



*What is Dying  
to be Born?*

*A compilation of  
women's wisdom,  
vision and  
imagination*

Another world is not only possible, she is on her way.  
On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.

- Arundhati Roy



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# introduction

*This book was dying to be born.*

The idea for this book came to me on New Year's Eve 2009. I was immersed in reading the responses to The Edge Annual Question and a few days earlier Seth Godin had just released an ebook entitled *What Matters Now*. I found myself wondering how some of the women I admire and look to for leadership would respond if they had been asked these questions.

The thought popped into my head: Why don't I ask them my burning question - what is dying to be born?

Who, me? Are you kidding? I'm no Seth Godin - why would anyone answer my question?

But the question wouldn't leave me alone. It had first come up in a gathering of women at a workshop in Vancouver when the facilitator asked us why we were there. I commented that I had been feeling drawn to these gatherings of great women because something is dying to be born through us. Then Kelly Diels, one of the women I met that weekend, picked up on the idea and wrote eloquently about it. That piece of writing now opens the book.

So pretending to be Elizabeth Gilbert overcome by her muse, I composed an email explaining my idea and asking my question and I sent it to every amazing, wise, wonderful woman I could think of. The only way I found the courage to hit the send button was by being fully prepared to receive no replies. For the idea to be a complete flop.

To my complete amazement and delight they responded. I mean, they *responded*.

The result is this juicy, wise, poetic, thoughtful, heart-felt, smart, crazy, luscious book.

A labour of love for all involved, I am deeply appreciative to all the women who gave their gifts to make it happen. Each piece is a treasure and together they are a rhapsody.

I completely fell in love with this book as I put it together over the last couple of months. I hope you do, too.

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Lianne  
Raymond

*Lianne Raymond is a personal coach, high school teacher and yogini.  
You can find her on Twitter @Lianne\_R*

*Something is dying to be born.*

It seems such a female thing to say: the flesh poetry of experience. A secret language traded between intimates of the violence of birth and glory of delivery. The wrenching of asunder and the joy of embrace. A story beaten in the pulse of mundane responsibility and cosmic love. Goddesses and bitches and sisters and women. We know this story. **It is the story of generation.**

It is the story of Kali, goddess of destruction, eater of time, protectress and creatrix.

It is the story of Eve. Of Lilith. Of my feminist friend, Ronna Detrick, who walked away from a church and a marriage but knows with her body, her mind and her faith that her leavings *have led to profound findings.*

It is the story of money. Of power. Of God. *He who giveth, taketh away.*

It is the story of sex and passion and love, all of which can destroy lives and create them. Women throw themselves on the pyre of love and of loss and cry, *burn me up.*

It is the story of Bertha, the seemingly mad wife in Jane Eyre who burns down Thornfield, and of the haiku necessity of ember, flame, and ash:

*barn's burnt down...now i can see the moon -  
basho*

It is the story of cold, clear winter moons and of truths washed clean by icy, white light. It is the story of Foucault and forgiveness, of brooms and brushed floors, and revolution.

Revolution: 360 degrees: all the way around.  
Return. Circles. Cycles. Seasons.

It is the story of winter and of spring, too. Of years, too, for as Zora Neale Hurston insists, there are years that ask questions and years that answer. Seasons, years, questions, loss, faith, creation, dancing with answers and answering with dance: **these are the stories of generations.**

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Kelly  
Diels

*[Kelly Diels](#) is a writer.*

stories

# world-healers

All traditional cultures recognize certain people as natural-born mystical healers (shamans, medicine men, pick your label). Modern Western culture has no category for such people. But that doesn't mean they aren't here. Right now, everywhere, ordinary people born to the archetype of the shaman are feeling compelled to begin finding one another and fulfilling their inborn purpose.

The great challenge of the 21st century is to wage peace on a globe full of humans while repairing the unintended damage we've inflicted on ourselves, other beings, and the earth. We need modern shamans to channel ancient "technologies of magic" like empathy, creativity, art, and spiritual interconnection, through "magical technologies" like medicine, computers, and satellites. That marriage of ancient and cutting-edge genius can heal hearts, minds, beasts, plants, ecosystems—almost anything.

If you feel something stirring in your heart at the thought that you may be shaman-born, pay attention. This is not an accident. Some as-yet unexplained force is calling you to join in a healing of unprecedented scope. And though that healing will, of course, follow the laws of science, doing it will feel like pure magic.



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Martha  
Beck

*Martha Beck, Ph.D., is a coach, writer, and columnist for O, the Oprah Magazine.  
Her most recent book is [Steering by Starlight](#).*

# homo sentien

What's dying to be born? Homo sapiens. Dying to be born into the next iteration—the *homo sentien*, perhaps. Homo sapiens *knows*, but look where that's got us. Brains without a heart. Homo sentiens will have bridged the brain-heart gap and “*compassion-- feeling with*” will be their modus operandi.

The *homo sentiens* will usher in economies of equity, politics of collaboration, triple-bottom line businesses. They will rise up from the ashes of fallen institutions and imploded religions, bringing with them new myths and stories that heal. They will honor art and see that every day is a canvas for every living being. They will be notorious for displays of adoration and awe, famous for crying at the drop of a hat—male and female both—and they will declare war obsolete once and for all.

Homo sentiens will revere the young and the aged. They will create communities where extraordinary education is common, where people learn many languages, where food and care and support are everywhere to be found. They will have transcended religions and committed themselves to the common good with the greatest of faith. Children will be encouraged to make music, make art, and make culture. They will know their value from an early age as they will see this value reflected in every community's choices.

Homo sentiens will understand birdsongs, walk with lions, listen to trees. They will be aware of their oneness with all creatures and they will not distinguish between sacred and secular. All things will be holy in the eyes of these beings who are our descendants. I will come back one day as a homo sentien and will cry for joy. Alleluia! We see the light!

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Jan  
Phillips

*Jan Phillips is the author of The Art of Original Thinking - The Making of a Thought Leader and several other books.*

# listening



Leah  
Piken-Kolidas

*Leah Piken Kolidas is a mixed-media artist living near Boston, MA with her husband and their four cats. Her work can be viewed at [Blue Tree Art Gallery](#).*

# health care

Let's get something straight for once and for all: Disease care is not health care. As Dean Ornish, M.D., recently argued to the U.S. Senate, we have a system of disease care. No matter what kind of reform we get, it is still going to be disease care. Actual health care is up to you.

The World Health Organization defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” This definition has not changed in 60 years. Logically, then, healthcare should care for our holistic well-being. But when was the last time your insurance company paid for something that made you happy? With few exceptions, our so-called healthcare system only throws money at what is already killing or disabling you.

Even what the system calls prevention is not health-promoting. Cancer screening doesn't prevent cancer, it just finds it. Cholesterol tests don't prevent heart disease, they just identify risk. Asking your patients if they are depressed doesn't prevent suffering, it just helps you know who to write the prescriptions for.

None of this creates health.

There are, of course, things you can do that both create well-being and prevent cancer, cardiovascular disease, and depression. You can exercise, meditate, and eat a plant-based diet. Be active in your community. Even getting a good night's sleep may ward off loneliness, diabetes, and the flu. We just don't have a system that wants to—or knows how to—pay for this kind of “medicine.” There is no reimbursement code for “filled with joy” or “gave a sense of purpose in life.” It's up to you to create a life that sustains you physically, mentally, and socially. Yes, do everything you know you should do to take care of your health. Then give yourself permission to do the thing that makes your heart sing, or that quiets the suffering in your mind. Remember to look at something green and living, or pet something soft and furry. Stay connected to nature, and to others. Feed your spirit with gratitude, compassion, creativity, and the satisfaction of hard work. This is what real health care reform looks like, and for now, it's up to you.

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Kelly  
McGonigal

*Kelly McGonigal, PhD, is a health psychologist at Stanford University and the author of [Yoga for Pain Relief](#). She blogs at [Psychology Today](#).*

# courage

Have you ever wondered who's behind that little voice in your head that tells you, "you're in this by yourself, one person doesn't make a difference, so why even try?"

His name is Fear. Fear plays the role of antagonist in the story of your life. You must rid yourself of him using all necessary means.

We're often impressed by those who appear to be fearless. The people who fly to the moon. Chase tornadoes. Enter dangerous war zones. Skydive. Speak in front of thousands of people. Stand up to cancer. Raise money and adopt a child that isn't their flesh and blood.

So, why are we so inspired by them?

Because deep down, we are them. We all share the same characteristics.

We're all divinely human.

Until Fear is gone, (and realize he may never completely leave) make the decision to be courageous. The world needs your story in order to be complete.



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Anne  
Jackson

*Anne Jackson blogs, tweets, and writes books. Her most recent work, [Permission To Speak Freely: Essays and Art on Fear, Confession and Grace](#), will be available in August.*

# authenticity

## The Audacity of Authenticity

Authenticity is the daily practice of letting go of who we think we're supposed to be, and embracing who we are.

Choosing authenticity means:

- Cultivating the courage to be imperfect, to set boundaries, and to allow ourselves to be vulnerable;
- Exercising the compassion that comes from knowing that we are all made of strength and struggle and connected to each other through a loving and resilient human spirit; and
- Nurturing the connection and sense of belonging that can only happen we believe that we are enough.

Authenticity demands wholehearted living and loving – even when it's hard, even when we're wrestling with the shame and fear of not being good enough, and especially when the joy is so intense that we're afraid to let ourselves feel it.

Choosing authenticity is not only an act of courage; it is an act of resistance. You're going to confuse, piss-off and terrify lots of people – including yourself. One minute you'll pray that the transformation ends and the next minute you'll pray that it never ends. But, if we want to engage in our lives from a place of worthiness, authenticity is not an option. We have to wake up every morning and say, "This is who I am, this is my story, and . . . I am enough."

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Brené  
Brown

*Brené Brown Ph.D., is a researcher, professor, and writer. Her most recent book is [The Gifts of Imperfection](#) (2010), and she blogs at [ordinarycourage.com](#)*

# ripple effect



Flora S.  
Bowley

*Flora S. Bowley is an artist whose paintings are celebrations of the present moment; chaotic, subtle, mystical and ever-changing.*

# mysticism

We are entering the era of the Divine Feminine--- the birth of a new spirituality. The effects of the male-dominated, competition and fear-based society is crumbling (although it will fight the good fight for some time to come). Our planet, our children our establishments, our organizations and our businesses depend on this evolutionary shift in order to be ushered back into prosperity and health.

The spiritual work at hand is that of the mystic. The mystic, peppered throughout history and several ancient traditions, has been subject to ridicule and sometimes exile, but that is the risk she has to be willing to take. The Jews had Kabbalah, the Muslims had Sufism and the Christians had their desert mystics, the Gnostics. They were the outsiders of their time, but only because they claimed direct access to the collective consciousness often called God. The mystic, then and now, maintains a receptivity to source that transforms them and all who they come in contact with

The word mystic derives from the Greek ---mystes, which is also related to the Greek mystikos meaning “seeing with eyes closed”. The mystic knows through feeling not just through visual or intellectual means. Just as a woman can sense her children’s needs, or someone can measure their surroundings or size up people, the mystic’s connection to wisdom is not limited to their five senses. He or she receives their clues from a higher vibration of knowing that is not necessarily proven. It is this ability to connect to the unseen that is going to help in healing the world.

We are growing to understand and embrace ONENESS. As our global economy ties us closer to a bigger world than generations before, the need to think about how our impact affects others has become more critical. We can no longer function in an ‘every man for himself’ model. The connectivity this requires is ripe in each person and ready to be harvested. The spiritual work at hand becomes integrating this truth into daily life. Remembering who we really are, nurturers of connection and fighters for Truth, is our charge. Infinite wisdom is our source.

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Laura  
BermanFortgang

*Laura Berman Fortgang, MCC, is a coach, author and a contributing editor at REDBOOK Magazine. Her latest book, [The Little Book On Meaning](#), is a finalist for a Books for A Better Life Award.*

# possibility

When I was at the height of what felt like a powerful rebellion, my friend Marvin asked me why I was railing so raucously against, well, just about everything. I explained that I felt confined by so many aspects of the mainstream culture, that some days I didn't know where to start—*everything* needed fixing, *everything* needed tearing down.

He asked me what would happen if I just imagined that the systems that were confining me didn't exist. Impossible, said I, they dictate everything that we do. But if you're constantly focusing your energy on breaking down a system, he said, you're starting off by first admitting that it's true, and that it holds power over you—this gives it its power. How about starting from a place where none of those systems exist, and we can define for ourselves what we think is important?

That conversation happened years ago—enough so that my hair, for example, has been through an entire rotation of colors, but almost every day I'm reminded of its unique possibility, especially when traversing conversations on online social networks. More than ever, we have the opportunity to reject prescribed identities and social structures, and to connect with others doing the same. The more there are of us doing it together, and as many kinds of people as we can find, the better off our brave new world will be.

Sometimes change takes anger; it often requires breaking apart social structures and barriers from the outside in. But just maybe if enough of us sidestep those barriers and use our ever-advancing social tools to create space for a future where power, tradition and hierarchy are not required elements for success.

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Deanna  
Zandt

*Deanna Zandt is a media technologist and author of [Share This! How You Will Change the World with Social Networking](#) (Berrett-Koehler, June 2010).*

# Offering

## Dying to be born

I used to worry  
about making something big  
and important  
and beautiful  
and necessary

The greatest story ever told  
or song ever sung  
or line ever drawn  
anywhere  
by anyone

So bright  
it would shine a light  
clear to the other side  
of eternity,  
and cast a shadow—  
my shadow—  
until the end of time  
or at least as long  
as the shadows  
that had walked with me  
for as long  
as I could remember walking.

To pass the time  
I lived a life  
as best I could,  
full of kisses and homework,  
faucets and game shows,  
glasses and ice cream—  
a thousand projects lost  
for every lesson learned,  
and more recidivism  
than you could shake a stick at.

Until one day  
(or was it a month?)  
when I sat down to rest  
(or was I driving?)  
and heard the smallest sound  
imaginable  
and for once  
(or was it just the first time I heard?)  
I saw that the light  
could be a sound  
and a Great Work  
as small as a salted peanut  
offered up  
in the right way.

Which is good  
because while Great Works  
of the traditional sort  
are marvels of time and space,  
life offers  
far more opportunities  
for the sharing of peanuts.

You will, of course,  
spend your own days  
as you must  
for your path is not mine  
and your gifts yours  
to do with  
as you will.

But you are everything you need to be  
right now  
and have everything we need  
right there

What that is  
or how it will change both of us  
when you do  
we cannot know.

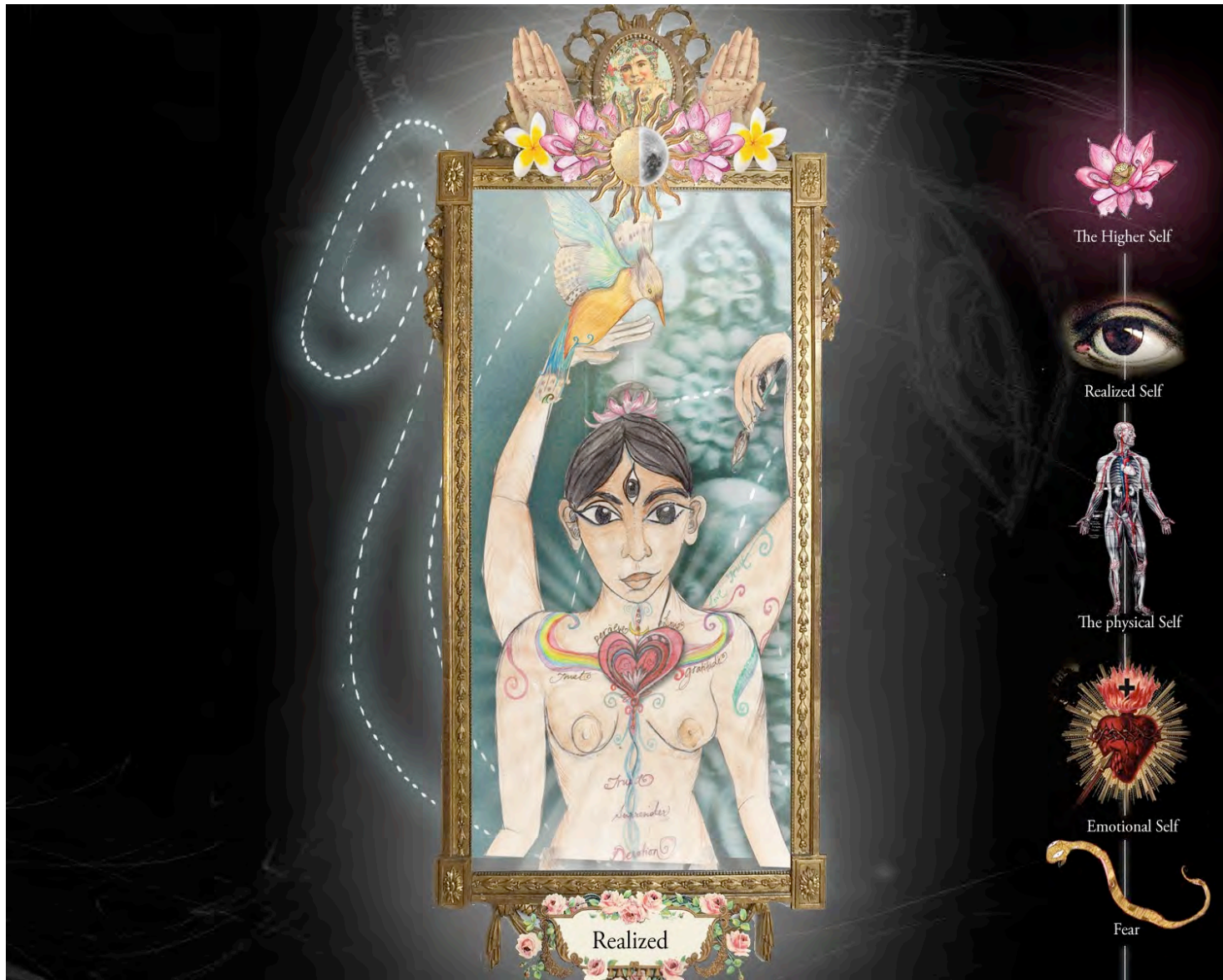
Only that it will  
and you must.

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Colleen  
Wainwright

*Colleen Wainwright is a writer-speaker-illuminator. You can find more of her poetry and writing at her website, [communicatrix](#).*

# realized self



Shilo  
ShivSuleman

*[Shilo Shiv Suleman](#) is an artist and book illustrator.*

# presence

I am vigilant. I value competence. I strive to be on top of everything. I am a woman who has climbed the corporate ladder at two Fortune 100 companies. I am a woman who had to advocate for myself through a serious illness. Vigilance was my ally. Or was it?

Even as my steel-toed boots vigilance has navigated life's land mines, it is also blinding, lacking peripheral vision, lacking in any real sight. Vigilance shows us only what we think we'll find. People can only be who we know them to be. No possibility. No surprise. The knowing of vigilance strangles.

Presence is dying to be born. A universe unknown, right here, in this moment, is dying to be born to me, to you, to all of us.

A letting go, as if in totally restful sleep, yet all the while fully awake – there is nothing to do, no one to be, no effort, senses engaged. A moment is an eternity – it's all there is.

Presence is where the world meets us – where we are. Without pushing, without striving.

Presence is where we can welcome another, with love, present for whoever they may be, opening us to a journey into new landscapes.

Vigilance has its place. Presence is dying to be born.



# compassion

An ethic and practice of **fierce and fearless compassion** is pushing to be reborn. One which would let us tear down our fears about human difference and bridge the socially constructed chasms carved into our essential humanity by the social and historical forces of economic exploitation and gender, class, race, religious and sexual oppression.

While this may sound like a worn and weary ideal whose time will never come, we have several historical models for when human beings were moved to act for justice on someone else's behalf and reaped the harvest of their own liberation - both in material terms and in the joy of being of service to one another. We only have to look to them.

Perhaps the most widely recognized incarnation of this ethic of **fierce and fearless compassion** manifested in the modern Civil Rights Movement in the U.S.

African-Americans, whites, Jews, Christians, atheists, gay men and lesbian women of all colors, rich and poor - all humans of good conscience - were compelled to answer the call put out by Martin Luther King, Ella Baker, Bayard Rustin, Gayle Jenkins and other civil rights leaders. They averred that God's law and all that is worthy in humanism demanded that the immorality of racial oppression inscribed in American law be confronted with the power of fierce and fearless compassion.

In answering, they put their livelihoods and even their lives on the line. Yet while the social and economic penalties of that compassion cost them, it bought us all so much more.

As these individuals struggled along in mass movement opposing racial injustice, they began to formulate wider understandings of human freedom and equality.

Building analogies between women's oppression and black oppression, white women who spent a generation in civil rights initiated the *second wave of feminism*.

Understanding the interconnectivity of race, class and gender oppression as it worked in their own lives, black women (straight and lesbian) worked in both civil rights and feminist movements to push for wider *human* rights.

Having grown *with* their activities in the Civil Rights movement, gay men and women began to build a critically self-defensive gay liberation movement.

The Civil Rights movement for black freedom was the "birth mother" of those modern freedom movements and that vital ethic of fierce and fearless compassion.

Where can fearless compassion start now?

With me. With you. With all of us *choosing* to be the birthmothers of a germinal compassion that we raise to full fearlessness.

For whose freedom will you put something on the line?

**For whom will you practice fierce and fearless compassion?**

For it's pushing to be born. Again.

Melvina  
Johnson Young

*Melvina Johnson Young has taught and published on race, history and social justice. She has also contributed as an opinion columnist for the Kansas City Star and is currently working on her first novel.*

# the same

Imagine our shock when Tess handed us this drawing she had done after dinner one night. A perfect Venn diagram that sprung from the head of a first grader. She had puzzled it out, circle by wobbly circle.

“Have you studied these kinds of pictures in school?” John asked.

“What do you mean?” she said. “I just drew what I saw.”

Looking at these two circles of difference, and the smaller but important place where they overlap, we realized what discovery looks like.

We lose our sheer exuberant delight in those big circles of difference, don't we? WOW! YOU'RE A FROG! I'M A TOAD! We lose the ability to talk openly about how we differ, we Frogs and Toads. YOUR SKIN LOOKS LIKE COFFEE AND MINE LOOKS LIKE BREAD! We confuse noticing difference with making a judgment.

FROGS ARE JUST DIFFERENT FROM TOADS, NOT BETTER.

We ignore that what completely rocks our world is how those Toads on the other side of the planet—or in the next cubicle--are fantastically different from us Frogs.

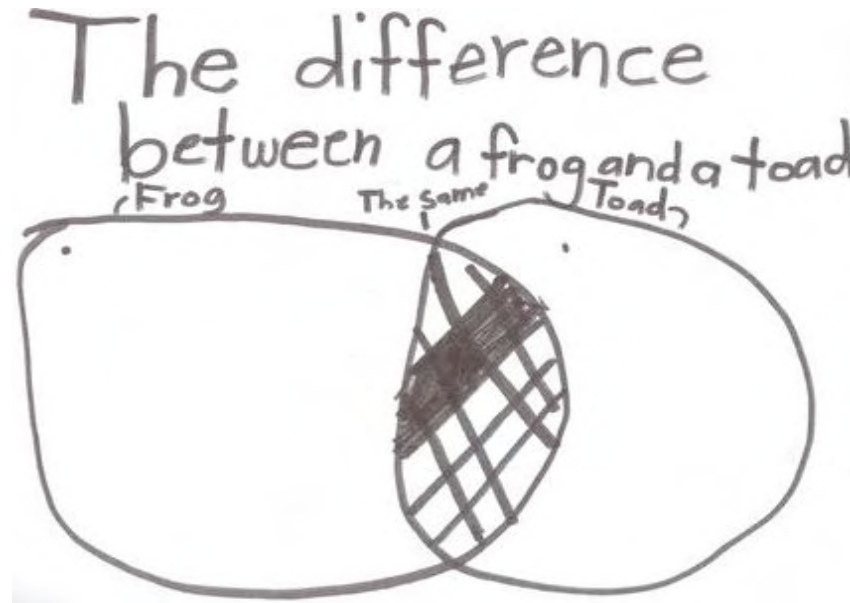
We don't speak about those differences. We pretend we don't see them. We even try to make them lose their accent, their dress code, their ability to marry.

Look at that middle part, where we are the same.

We lose that too—sometimes by denying it, sometimes by creating a gated community out of

it, sometimes by assuming it is much smaller than it actually is.

Finding and embracing that place where we are all simply, fully human ... embracing and walking into the differences without judgment, but with a child's sense of observation and wonder instead. That's what is dying to be born.



# mischief



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Melanie  
Schambach

*Melanie Schambach is a Colombian/Canadian Community Engaged Artist who challenges painting into activism by encouraging critical thinking and discourse through participatory painting.*

# believe

Maybe the camera crew is at someone else's house,  
a spotlight haloing over another's fleshy story.  
Maybe the mailman is delivering the good news  
to your neighbor, or a different city entirely,  
and you come home to a rash of catalogues,  
the second notice for a doctor's bill, a plea  
from the do-gooders for whatever you can spare.  
Maybe you haven't cleaned your kitchen floor in weeks,  
forgotten to nourish the front garden, spilled too much  
coffee in your car, weaving through traffic.  
Maybe you are 10 pounds heavier than last year.  
Maybe your skin is betraying your age.  
Maybe winter is ravaging your heart.  
Maybe you are afraid, or lonely, or furious, or wanting out  
of every commitment you entered with vigor and trust.  
Maybe you've bitten your nails down to the quick,  
chosen your meals badly, ignored the advice of those  
who know you best. Maybe you are stubborn as a toddler.

Maybe you are clumsy or foolish or hasty or reckless.  
Maybe you haven't read all the books you're supposed to.  
Maybe your handwriting is still illegible after all these years.  
Maybe you spent too much on a pair of shoes you didn't need.  
Maybe you left the window open and the rain ruined the cake.  
Maybe you've destroyed everything you wanted to save.

Still.

If anything, believe in your own strange loveliness.  
How your body, even as it stumbles, angles for light.  
The way you hold a dandelion with such  
yearning and tenderness,  
the whole world stops spinning.

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Maya  
Stein

*Maya Stein is a writer and owns a small catering business. She has self-published three collections of poetry and personal essays.*

# human values

There is a re-birth that needs to happen as we go into the future. And that re-birth is one of human values.

The shift away from human values and towards something that is more akin to an industrial way of thinking began pre-Industrial Revolution. The shift occurred as science gained popularity over faith. Religion had been the dominating answer to all that is true, but religious institutions, run by men, had let people down. Corruption and exploitation in the name of their God had led to a decline in trust. So when science showed up with logic and indisputable fairness, people embraced it.

Science was not without its biases, though, as what is researched and what questions are asked is still determined by the people who study it. Posing a question that cannot be scientifically proven, such as "What is love?", becomes problematic. In this way, under science, softer more feminine values lose value.

The Industrial Revolution took this further. Profits and mass distribution became worthier pursuits than love, family, knowledge and beauty. The value of human beings declined as efficiency was needed for growth.

Machines replaced human tasks. People worked in dangerous conditions for pennies a day in order to keep their jobs. It took unionizing and government regulations to slow human exploitation, but these negotiations involved having to balance the need for profit with that of human lives and livelihoods.

Over time, the attitude of profit over people became more taken for granted and as industry evolved and grew, most believed the mantra that private business was the bastion of our freedom and the core to our actualization as human beings. Who cares if people die, if the planet suffers and if the very world we operate in will disappear as long as corporations turn a profit in the next quarter and the DOW continues to rise? Even a major economic upheaval like the housing market crash didn't deter this attitude. It was human greed, not the free market. Don't regulate! That's Communism!

The fact is that humans DO run industry. And in honoring the human values of compassion, love, family, knowledge and beauty, we can stop the unfortunate decline into human worthlessness.

**We need a return to human values.**

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Tara  
Hunt

*Tara Hunt* is a speaker and a writer. Her first book is [The Whuffie Factor](#) and she is currently working on her second book.

# sustainability

What is human and natural is an awareness of the long-term interconnectedness of what you do, whom you interact with, and the plants and animals you come into contact with along the way. Yet, the full comprehension of this truth is still dying to be born for many people.

Materialism has long tapped into our greatest human insecurities and we are buying on mass scale to feed a beast that will never be sated. Frantic 24/7 ties to technology and “urgent” messages leave our brains no space to ponder, reflect and connect with our closest loved ones, let alone our local or global communities.

But, what is that shift that occurs when a baby is born or a pet passes away? Those are brick wall life experiences that stop us in our tracks. We are forced to step back and think again about what really matters. So now - a flailing economy, overwhelming public health issues and serious environmental problems have swirled into a perfect storm. It is the twenty-first century’s brick wall.

How we got here is pretty clear, but how we get out is the ultimate – but extremely rewarding - challenge. Will we choose to accept responsibility and live and work with more intention? Will we make decisions that keep in mind the needs of future generations as well as our own: air to breathe, water to drink and supportive communities?

We’ve lost our way by focusing on short-term personal gain, which only leaves us empty and defeated. A sustainable perspective is the key to countering much that ails us. Through that lens, we will always see the long-term interconnectedness of the decisions we each make. Why waste any more time on the alternative?

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Andrea  
Learned

*Andrea Learned* is a Gender, Consumer Behavior & Sustainability Expert.

# abandon

Raven, teach me to ride the winds of change

Perch where the wind comes at you full force.

Let it blow you apart till your feathers fly off and  
you look like hell.

Then abandon yourself.

The wind is not your enemy.

Nothing in life is.

Go where wind takes you

higher lower

backwards

The wind to carry you forward will find you  
when you are ready.

When you can bear it.



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Margaret  
Wheatley

*Margaret Wheatley is an organizational consultant and speaker. She founded [The Berkana Institute](#) and has written numerous books including [Leadership and the New Science](#) and [Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future](#).*

# transparency

Race may be a pigment of our imagination, but in conversations that offend people, you get stuck. First, you begin to devalue what was said and then you avoid any offenders claiming they are “racist”. But, who was the separatist—them or you?

In 2009, I taught my first racism course at a diverse business college in NYC. Around midterms, in a ten-page document, a white, male student claimed that I said “all white people should be killed,” adding that I—a black, female, Associate Professor—insisted the course be required as “reparations” for past racial injustices.

Things escalated into six weeks of brazen discontent. He colluded with other students—white and black—who had grown “tired” of talking about race/racism following Obama’s election. Then a belligerent outburst led to a mediation with the Omsbud the day before classes ended.

I heard him out—listening without interruption to his concerns. By meeting’s end, he was still threatening to sue. Shaken, I rushed to catch a cab to a rehearsal. One driver--locking his doors and cracking his window--tried to refuse my fare to Soho at three in the afternoon. This stayed under my skin.

During the final class, I could barely speak without crying. I shared, not about the student, but about the taxicab driver’s crooked admission when I forced myself to ask, “You weren’t going to pick me up because I was black, were you?” I shared that I left a tip for his honesty.

To my surprise, the student raised his hand to share. He offered, “I think everyone should have the opportunity to face their oppressor and if they don’t, I’d apologize to them. Everyone should have that opportunity.”

In that moment, we were eye to eye with the remarkable oneness of humanity without changing a thing. The transparency of race was available and any conversation about bigotry, prejudice, or discrimination seemed a superstition of the past like the earth being flat.

Get rid of racism and we get rid of the next opportunity to agree to be offended and stay connected. Racism can be a resource for being courageous and compassionate, but it begins with transparency.

Kyra D.  
Gaunt

*Kyra D. Gaunt, Ph.D. voices "the unspoken" through song, scholarship and social media; she is a singer-songwriter, prize-winning author of [The Games Black Girls Play: Learning the Ropes from Double-Dutch to Hip-Hop](#), and a 2009 Long Beach TED Fellow (Twitter: @kyraocity)*

# Oneness

Today by the creek I pretend I'm the Dalai Lama. I don't know enough to get it wrong. The robes, white and golden. The smile, serene, the walk like an animal I've never met, feline, perhaps, Persian, with a hint of bobcat.

I breathe myself in, exotic scents of Tibetan cologne. My breath comes from the belly, sanctifies plants that sway on the out-breath, the spring seeds released by my presence. My imagined tatami matt-like sandals lined in crisp black cotton tread lightly. People smile, they Namaste, they bow with tears in their eyes in tribute to the soul inside them, quivering to spill up and out

As Dalai Lama I eat lightly. I forego coffee, share my morning oatmeal, split my chocolate Enviro-Mint Bug Bite with Rose at Chico Natural foods. I bestow smile after smile, hands raised in blessing, and I feel the sun bless my eyelids, the frog bless my ears, a twang on the base fiddle, a strum on a steel guitar. I notice small beetles spinning as they mate, tail ends merged, pulling one another along backwards in bug ecstasy and as the Lama, celibate as a leaf, myself, I smile at them.

One water strider jots back and forth wondering, no doubt, is it she? Is it really she? Our lovely, kind, neutral, enlightened Dalai Lama? It's the same question the Kingfisher asks, and other birds, I can hear it in their calls, Is it he? Is it he? Is it she? Is it he? She she she she she chi chi chi she she?.....

I bow my head in gratitude toward the pill bug in my leg's shadow. I love it unconditionally. I love being Dalai Lama. I can't wait for the night with Dalai Lama dreams. On my knee one of those mini firefly looking bugs with orange eyes and black wings is stretching in a bug yoga of oblation, wings opening in sun salutation as if in honor of my presence, antennae atwirl. As Dalai Lama I am one with it.

And, today, just today, as Dalai Lama, I declare, in spite of everything, in spite of villages in flames and warring in the streets, I declare it, I am Dalai Lama, today, here by the creek, and all is well.

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Susan  
Wooldridge

*Susan Wooldridge is a poet and a writer and she presents writing and creativity workshops around the U.S. She has published two books on unleashing creativity: [poemcrazy](#) and [Foolsgold](#).*

# good

When I was growing up, no one wanted to be good. It wasn't cool or fun. It wasn't radical or rebellious. It was boring and passé; average and ordinary. Downright, schoolmarm-ish.

Now, thankfully, good is making a comeback — helped perhaps by the endless scandals — financial, political, marital — that shook our economy, our institutions, and our beliefs. And, the Good that is re-surging is the good of being morally admirable: of people leaving Wall Street jobs and bonuses to build schools in Tanzania; of startups that help enable ordinary citizens to bring about extraordinary social change; of businesses doing well by doing good; or of raising incredible amounts — during the worst economic time — to help a country devastated by an earthquake.

But, good is still in its infancy. It hasn't grown up to reach everyone yet. We can help. We can take those extra minutes to help a child; put a few more dollars into the donation can; volunteer a few more minutes for a cause. And, we can encourage our friends, our families and our professional colleagues to join us and be good. Good is dying to multiply and infect us all. Let's help her. It's good to be good.

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Anne  
MaiBertelsen

*Anne Mai Bertelsen is a Mother, Gardener, Aspiring Do-Gooder. She is the Founder and President of [MAi Strategies](#) and Principal at [CauseShift](#).*

# connection

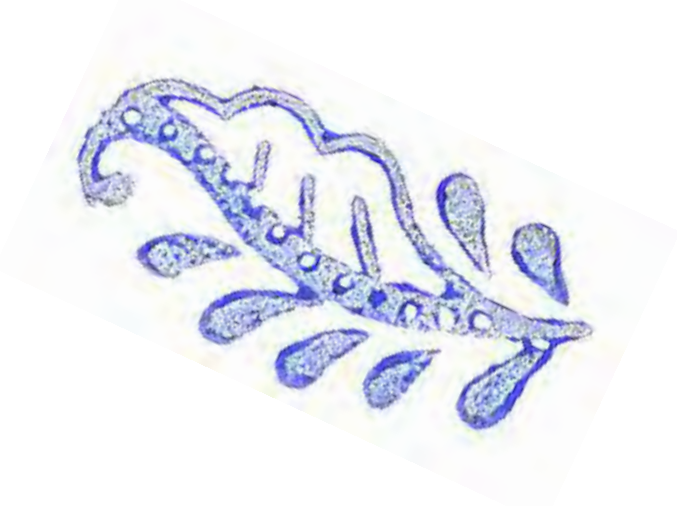
Women understand, on a visceral level, that life is change and that we are dependent on one another. We cannot remain in one role throughout our lives-- we get stuck. We need to allow ourselves and each other the freedom to change and hopefully, to grow from our experience.

We need to be truly open-hearted, to approach the world, and our own lives with courage-- to not hold on to the familiar and the the safe. Every single moment is a possibility to open your heart to another person, to open your heart to your life.

Women understand that life is change and interconnectedness, because we experience so much of this in our bodies-- puberty, menstruation, giving birth, putting the needs of another human being before one's own. The experience of mothering feels like the baby's need IS one's own. No separation.

Mothering gives us the great lesson of interconnectedness-- the lesson the world refuses to learn at it's peril. We are connected to each other and to the earth. This is the wisdom of the mothers. Mother--mater--matter

And it is a wisdom that has helped us thrive as a species, but one whose message we can no longer contain in the private realm of home and family. This wisdom must be brought to the public realm-- before it is too late.



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Pamela  
TannerBoll

*Pamela Tanner Boll is an artist, writer, filmmaker, activist and mother of three sons. She directed the film [Who Does She Think She Is?](#) She also co-executive produced the Academy Award winning film, [Born into Brothels: The Kids of Calcutta's Red Light District.](#)*

# re-configuration



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Cheryl  
Sorg

*Cheryl Sorg is an artist. She is currently working on a project, [Under No One's Thumb](#), to help abolish the global sex trade.*

# conversation

We need the courage and patience to fill the deadly silence brought on by words like terrorist, hetero-normative, ghetto, white privilege, gay lifestyle, illegal worker.

Let's begin to fill that dead zone with words like "from my perspective" and "why do you believe that?" And then let's meet those words with what the academics like to call active listening, but what is really no more than simply really listening to another person's point of view.

But as we will fill that cold place with our new words, we must stand there rooted in the promise that we will stay at it until we sort this through and have begun to understand what "others" are saying to us. By no means are we required, or even urged to push for some sort of new found agreement. Simply understanding, though there is nothing simple about understanding, will be victory enough. Besides, I may never be able to agree with you but I sure would like to understand you.

Let's also remember to take baby steps. This may not be the time for finding the right words to string together to form world peace. This may just be the time to get used to having conversations across the fault lines that divide us. And let's be gentle with ourselves and each other.

We're new at this. We're bound to make mistakes. There's a good chance that not all our words will be properly polished. We may also find that the words we speak may not be the words that are heard. And, inevitably there will be times the words will hurt.

That's when we need to face the speaker and ask, is that what you meant? Why does my generation, gender, race, class, geography or different opinion make you want to use hurtful words. Or was it an accident? Did you misspeak? Did I mishear? It won't be easy, but if we stick with it, perhaps we can create a movement where we replace the dueling monologues with conversations that fill the dead space with the warmth of human interaction.

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Dori J.  
Maynard

*Dori J. Maynard is the president of the [Robert C. Maynard Institute for Journalism Education](#) where she works to help create a multi-cultural multimedia that accurately and fairly portrays all segments of our society.*

# WORK

Millions of people gritted their teeth through the economic meltdown of 2009. Our global economic corporate structure was blasted to hell. Institutions fell. Hopes crashed. Businesses folded.

Good.

Our agony was the final straw for our collective consciousness. We now know that no job is secure in any industry. Any successful small business can fail with a hiccup in the market. No institution has all the answers. And it is up to each of us – united by honesty, creativity and compassion – to create a new world of work that serves us all.

Now we can interpret work as it really is --- the best personal development tool on the planet. And our greatest chance at solving the world's problems.

When each of us takes personal responsibility to do work that is deeply meaningful and creative, we birth new markets. We cross social, racial and economic boundaries. We question established practices like sweatshops and predatory lending. We simplify and streamline. We look for lessons from all corners of the world, not the one being sold from the corner office of a shiny building on Madison Avenue.

As we look back on the history of our planet, we see examples of work as love, work as art, work as harmony with the pulse of the earth.

We get to decide how work will look in this century.

Good.

# genius heart

## **Ruthless compassion.**

A spirituality that makes way for rage.

A body politic that can forgive.

A generous commerce.

A unified diversity.

It's feminine-fire-fuelled. It's round like eggs. It's spine roots back to the beginning.

A tree will conspire to speed the death of it's own branches as symptoms of disease surface. It's how some of us vote, or yell on behalf of the silenced. It's how we call crazy on its shit, and declare with hollers, and touch, and laughter that, *The heart is sane!*

The beauty of our DNA is dying to be born: an acceptance of the order of chaos; the reverence of High Priestesses in the grocery store; the force of incredibly tender men; the critical necessity of senses that transcend technology.

We can speed the dying (it can hurt.) Karate-chop greed. Puncture silicon. Carve up pretense and principles too small for how big we really are. Let the heart make the way -- she will anyhow, by plow or by whisper, by angst or by grace.

## **The genius heart is being born.**

She loves fiercely, wholly, and now.

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Danielle  
LaPorte

*Danielle LaPorte is the creator of [WhiteHotTruth.com](http://WhiteHotTruth.com)... because self realization rocks. An inspirational speaker and strategist, she helps entrepreneurs light up their career with her signature Fire Starter Sessions. You can find her on Twitter [@daniellelaporte](https://twitter.com/daniellelaporte)*

# renewal



While accompanying restoration ecologists on prescribed prairie burns, I am drawn to the ephemeral quality of a single moment when life and death do not seem opposed to each other, but are parts of a single process to be accepted as a whole.

Controlled burns imitate naturally occurring fires by removing accumulated dead vegetation and releasing seeds from dormancy. By opening the woodlands to more sunlight, the fires prepare the soil for new spring growth, and the cycle of renewal continues.

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Jane  
Fulton Alt

*Jane Fulton Alt is an award-winning fine art photographer.*

# deep feminine

As Vancouver emerges out of the 2010 Winter Olympics, I am filled with many emotions. “Citius, Altius, Fortius” the Olympic motto proclaims. “Faster, Higher, Stronger.” And what a spectacle it was – a magnificent and thrilling display of Yang energy, spilling into the streets of Vancouver with unbridled celebration and joy.

What now? A natural progression would have the pendulum swing in the direction of Yin. If we could cherish the cyclical rhythm of life, we might welcome the “Slower, Deeper, Gentler” qualities of the archetypal feminine that holds the world in balance.

Following the adrenalin rush of speed, we would honour the desire to slow down and sit by the window, breathing deeply and savouring the freedom simply to be alive in each passing moment. Having scaled the Olympian heights, we might sink back onto the ground and lay there awhile, feeling the earth’s heartbeat and the reality of all that nourishes and sustains us. Having demonstrated our strength, we would cherish the gentleness and vulnerability in ourselves and others that make us human.

After focusing long and hard on outer goals, we might turn our eye of longing inward to illuminate the dark glow of our own unknown depths. The thinking heart and the feeling mind. The dancing soul and the yearning body. Poetry and passion in our everyday lives. A grounded, reality-based, earth-loving honesty, and a wise and humble sense of who we are.

The Olympics are over and the streets are quiet again. Vancouver is awash with cherry blossoms, and the world is made new. The rhythm of life continues. The Deep Feminine is dying to be born.



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Marlene  
Schiwy

*Marlene Schiwy, Ph.D., is a writer, university instructor, workshop leader, and Jungian counsellor. Author of [A Voice of Her Own](#) and [Simple Days](#), she is currently working on a new book that explores the archetype of the Dark Feminine in women and men.*

# credits

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The future of the world depends on women.

- Margaret Wheatley

