

# Self-Empowerment

Winter 2017/2018

The newsletter dedicated to nurturing personal development

Vol. 25, Number 2

*Are you ready for change, growth, and healing? I am excited to share this journey with you!*

## 25 Years of the Self-Empowerment newsletter

Greetings, Friends!

I first began publishing the Self-Empowerment newsletter 25 years ago. I have been blessed with my awesome editor, Mike Tunney, who, for the past 25 years, has helped me fine-tune and sometimes unscramble, my early drafts of each issue. That team-work has helped to make the 25 years zoom by with joy and inspiration, rather than a grueling lonesome endeavor.

Some of you have been on this ride with me since the beginning, while others have connected at different points along the way, giving me a sense of connection with many of you. Receiving positive feedback has also greased the wheels, keeping me motivated to continue this publication no matter how busy I was with other commitments in my life.

There have been changes in my life including my ordination as an Interfaith Minister, remarriage, retirement, treatment for cancer, and our moves from Philadelphia, PA to NJ and to Florida.

I have felt tempted to retire from publishing this newsletter so that I could focus on my changing needs. The current chapter of my life calls for more freedom, relaxation, creativity, social action, and self-care. Plus I have been working on writing a book that is part memoir and part spiritual teaching (of course). But since I'm not ready to stop yet, I have decided to make a compromise between the old schedule & format, and my desire to continue it in a form that meets my needs.

While I have not yet established exactly what that will look like, I can tell you that starting now

there are, and probably will continue to be, some more ch-ch-ch-changes. Oh, boy! :-)

Thank you for your presence. I continue to welcome your feedback. Feel free to email me at [Jilleroni@juno.com](mailto:Jilleroni@juno.com).

Wishing you peace and blessings.  
Your fellow traveler,

*Rev. Jill*

## Me & Politics

I sure picked a wild time to get involved in politics! Up until the 2016 presidential election I basically just exercised my right to vote. But many big issues began to grab my attention, screaming for some kind of action from me. I began to read the flood of news stories, trying to navigate my way through the barrage of daily upheavals with efforts to maintain peace of mind, clarity, and compassion.

I met with others who shared my values of personal freedom, civil rights, and other liberal and progressive positions. I have endeavored to stay positive, focusing more on what values I support, rather than on any negative bashing of "the other side of the aisle."

Willing to speak up, I wrote the following editorial. It was published in our local newspaper, the Ocala Star Banner on May 21, 2017:

### Seeking Common Ground

by Rev. Jill Carel

As a citizen, I have deep concerns about the future of our democracy. In the past I was relatively satisfied by just voting in every election, accepting the fact that sometimes my favored candidate won and other times lost. While I had some opinions, I pretty much kept them to myself. Over the past 45 years of casting my vote, the pendulum has swung

between the two main political parties, giving each side of the aisle opportunities to follow their agenda for governing. I have seen the “spin” from both parties to make their side seem like the good guys and portray the other side as bad, reckless, ill-informed, or whatever angle they chose to employ in their public relations remarks. I have chosen to refrain from being an echo of negative campaign rhetoric. I seek the common ground from which we can support the democratic republic to which we have pledged allegiance.

Up until the 2016 election I generally trusted that the laws of our land and our process of elections, while imperfect, were aimed at the security and safety of its citizens. I am not so confident now. I am not alone in believing that there was Russian interference in our 2016 election process. I believe that most citizens would agree that the safety and integrity of our election process is a critical issue that needs to be handled appropriately.

My many years of voting had given me a trust in the separation of powers between the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches of government that assured me that wrongs would eventually be righted by a government that has been the beacon of democracy to the world. But something has gone wrong. Our president has fired the director of the FBI without a reasonable process of transparency in the midst of the investigation of the 2016 election, putting himself in deeper suspicion of misconduct. Judges have been denounced and the established media is being called the enemy and fake news. A shifting narrative has polarized the public into warring camps of Democrats versus Republicans, publishing left-leaning and right-leaning news and editorials.

Despite differences of political opinions, I love my neighbors, no matter which, if any, political party they align. The truth is not owned by any one particular political party,

and we must strive to work together for the common good. A bipartisan approach is needed to bring us together so that we can get to the bottom of any threats to our mutual freedom or civil rights.

I have recently been contacting my members of Congress for the first time in my life to voice my positions and concerns about several important issues, as there are so many issues that touch my own life as well as the lives of millions. I am not engaging in an ideological debate. I am endeavoring to do two things: voice my stand on issues to my elected representatives and share my overarching desire for the bipartisan common ground to work together for the greatest good we can aim for. I am participating in and contributing to the best of the American Way with a desire to respect the many points of view that make the United States as united as possible.

With my newly developed political participation, I am advocating for freedom and safety for all of us. I am speaking up for freedom of the press, human rights, a good healthcare system, environmental protections, religious freedom, and other supports of our economy and safety. I am doing this voluntarily. I am not paid by anyone to voice my political views.

Our democracy is currently at risk, from outside forces as well as from divisiveness within. You may not agree with my individual political views, but let’s agree that the special prosecutor who has been secured can lead an investigation to get to the truth about outside forces of Russian interference. Let us work together the best we can on the common ground of love of our country and neighbors.

*We can handle the truth, right?!*

*– Rev. Jill Carel, an Interfaith Minister, is an active member of two Indivisible groups: Common Cents Ocala and Ocala Concerned Citizens.*

I have chosen to refrain from being an echo of negative campaign rhetoric. I seek the common ground from which we can support the democratic republic to which we have pledged allegiance.

## Seeking Common Ground

Seeking common ground and being open to truth is not just a spiritual journey. It can also be a political journey. At the time that I wrote that editorial, I wanted to address my concern about the integrity of the 2016 presidential election, as well as to clearly express my need to stay connected with others despite our differing political stances. So far, I am still enjoying friendly relations with my neighbors who support the party of the other side of the aisle.

I truly believe that our fundamental needs for safety, security, health care, and a stable economy are similar. It is the strategies we use for meeting our needs that are so very different. It is a difficult conversation to have, as there are so many complex issues involved. Depending on one's sources of facts, the amount of "spin" on any communication of news can put us on very different playing fields.

Since the publication of my editorial, I have been aware of such a great number of issues that I care about, that I have *sometimes* lost my peace of mind and questioned my motivation to continue to participate in the political scene. Ahhh! – Red Flag Time – That is the time to bring spiritual practices back into play. When I fall into a state of overwhelm, it is a temporary loss of my right mind. I know that my right mind is grounded in peace, compassion, and love. Surely I can remember to practice what I preach.

Can I trust Life to unfold in an orderly and intelligent way? Yes, even if I don't fully understand the how and when.

Is it up to me to attempt to fix all the "wrongs" I perceive? No! I do not have all the facts or data to make an impartial judgment. Additionally, I do not have the time or energy to respond to my growing list of concerns.

*My current list of concerns:*

*Getting "Big Money" Out of Politics, Civil Rights, Women's Rights, LGBTQ Rights, Climate Change, Consumer Protection, Legalizing / De-criminalizing Cannabis (Marijuana), Election Process Security, the Electoral College, the Environment, Foreign Government Hacking / Interference, Free Speech, Free Press, Gerrymandering, Gun Control, Healthcare*

*Reform, Immigration & DACA, Mass Incarceration & Prison Reform, Mental Health Services, Minimum Wage, Net Neutrality, Nuclear Threats, Public Education, Sabotage & Dismantling of Hard-won Laws & Regulations, Sexual Abuse, Taxation & Budget, Unbridled Partisanship in Congress, Unqualified Representatives in power, and Voter Suppression.*

So, what is my relationship with the current events of the day? I cannot maintain my health and sanity if I try to address each and every concern of which I become aware. Instead, it is my job to nourish my body, mind, and spirit while contributing to the world I see by whatever *right action* I am inspired to take. Accessing my Inner Wisdom is my guidance system. I am most effective when I maintain a healthy balance while taking action in any endeavor, including through political activities that reflect my cherished values of freedom, equality, and safety.

In addition to my published editorial, I have participated in a few sign-carrying demonstrations, called the offices of my Senators and Congressman, mailed letters to members of Congress, sent postcards to registered voters across the country encouraging them to vote, joined political and race relations groups, and spent more time than I ever would have imagined keeping abreast of political developments. I try to limit the amount of time and energy I devote to it all, making every effort to stay positive, enthusiastic, hopeful, and compassionate.

## Sexual Harassment and Sexual Abuse

Recently there have been sexual harassment and sexual abuse scandals that have motivated an avalanche of #MeToo postings on social media, mostly of women sharing a statement of fact that they, too, have had personal experiences of such harassment or abuse. Whether or not they disclose any details of what happened to them, they are feeling emboldened and empowered to speak out in some form. Most have been pressured into silence for so long that this release, in any form, is cathartic.

"It's not always easy to know what to say when someone tells you they've experienced sexual assault or harassment, especially if that person is a

friend or loved one," says Sara McGovern, a spokesperson for the [Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network \(RAINN\)](#). If you have experienced sexual violence and are in need of crisis support, call the [RAINN Sexual Assault Hotline](#) at 1-800-656-HOPE (4673).

### In this issue

Any generic discussion of sexual harassment and sexual abuse, particularly focusing on high-profile perpetrators, can be fraught with intense emotional beliefs about who *should* have spoken up, when, and how. It is important to recognize that each person may have a set of concerns and fears that may restrain or silence them. The potential loss of family trust, job or career loss, legal battles, reputation, and more, may be part of an equation that does not even address the psychological damage to one's own issues of self-worth and shame. This is a very complex subject.

At the risk of walking through a mine field, I am reprinting an article by Terrie Lewine on the subject. She courageously shares from her own personal experience as well as from the wider perspective of human needs within cultural patterns.

It is important that you understand that I am not making a case for excusing unacceptable behavior. Any individual who has been victimized to any degree needs to seek whatever support, legal recourse, and psychological resources are needed for their healing.

There are, however, major cultural issues that we should recognize in order to take steps to remedy for the sake of future generations. It is my hope that an informed conversation can lead to critical healing, instead of perpetuating an irreconcilable battle of the sexes.

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## **IT'S AN EMERGENCY! EMERGE AND SEE.**

by Terrie Lewine

I am quite moved by all the #metoo's I am reading on Facebook. So grateful that we have found an opening, a place to begin this

conversation. I am hearing about years and years of aggression, defense, confusion, pain, shame, and rage.

I am experiencing this moment as women wanting to, once again, emerge with all the power that the sacred feminine embodies. It seems almost impossible *not* to share our stories. **It is a true emergency.**

The blame game language that I hear the leaders in our country use seems to be waking us up on many levels. Everyone, whatever our thoughts are on these matters, seems to be awake, alert, and participating.

Not only are women finding their voices, but also people of color, people who identify sexually different than the cultural 'norm' are saying "I am here. And I am speaking up".

Obviously, the people on my Facebook feed are saying things that I find inspiring, and I agree with much of what they are writing. Mostly, I am

inspired *that* they are writing. While I don't particularly see the other posts, I do see the news, so I hear enough—enough that I can be aware of what's happening out there, and manage my feelings.

### **We Too.**

At the same time that I feel excitement and some relief hearing people I know speak up, I also feel a well of dread and despair reading some of the language in my friends sharing, and reading about what is being reported in the #metoo movement. It seems that most of the energy here is against men. Men did this. And yes, men did do these things. Women have *something* to do with it. We all do. I am concerned with how easily we are joining in the blame game. As a society it behooves us to avoid the trap of simplifying the issue to "It is THEM. THEY did this."

I understand that it takes a great deal of energy to say things that we have been holding onto for so long. A freedom and sense of our own power is required and also generated by speaking up. Please let's not take our power at the expense of the men on this planet. The power of the feminine is different, and I would like us to remember that.

We are in a deep cultural pathology and need deep cultural therapy.

~ Thomas Berry

Especially now. It is our time, it is our responsibility.

Young men as well as young women have been brought up inside a culture that allows for this all to happen. This is an US thing. WE TOO. Men have been brought up not to understand their own power or value, so it is expressed in these tragic, tragic ways.

My teen years were in the 1970s. Sex, drugs, and rock and roll. I had literally *zero* explicit input from my parents about how to talk with boys or how to negotiate sex. All I had to go on was my intuition, which was filled with self-doubt, needing lots of acknowledgement. When I said "yes" to sex in those days, I got lots of appreciation. So I said "yes" a lot. Did I want to have sex all those times, back then? I don't even know. It is very difficult for me to sort it out. I remember it being fun sometimes. I remember wanting more connection afterward, and rarely getting it, and I remember not having a soul engaged enough to talk about it with.

I had no language to ask for what I wanted - so how could the men I was with know what I really wanted? There were so many drugs back then that I don't remember the who, what, and when that much. I am certain that I had sex with people I didn't want to have sex with. Many times, in many different ways. I could not find a way to speak up. I remember bosses sticking their tongues down my throat at Christmas parties and never speaking of it ever. Bosses that I loved dearly in jobs that I loved dearly.

My guess is that those people who I was with, as well as many other men, weren't getting much of their own needs met. They, too, longed for some sense of value and importance - and getting sex was their strategy. They, too, were not taught about how to talk about what was happening. Likely, for many, their deficit for valuing themselves was so deep, they took it in ways that had (have) a HUGE COST. So here we are. Unpacking all of this now.

## Power Over vs. Power With

I am having trouble joining in the blame game. Blaming the people I was with. Blaming the men. We all have been taught tragic ways to find our power, and ultimately our deep sense of belonging and value. It can't be *just* men. We all know men who are 'not like that'.

I watch television and see the sitcom family, as it's time for the parents to have 'the sex talk', and how they dread and actually avoid it. This is not funny. We must take our bodies back. Men and women both must. We must teach our young people what these parts are, how they work, and how to navigate and communicate our desires, and the impacts of all of it.

Yes, we must take our power back. Stop what is happening. And then do something different.

If it is as I believe — that women will be the change agents, then please let's connect with the feminine energy that has been so undervalued in our culture. This is our task. Let's stop giving up our true nature to be accepted in a patriarchal/dominator culture. Can we truly celebrate our bodies, our emotions and our wisdom and our strength? Can we actually be the ones to help men find their strength and authentic power, as well? I can only imagine this as the healing that we are looking for.

Can we find our resilience, over and over again, without resignation? Can we inspire and generate a culture of power with vs. power over? A cooperative or partnership culture vs. the competitive one we are in right now. The 'utopia' in which we are supported and valued and cared for cannot be found inside the same blame-game thinking which has created this imbalance.

We can grow a true matriarchal society. A culture where relationships, the unseen, nurturing energy and intuition can blossom and be woven into how we make choices and decisions. We are the gatherers. We gather around each other, we gather knowledge, we gather our hearts and minds. It is the task of the feminine to bring this forth now, if we want something different. We must teach our children to care about, and for, one another. We must speak up — even though we

We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.

~ Albert Einstein

might have so much shame — and teach our children (boys, girls, and all genders) about their bodies and power. We must not shy away from this responsibility.

We must learn how to talk with one another - especially when all we want to do is scream at one another. If we truly want a cooperative culture, we must collectively use the power that we all share. We must combine protective use of force, too, so we are safe as we uncover and allow the true nature of humans to emerge. Let's emerge and see.

I suggest reading these books, if this speaks to you:

1. **The Chalice and the Blade, Our History, Our Future.**  
by Riane Eisler
2. **Sacred Land, Sacred Sex: Rapture of the Deep: Deep Ecology and Celebrating Life.**  
by Dolores Lachapelle
3. **The Fifth Sacred Thing.**  
by Starhawk

*Terrie Lewine offers Private Coaching Sessions, Classes, and Workshops to support you in creating a life that highlights your personality, your interests, and the relationships you want, guided by the values which you hold dear. She offers these classes both 'live' in Philadelphia and online via Zoom classes.*

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## Daily Word

*I view every moment as an opportunity for change and transformation.*

In *Meditation, A Way of Life*, Julien Bouchard writes, “Nothing is stable, nothing is static, everything is moving, everything is transforming and from one moment to another we are the spectators of our world’s renewal, of a new universe.”

Rather than considering change as a fear of the unknown, I consider it an opportunity to transform the way that I think, feel, and act. I shift into new ways of being by shifting my perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about myself and my world.

Thought by thought I can change my outlook and my attitude, regardless of what is happening in my life or around me. I always have the power to change. Every moment is an opportunity for transformation.

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**Wishing you all a safe and fulfilling holiday season!**

