

# Cradle to grave

*Ariel Gore returns to Portland for a relaunch of her zine Hip Mama and to showcase her new memoir, "The End of Eve"*

BY SUE ZALOKAR  
STAFF WRITER

Ariel Gore is as raw and honest in her writing as she is in her life, earning her the moniker of the hippest mama around. But the backstory is a long way from Ozzie and Harriet.

Gore, spurred by a resilience born of childhood trauma, dropped out of high school and traveled throughout China and Europe, most often generating revenue by smuggling goods from Hong Kong to Korea.

At 19, she was in Spain, pregnant and living in squats. Gore decided to become a mother. After making her way back to Northern California, with her baby girl in her arms, she enrolled in college, got on public assistance and starting building a life for her budding family. She would go on to create the original alternative-parenting magazine, Hip Mama.

Through the years, her truthful, politically fueled, punk rock writing style brought Gore, her mothering books and Hip Mama much deserved attention and a national readership. She was the first "real welfare" mom to confront the (then) newly seated speaker of the house, Newt Gingrich, on MTV.

Five years ago, Ariel Gore walked away from her position as editor of Hip Mama to care for her mother who was diagnosed with stage four lung cancer. Gore recounts her experience of caregiving for both her toddler son and her dying mother in her new book, "The End of Eve." The book was published by Hawthorne Books in Portland, Oregon.

Gore, who called Portland her home for about ten years, will have a dual celebration in Stumptown: her book tour and the 20 year anniversary relaunch of Hip Mama magazine. Gore will be at the new Reading Frenzy on Mississippi on Sunday, March 2 at 4 p.m. for the relaunch of Hip Mama and then at Powell's on Burnside on Monday, March 3 at 7:30 p.m. to promote her latest memoir, "The End of Eve."

**Sue Zalokar:** *You left home when you were 16 and spent more than 3 years traveling around China and Europe. What motivates a teenager to do that and how did you have the resources to go?*

**Ariel Gore:** I had been working and saving money. I had about \$3,000. I bought a ticket for \$600. I was sick of school. My friends were killing themselves. I wasn't on that many drugs, but that seemed like the only other fun thing to do. I wrote a memoir about it, "Atlas of the Aching Heart." I'd been studying Chinese since I was a little kid, so I had this interest in travel, specifically to Asia.

**S.Z.:** *Did you work? You had some Chinese language skills...*

**A.G.:** I had this fantasy of being more of an exchange student. I went to a high school with a lot of rich kids and they would do a year abroad. My parents didn't have the

resources for that or didn't allocate the resources for that. I was also a political child and really into Communism, particularly. I ended up being pretty disillusioned by the Communism of Cold War China. It was pre-Tiananmen Square, but not by much. It was a couple of years before that. I was coming out of this California thing, where you can do whatever you want, into a situation where, at least for my Chinese peers, there would be severe consequences if I did whatever I wanted to do.

I worked some. I smuggled things to Korea from Hong Kong. That was something a lot of travelers did at the time.

**S.Z.:** *What kinds of things would you smuggle?*

**A.G.:** Well, they told us we were smuggling clothing. They really needed new clothes in South Korea and they couldn't afford the tax, or something like that. I don't really think that it was drugs, but maybe it was drugs. You know, you're 16 you're invincible; it doesn't occur to you that people get the death penalty for that. That was simply how people who stayed in the youth hostels that I was staying in made a living without consciously dealing drugs. A lot of people went to Japan to do sex work. I didn't do that. Not for me.

**S.Z.:** *Did you plan to be pregnant?*

**A.G.:** No. I got pregnant when I was in Europe. I was a very bad smuggler. I ended up broke in Europe and living in squats and that's where I met my daughter's father.

It wasn't planned. Once I was pregnant, I decided to have my daughter and have that be the next chapter of my life.

**S.Z.:** *You came back to the United States and got into school and signed up for welfare.*

**A.G.:** Yeah. I had my daughter in Italy and came back when she was about 3 months old. When she was about 6 months old, I started an undergrad program at this hippie school in Northern California. I didn't have a GED or anything, so it was kind of the only place that would have me.

**S.Z.:** *Did you ever get your GED?*

**A.G.:** I did. I transferred to Mills (College), because the hippie school went bankrupt, and (Mills) made me take my GED when I was basically a

junior in college, just as a formality, I guess. At the hippie school, I was studying economics and at Mills I studied communication. I ended up going to grad school at University of California Berkeley and got a graduate degree in journalism.

**S.Z.:** *You were a welfare mom in college with an infant baby girl when you debated Newt Gingrich, the newly seated speaker of the house, on MTV.*

**A.G.:** I was "the first welfare mom to confront Newt Gingrich." That was how MTV billed it.

**S.Z.:** *What was that like?*

**A.G.:** It was horrible! I'm a writer, I couldn't talk very well at that time. I was really introverted. It seemed like a good thing, I get this free trip to D.C. and stay in a hotel. It seemed like a fine idea. I didn't really think about the fact that he is a debater, like, that's his line of work.

**S.Z.:** *What were your impressions of him then?*

**A.G.:** I think he ended up sounding like an idiot.

At 25, I guess I was still kind of naive. Some part of me still believed that people, even if they were politicians, thought about the things that you asked them and answered in a genuine way. He just had these canned answers.

See GORE, page 9

