) contrary to what that little voice in their head might be saying, *there are no stupid stories*.

You can follow a sign-up sheet you might have had at the door, or just let folks spontaneously stand and tell a story when they feel ready. You could also alternate back and forth between those who signed-up and those who feel spontaneously moved to share. They can stand at the mike, pass the mike around, or just bellow loud enough for all to hear. However you proceed, encourage clapping, cheering, supportive yelps, and congratulatory pats on the back at the end of each story.

Inspirational Wrap Up and Taking the Attitude Home

The whole event should not go on for more than two hours—unless everyone is really digging it. In the end, it is better to leave them wanting more, not feeling like it went on too long. If the last story told was not "up" enough, have a pre-selected volunteer share a pre-selected up-beat story from her life or from the book. If there isn't time for a whole story, give a short synopsis. Just make sure the night ends on an up note.

Thank everyone for coming. The MC can remind them to keep being gutsy, audacious, and bold in their everyday lives, both because it will enhance their own lives—we develop confidence and experience by taking risks and living through them—and because it will be an active and needed role model for other females of all ages.

If you have the book for sale at your event (thank you!), tell folks they can take this inspirational feeling home with them in the form of a small, light-weight paperback for only \$13. Have an assistant or bookstore employee sell copies and have a contributor to the book (if one came) sign them. Then put that toe-tapping, rockin' music back on so people can dance their way out the door.

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION, SEX TRAFFICKING, AND *OVARIES!* FUND-RAISERS

Rivka-the-book-editor sez: It is my hope that the *That Takes Ovaries!* Open Mikes that you organize (especially the "bigger, public" ones) will be both consciousness-raisers and fund-raisers, with a percentage of the money raised going to local girls' groups and a percentage going to the organization Equality Now (www.equalitynow.org) for their work to stop female genital mutilation (FGM) and the equally horrible but separate atrocity of sexual enslavement. (For general info on *Ovaries!* fund-raising see above section called "Fund-raiser, too!")

FGM is one of the most atrocious human rights abuses perpetrated against girls around the globe. To date, 130 million females from Africa to Europe and the United States. have been mutilated and suffer permanent disabilities from the barbaric act. An unknown number die each year during and after the procedure. Equality Now works with community-based leaders and grassroots groups worldwide to promote a better understanding of FGM and effective strategies for its eradication

This is how Fauziya Kassindja, who managed to escape FGM, describes it in her story in *That Takes Ovaries!*

A harmful traditional practice among some African, Asian, and Middle Eastern cultures, female genital mutilation (FGM) is performed on about two million infants, girls, and women each year. That's more than five thousand a day. Depending on the local custom, you will either "only" have your clitoris cut off, or you will lose the whole thing, including labia minora and majora. If it is the latter, you are sewn up, leaving a small hole, hardly big enough to allow pee and menstrual blood to squeeze out. Then, with each baby you birth, you are recut and resewn anew. The rationale behind FGM is complex: It is tradition; it is thought to protect virginity and prevent promiscuity; uncircumcised females are considered dirty; girls must be cut as a requirement for marriage; and circumcised girls and women are deemed more sexually desirable.

The practice of FGM subjects women to a number of long-term physical and psychological problems. Often carried out without anesthesia and with unsterilized razors or knives, it is a sometimes deadly practice. My other aunt died from it, as do many girls every year, either from hemorrhaging or infection.

I wanted nothing to do with either the [forced] marriage or the so-called circumcision, so with the help of my sister, and my mother from afar, I fled that very day.

Fauziya left her home, her family, her country to escape the brutality of FGM. Today, in part because of her work publicizing the horrors of FGM, Fauziya's homeland of Togo, West Africa, has outlawed the practice. But it still goes on legally and illegally around the world. Equality Now is one of the leading organizations working to stop it.

They also work to end global sex trafficking of girls and women. Ruchira Gupta describes sexual slavery in India in her story in *That Takes Ovaries!*

I came to learn that the sale of girls is no secret; it is all done in the open, like any business. There is the local procurer, an uncle or fellow villager, who buys the girl from her parents for twenty to thirty dollars. He'll collect three or four females, aged seven to thirty, bring them to a bigger town, collect another dozen girls from other rural areas, put them all in a truck, smuggle them over the Nepal-India border (where he'll pay off the border police), then sell them to the next middleman up the chain, in India. The new men take the girls to small boardinghouses. There they rape the girls, beat them, subjugate their spirits completely until they do whatever these men want. The men sometimes use ice to break in the premenstrual girls. Then the girls are taken to Bombay and sold to brothel madams for three thousand rupees apiece, about forty to fifty dollars.

Back in Bombay, I heard how the half-grown children are bonded sex slaves for the first five years, unpaid and forced to "service" twenty-five to thirty men a day: *raped* twenty-five to thirty times

a day! "Clients" stub out cigarettes on their young breasts and shove bottles up their vaginas. They are kept in five-by-seven-foot rooms, each crammed with about four miniature beds. The rooms have no walking space, just beds and curtains separating them. Windows are barred, entrances locked and guarded. A severe beating follows any attempt to flee. After five years, they are allowed to keep half their meager earnings. By then the madams have made sure that the girls have become addicted to drugs and alcohol and have had a baby, so they won't run. The girls, now with distorted, almost caricatured bodies, get trapped by disease and debt—they have to pay for water, bedding, and food. By age forty they are usually dead from AIDS.

I learned that this horror goes on around the globe, from Africa to Albania. Each year 4 million girls are sold by their impoverished parents, tricked with false promises of good jobs, or outright kidnapped. They are brought to big cities in their own country or sent abroad to rich Western nations. Fifty thousand are shipped to the United States each year.

Both Ruchira's and Fauziya's descriptions help to explain why *That Takes Ovaries!* established a relationship with Equality Now and why I strongly suggest you send them a percentage of the money raised at any *Ovaries!* Open Mikes.

Equality Now
P.O. Box 20646
Columbus Circle Station
New York, NY 10023
Phone: (212) 586-0906 // Fax: (212) 586-1611
E-mail: info@equalitynow.org
Website: www.equalitynow.org

Appendix A -- Registering to lead an open mike

This is also found on the website www.thattakesovaries.org.

REGISTER **(to organize a "bigger, public" open mike)**

Email us at register@thattakesovaries.org with your short answers to these below questions if you want to register to organize a "bigger, public" *That Takes Ovaries!* reading or open mike. (But there's no need to register for a "just friends" Living Room Open Mike. What's the difference between a "just friends" Living Room Open Mike and a "bigger, public" one? To find out, read page 5 of the **Guidelines for Organizing an *Ovaries!* Open Mike in Your Community.**) We reserve the right to either approve (yay!) or deny your request to organize a bigger, public *Ovaries!* event.

To register, email us your *short* answers to these questions and we'll get back to you.

12 Quick Registration Questions

1. Did you read—and do you now agree to follow—the *full*, not-just-summarized **Guidelines for Organizing an *Ovaries!* Open Mike in Your Community**? They are flexible and if you need to adapt them further for your own community's needs, just ask.
2. What is your contact info? Name, address, email—phone optional but very helpful. This contact info will not be sold or given to anyone but us *Ovaries!* ladies.
3. Tell us about you: Who are you, what do you do, what identity groups or communities are you part of? (African American? Lesbian? Girls' groups? Women's organizations? Colleges? Anything.)
4. What are you thinking of doing? (An *Ovaries!* reading? Open mike?)
5. Do you have experience organizing events? Please explain. (P.S. First time organizers welcome.)
6. Will anyone be helping you? (Friends, colleagues, organizations, site managers?)
7. Ideas for a free/cheap site to hold this *Ovaries!* event?
8. Potential date (or month) for the event?
9. Number of people you want to attend?
10. Considering asking local women's and girls' groups to sponsor, help publicize and/or attend? If so, which?
11. Planning on making this a fundraiser? If so, for whom? (Info on fundraisers found in the **Fund-raisers, Too!** section above)
12. Trying for media coverage? If so, who/what?

Keep a copy of your answers for yourself, then send us a copy to: register@thattakesovaries.org. Please be patient. It may take us a while to respond with an approval or denial of your request.

PRIVACY NOTICE FOR EVERYONE TO READ: *That Takes Ovaries!* respects your right to privacy and understands that visitors to the *That Takes Ovaries!* website need to be in control of their personal information. For this reason, we only ask you to give us information about you when you register to organize an open mike. We will use the registration information you provide us only in our communication with you. We will NOT share the information with any third parties (folks not working on *Ovaries!* activities).

SPECIAL NOTICE TO YOUNG PEOPLE AND CHILDREN: If you are age 13 and under you will need an adult to work on the open mike with you. But don't let that stop you! Contact us about this at register@thattakesovaries.org. **DETAILS:** Before giving any personal or registration information to us or to anyone on the Internet, please ask your parents for permission. We cannot accept information from anyone 13 years of age or younger without prior written consent from a parent or guardian. We encourage parents to actively participate in their children's use of the Internet and *That Takes Ovaries!* activities.

Appendix B -- Rivka's NOTE TO ALL READERS (and to be read at all open mikes)

Rivka's *NOTE TO ALL READERS* *
(*and to be read aloud at all open mikes)

Girls are born self-assured and bold.

It is not a chromosomal thing that makes many girls shy about speaking up in class, hesitant to dive into competitive sports, or tolerant of street harassment. It's not due to genetic makeup that women are less likely to run for political office, climb the corporate ladder, or attain equality—whether equal pay on the job or equal attention in the bedroom. It's not nature; it's nurture. Internalized social messages and conditioning by a sexist, often violent society are what contributes to any female suppressing her naturally confident, daring self and replacing it with less risk-taking, less space-taking behavior.

Well, it's time to deprogram.

It's time to reject all that keeps a woman quiet or unsure. Many girls are conditioned to downplay their abilities or needs so that no one else's feathers get ruffled. Most women are taught not to push for or promote their own self-interests. This antiquated behavior has kept women back.

What femininity needs is a boost of bravado.

We perk up and take note when we hear about acts of female adventure and courage. They are stories we grab onto and delight in with others ("*Hey, did you hear about the woman who...!*"). We fix on these magnetic mental images and they become models of how we, too, can be in our lives ("*If she can do it, so can I!*"). So what we need are role models galore—down and dirty role models. They show what is possible. They show how to counteract the subtle and overt messages telling us to be "good girls" even when doing so isn't in our best interest.

Fortunately, role models abound. They are in every racial, cultural, and socioeconomic group, and in girls and women of every age, sexual orientation, ability, and disability. They are everywhere, because they are us. Many girls believe in their strength in spite of cultural conditioning. Women find ways to skirt around and overcome efforts to program them. Examples of resistance, bravery, and breaking-the-mold behavior can be found in every female.

If courage creates ripples, get ready to be hit by a wave.

That Takes Ovaries! is a celebration of ourselves—girls and women just like you and me, speaking in our own words about our own actions. This is a celebration of everyday feisty females, those who haven't made the history books or the cover of *Time* magazine but who *have* taken on the tired, false stereotype of the passive female. Their gutsy acts spur us to be risk-takers and heroines in our day-to-day lives. Then we, creating ripples ourselves, inspire them in return with our own daring deeds.

That takes balls are words of praise reserved for a man who has done something bold: a guy we might respect for his ability to push the boundaries or break the rules, a boy with chutzpah. Well, *move over, gentlemen, it's time for the ladies!*

Some women need *ovaries* simply to survive in this harsh world. Others need them in order to flourish. But wherever an individual may fall on that spectrum, it is almost certain she will need to be a *Woman of Ovaries* if she wants to right wrongs, fight the injustices that still plague our communities, and gain her own freedom. Freedom, after all, isn't simply about rejecting conditioning; in the end, it's about dismantling the sexist institutions that promote the conditioning. We gotta be risk-takers to do that.

Of course *all* stories are welcome here, whether they are about hell-raising social change or hell-raising fun. Either act can be a life-altering experience if a girl is tossing aside the rules of how a female is "supposed" to behave.

Although some of the *ovarian* acts described here may seem too risky to you (and, in retrospect, they may seem that way to some of the people who did them), remember that the deeds were originally done with a sassy sense of valor and adventure. Of course some were also done out of panic and blind instinct, and some yielded unsuccessful results. The aim is not to showcase perfect women doing perfect, selfless acts—though we'll witness some of those here, too. The goal is to showcase *real* women. Sometimes we make smart, calculated decisions; sometimes we take foolhardy chances. Either way, *that takes ovaries!*

Appendix C -- Press/publicity stuff (next 8 pages)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE -- PRESS RELEASE

That Takes Ovaries!®

BOOK PUBLICATION & EVENTS NATION-WIDE

CONTACT: Rivka Solomon, book editor. Ph. 781-674-2244; 781-863-2882 // rivka@thattakesovaries.org

THE BOOK

That Takes Ovaries! Bold Females and Their Brazen Acts (Random House May 2002; \$13), is a collection of real-life stories from women and girls about bold, gutsy, brazen, outrageous, audacious, courageous things they have done. It is jam-packed with 64 multi-culti, short, playful, sassy, often touching true tales of estrogen-powered deeds. Many of the stories are about women and girls unabashedly standing up for themselves and their rights – and having fun while they do it.

EVENTS NATION-WIDE: READINGS, OPEN MIKES, DRAMATIZATIONS

The book is coupled with a grassroots movement for empowerment. Because women and girls everywhere have inspiring stories to tell, there are *That Takes Ovaries!* open mikes and dramatizations being held all around the country. Many will be fundraisers for local girls' groups and for groups working to end human rights abuses against girls, including female genital mutilation and sex trafficking. Dozens of *That Takes Ovaries!* events are happening nation-wide, from Boston to San Francisco.

WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

A new book salutes 'balls' acts by bold women -- the anatomically correct way. -- *Glamour magazine, May 2002*

Wrap these up with a Bikini Kill CD and a copy of *Thelma & Louise*, then give to your niece for her very own intro to third-wave feminism. -- *Jane magazine, May 2002*

What do your ovaries mean to you? Most would say the organs' significance is limited to their reproductive function, but Rivka Solomon has another view...Whenever Solomon hears of a woman pulling off a particularly daring act, she'll say, "That takes ovaries."... Plenty of defiance was in evidence at a recent event celebrating "Ovaries"... -- *Chicago Tribune, May 2002*

I'm pretty sure I'd never have the balls -- excuse me, ovaries -- to do what many of these women did. But I sure had a high-flying time imagining them... -- *The Detroit New, April 2002*

Solomon has compiled a noteworthy testament to the force of womanhood everywhere... With confidence, wit, and unwavering integrity, these fiery females assert themselves and earn a place in history and in our hearts. -- *MoxieMag.com, May 2002*

Girl power profiles...The stories range from harrowing to sassy, from a 5-year-old girl who fought to play dodgeball with the boys to a woman who talked a burglar out of robbing her house. The idea was to include as many different examples of girl power as possible. -- *Detroit Free Press, June 2002*

That Takes Ovaries is meant to be a movement...throughout the country inviting men and women to share stories of everyday she-roes. In addition, the book doubles as a do-it-yourself handbook for holding in-home book readings and girl-power sessions. -- *Boston Globe, June 2002*

For more info: www.ThatTakesOvaries.org

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE FOR A *LOCAL* EVENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE/FLYER: (YR CITY'S NAME HERE) AREA BOOK READING/OPEN MIKE

NATIONAL CONTACT: Rivka Solomon, book editor -- rivka@thattakesovaries.org

LOCAL CONTACT: (Your name, phone and email here)

**YOU SAW IT IN GLAMOUR AND JANE MAGAZINES
NOW SEE IT FOR YOURSELF!**

"A new book salutes 'ballsy' acts by bold women -- the anatomically correct way."

-- Glamour magazine, May 2002

What's new? What's hip? This book:

THAT TAKES OVARIES!®

**Book Reading/Signing and Open Mike
Tuesday August 27, 12:30-1:30 pm**

Come hear stories read from the new book **THAT TAKES OVARIES!: BOLD FEMALES AND THEIR BRAZEN ACTS**. The book is a collection of real-life stories from women and girls. It is jam-packed with 64 multi-culti, short, playful, sassy, often touching, true tales of kickin' estrogen-powered deeds. Then tell your own stories about being a brazen babe! (Guys: Come proudly brag about the ovaries in *your* life -- your mothers, sisters, daughters.)

This event is coupled with a national grassroots movement for empowerment: Because women and girls everywhere have inspiring stories to tell, there will be *That Takes Ovaries!* open mikes and dramatizations held everywhere, from Boston to San Francisco.

WHAT: *That Takes Ovaries!* Book Reading and Open Mike (or whatever are doing)

WHEN: Date and time

WHERE: (Venue/site name and address)

CONTACT: *Venue/site Coordinator* (His/her name and phone and email)

Ovaries! Coordinator (Your name, phone and email)

CONTRIBUTORS PRESENT: (list if any, or list big names if any are coming to present/read)

"Wrap these up with a Bikini Kill CD and a copy of *Thelma & Louise*, then give to your niece for her very own intro to third-wave feminism."

-- Jane magazine, May 2002

For more info on *Ovaries!*: www.ThatTakesOvaries.org

SAMPLE E-FLYER (ELECTRONIC FLYER) FOR A LOCAL EVENT

FLYER/PRESS RELEASE

for book reading and open mike in (yr city here)

National Contact: Rivka Solomon

rivka@thattakesovaries.org

Local Contact: (Name, phone and email here)

YOU SAW IT IN GLAMOUR AND JANE MAGAZINES NOW SEE IT FOR YOURSELF!

What's new? What's hip? This book:

Please come to a book reading and open mike for

THAT TAKES OVARIES!

(Add date and time here)

Come hear stories read from the new book **THAT TAKES OVARIES!: BOLD FEMALES AND THEIR BRAZEN ACTS**. The book is a collection of real-life stories from women and girls. It is jam-packed with 64 multi-culti, short, playful, sassy, often touching, true tales of kickin' estrogen-powered deeds. Then tell your own stories about being a brazen babe! (Guys: Come proudly brag about the ovaries in *your* life -- your mothers, sisters, daughters.)

This event is coupled with a national grassroots movement for empowerment: Because women and girls everywhere have inspiring stories to tell, there will be *That Takes Ovaries!* open mikes and dramatizations held everywhere, from Boston to San Francisco. ***THAT TAKES OVARIES!* will be for sale at this event thanks to (name of bookstore if any is coming).**

WHAT: *That Takes Ovaries!* Book Reading and Open Mike (or whatever you make the event)

WHEN: (Day, date and time. Example: Sunday, June 16th, 3 to 5 PM)

WHERE: (Venue/site's name and address and phone)

LOCAL CONTACT: Local contact: (Name and phone and email)

NATIONAL CONTACT: Rivka Solomon <rivka@thattakesovaries.org>

CONTRIBUTORS PRESENT: (List if any are coming. And/or list all big names who are coming)

WHAT THEY'RE SAYING ABOUT *THAT TAKES OVARIES!*

"A new book salutes 'ballsy' acts by bold women -- the anatomically correct way."

-- Glamour magazine, May 2002

"Wrap these up with a Bikini Kill CD and a copy of *Thelma & Louise*, then give to your niece for her very own intro to third-wave feminism."

-- Jane magazine, May 2002

For more info: www.ThatTakesOvaries.org

PUBLICITY RECEIVED TO DATE

That Takes Ovaries!

CONTACT: Rivka Solomon, book editor <rivka@thattakesovaries.org>

PUBLICITY TO DATE (as of June 11, 2002)

- _ **Detroit News**, April 27 2002 -- column dedicated to the book
www.detnews.com/2002/metro/0204/27/d01-475778.htm
- _ Working Assets' April "Recommended Reading" list -- 400,000 person mailing
- _ **CT Nat'l Public Radio**, She Got Game, April 2002 -- aired story (www.shegotgame.com 4/6/02 show)
- _ Moxiemag.com (www.moxiemag.com/moxie/articles/perspectives), May 2002 -- book review
- _ Bamboo Girl Zine, Issue #11, May 2002, -- book review
- _ **Glamour** magazine, May 2002 -- "Wow Women" (p. 196) (Glamour Mag has 3 million readers)
- _ **Jane** magazine, May 2002 -- book reviewed/recommended: 3 stars! (p. 171)
- _ Latina magazine, May 2002 -- mentioned in the "Entertainment" section
- _ PopMatters.com (www.popmatters.com/books/reviews/t/that-takes-ovaries.shtml), online pop culture magazine, May 2002 -- review
- _ Bitch: Feminist Response to Pop Culture, Spring 2002 -- "And don't miss..." section
- _ **Chicago Tribune**, May 29, 2002 -- in Women News section
- _ **Daily Herald** (suburban Chicago newspaper), May 15, 2002 -- article and contributor's story
- _ **Detroit Free Press**, June 3, 2002 -- The Way We Live section
- _ Boston Phoenix, May 31, 2002 -- 8 Days a Week section (event was a pick of the day)
- _ **Boston Globe**, June 4, 2002 -- Go! section, Quick Hits (event was a pick of the day)
- _ Cambridge Tab, June 7, 2002 -- Front page feature
- _ **Washington City Paper**, June 7, 2002 -- City Lights (event was the only pick of the day)
- _ **Boston Globe**, June 9, 2002 -- City Weekly section
(www.boston.com/dailyglobe2/160/city/Everyday_women_and_their_gutsy_acts+.shtml)
- _ **Washington Post Book World**, June 9, 2002 -- a listing (selected) of upcoming event
- _ Girlfriends magazine, June 2002 -- review
- _ BUST magazine, June 2002, pending -- the featured book in the book review section
- _ Lesbianation (www.lesbianation.com), summer 2002, pending -- interview w/Rivka
- _ Sojourner: The Women's Forum, July 2002, slated -- review
- _ **Playgirl** magazine, August 2002, slated -- review
- _ **Glamour** magazine, Sept 2002, pending -- mini interview w/Rivka for article, "What is Chutzpah?"

For more info on *Ovaries!*: www.ThatTakesOvaries.org

BASIC INTRO/INFO LETTER

That Takes Ovaries!

Rivka Solomon, book editor <rivka@thattakesovaries.org>

"If you obey all the rules, you miss all the fun." -- Katharine Hepburn
"Well-behaved women rarely make history."-- Laurel Thatcher Ulrich

Dear Folks Interested in *That Takes Ovaries!*,

Enclosed please find information on my book *That Takes Ovaries! Bold Females and Their Brazen Acts* and the exciting projects surrounding it. I am planning book readings, open mikes and dramatizations with many groups at numerous venues. Either I or one of my Ovaries Cohorts (designated surrogates) will speak with any group interested in doing a public event. We hope you might be one of them!

First, **the book:** *That Takes Ovaries!* (Three Rivers Press/Random House, May 2002) is a collection of women's and girls' real-life stories in their own words. From courageous to outrageous, these accounts capture the breadth of gutsy acts. This book embraces diversity with the voices of every day females from many ages and cultural backgrounds, and also includes a few stories from better-known individuals and activists. *The book is already getting national publicity: Glamour Magazine, Jane Magazine and Playgirl Magazine are, respectively, doing a column and reviews.*

The book contains sixty-four first-person narratives representing a variety of audacious deeds. It includes accounts of women and girls standing up to a gun-toting gang banger in a fast food joint, skysurfing out of airplanes, organizing a hundred high school girls to take on the boys who harass them, jumping off a moving train to see the Alps, making a living as a sex writer, launching a pee protest in order to secure a wheelchair accessible bathroom on campus, and telling President Clinton what to do—and having him do it! The stories tell of how a fourteen-year-old led a revolt in her synagogue, a woman rose out of poverty and prostitution, a passerby confronted a crowd of catcalling men, a public health educator founded the country's first women-oriented sex toy store, a peacemaker met with guerilla leaders in a war zone, a Catholic school teacher snuck in to see the Pope...and dozens of other sassy, spirited acts.

The audience for this book are those eager for examples of women and girls acting outside the stereotype of passivity and niceness, including women and men of all ages who want to see their sisters, mothers, grandmothers and friends leading empowered lives; parents who care about their daughters growing up self-assured and confident; and girls eager to be part of the growing *girl power* movement. In short, this book is for everyone interested in challenging a culture still wrought with inequality and double standards. *That Takes Ovaries!* taps into the vibrant mass of women and girls hungry for powerful female role models.

To coincide with the book's publication, I am coordinating *That Takes Ovaries! Open Mikes* in cities across North America—and the world. At the open mikes, local women and girls from the community will have fun *and* inspire each other as they publicly share their own stories of gutsy brazenness. I am overseeing a growing number of local organizers as they plan these open mikes, and I will even be present to sign books at a few. However, because I want to encourage homegrown, grassroots activism and because my physical disability makes traveling hard, it is more likely we would arrange to have present an equally enticing Ovaries Cohort—one of the book editor's designated surrogates and/or local book contributors. An independent (or chain) bookstore can be invited to attend to sell the book—or they can host the event. Examples of events already in the planning include:

- * A community advocate in Detroit is organizing a reading to raise \$ for motherless daughters.
- * A Chicago poet is organizing a reading/open mike at her local, hip bookstore.
- * A Boston musician is organizing a punk rock event.
- * An organizer of prostitutes' rights is planning an open mike for Bombay, India.

I suggest—but don't mandate—that *Ovaries!* Open Mikes be **fund-raisers** with two groups as the beneficiaries: (1) a local girls' group of the event organizer's choosing; (2) Equality Now, an organization dedicated to ending female genital mutilation, sex trafficking and other human rights abuses against women. To facilitate the latter, I established a partnership with Equality Now (equalitynow.org), an organization some call "the women's Amnesty International." If the event raises money for the organizer's own women's cause instead of those suggested, that is fine. (Perhaps she will still consider giving a small percentage of the proceeds to Equality Now.) Whatever the arrangement, I suggest event organizers donate as much of the proceeds as they feel they can to good grrrl causes.

Because women and girls everywhere have triumphant stories to tell, included in the back of the book are **guidelines for how *any* reader *anywhere* can organize and lead an *Ovaries!* Open Mike** in her own community. Organized totally independent of me, the editor, any reader will be invited to hold an intimate (just friends) *Living Room Open Mike*. Or they can organize a bigger, more public one—which, if they want, could serve as a fund-raiser. (To lead a public one, women would first register on the *Ovaries!* website or clear it with me.) Even established organizations can host *That Takes Ovaries!* Open Mikes. It could transform a hum-drum annual fund-raiser or conference into a fun, audience-participatory event. And why not? Open mikes give folks an exhilarating chance to shout from the rooftops their stories of bravery and audacity. Women from all walks of life and with all levels of organizing experience will be coordinating and leading these events. *Maybe one of those women will be you!?*

In addition, there will be **staged dramatizations** of the stories, perhaps followed by open mikes with the audience. So far, directors from Boston, Nashville and San Francisco are planning on bringing *That Takes Ovaries!* to the stage. Any interested director or group is invited to pick and choose which scenes (stories) from the book they want to use for a play with their specific audience in their specific city. (E.g., teen stories for a teen audience, lesbian stories for a gay crowd, etc.) Directors can choose from dozens of cool, kickin' stories.

The book is published by Three Rivers Press/Random House (May 2002), and is represented by Lowenstein Associates, literary representatives of national and international bestsellers, National Book Award winners and Pulitzer Prize winners. Personally, I am a women's activist/advocate. My writing has appeared in national magazines, newspapers, anthologies and radio broadcasts. I am grateful for your time and consideration and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours,

Rivka Solomon
Editor, *That Takes Ovaries!*

Enclosed or Available Upon Request:
Book's Table of Contents (plus 1-line summary of each story)

Rivka Solomon <rivka@thattakesovaries.org>

That Takes Ovaries! Bold Females and Their Brazen Acts

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That Takes Ovaries! Open Mikes..... 000

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