

## Medoff Was On at Gurney's Inn Reading

Thirty-three year old Jillian Medoff comes across in person as fragile and vulnerable: so much so that you want to give her a hug and tell her everything's going to be okay – and by the way, could she please sign a copy of her critically acclaimed, Harper Collins – published book, *Hunger Point*. Already optioned for a film, and in its third printing, the novel – a tale of three generations accompanied by some serious family dysfunction – is Medoff's first effort as a fiction writer. At Gurney's Inn in Montauk last Saturday for a book signing, the author was catching a few days of "downtime," recovering from her exhaustive promotional tour.

Is Medoff just lucky her first time around? Maybe. But perhaps it's more accurate to say that the success of *Hunger Point* has at its source the author's painful steps through her own personal anguish and recovery from an eating disorder that she shares with Shelly, a central character of the novel. Obsessed with her weight, Shelly begins a downward spiral into the agony of anorexia and bulimia which eventually leads to her death. Unlike her character, however, after years of fighting the disease herself, Medoff has emerged intact. "My recovery made me realize that there's a lot of life ahead of me and that realization makes you strong," she said.

Although her surface demeanor is one of vulnerability, Medoff has ample reserves of determination, describing herself as a postmodern feminist who bears no grudge against what many feminist writers are quick to describe as our male-dominated culture. "I'm not anti-men at all," she insists. "I think that (addressing women's issues) comes from my experience of feeling like a victim for so long. A lot of what I did in my life and a lot of what I have left to do in the future

is a choice; and I've taken that realization and feel strongly about women taking charge of themselves and understanding that they're not victims. If you make choices that you're not happy with, you can change them. And I think a lot of what happens in our society is that people tend – not only women – to operate in a victim mode."

When the author shifted her vision from a negative perspective to one of strength with regard to her goals as a fiction writer, she decided, "(the novel) is what I want and this is what I have to do to get it." *Hunger Point* was the product of four years of nighttime work on her computer while Medoff worked full time as a corporate and medical writer. "The book has a pretty broad range of appeal," she said. "It's about sisters and families, but it's also about men and women and their relationships. While it is primarily a woman's book, I think that there is something in it for women of all ages to relate to." Currently, Medoff is working on

her new book, *The Sum of the Parts*. Set in the mid-eighties, the "arc of the book is that a marketing manager of a breast implant company becomes responsible for his own redemption when he goes from seeing women as valuable only for their body parts to accepting the female gender as valuable in itself, as an equal."

The author confided that she dreams one day of "buying a house in the Hamptons – it's so beautiful out here." Judging by her critical commendations and popularity among readers, this young writer may soon be consulting an East End realtor to fulfill that dream.

—Amy Patton

*Harper Collins has designated a website on the internet for Hunger Point, (www.hungerpoint.com) where visitors can share their thoughts about the novel with other readers, email the author, or order a copy of the book electronically.*