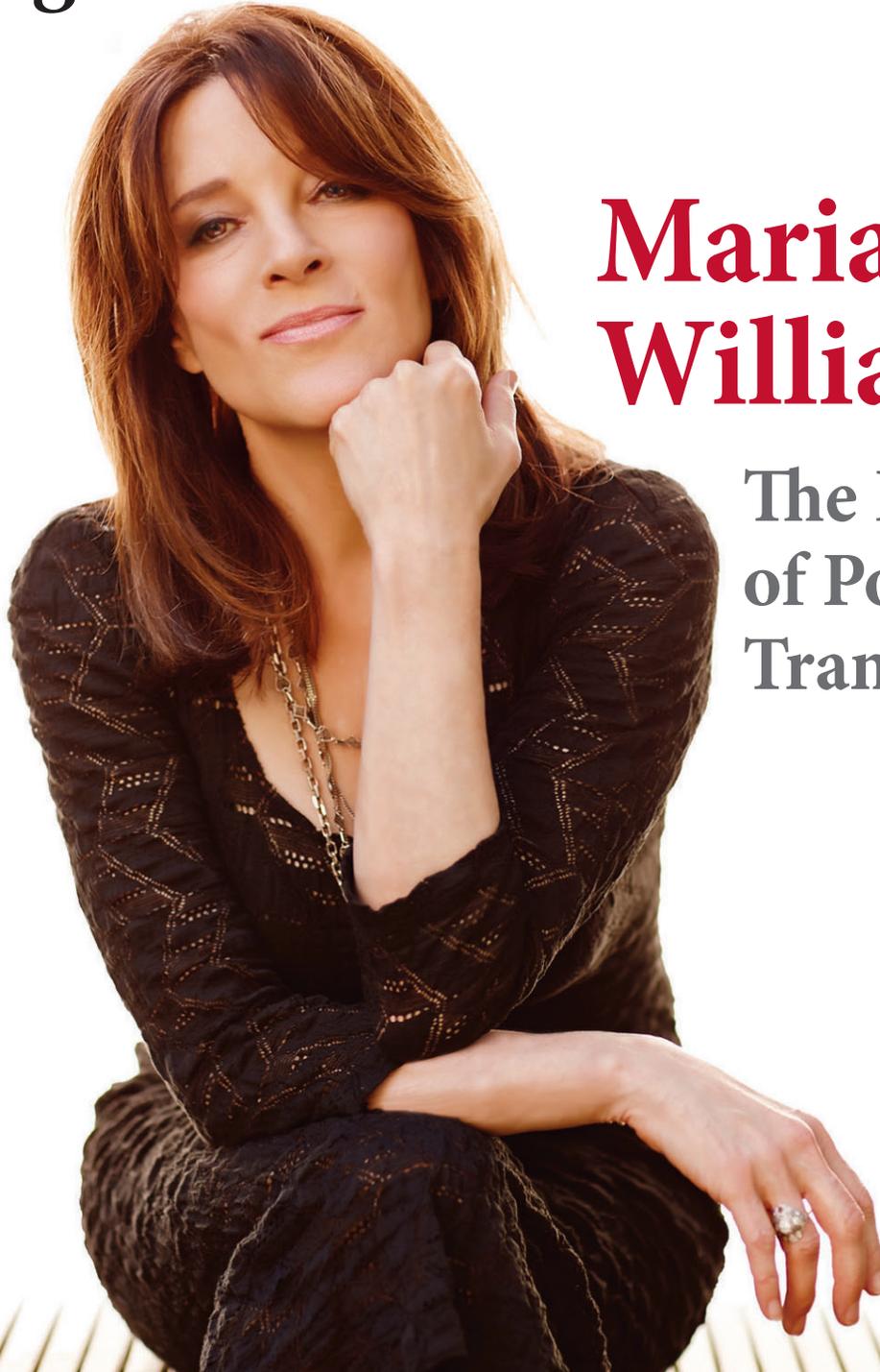




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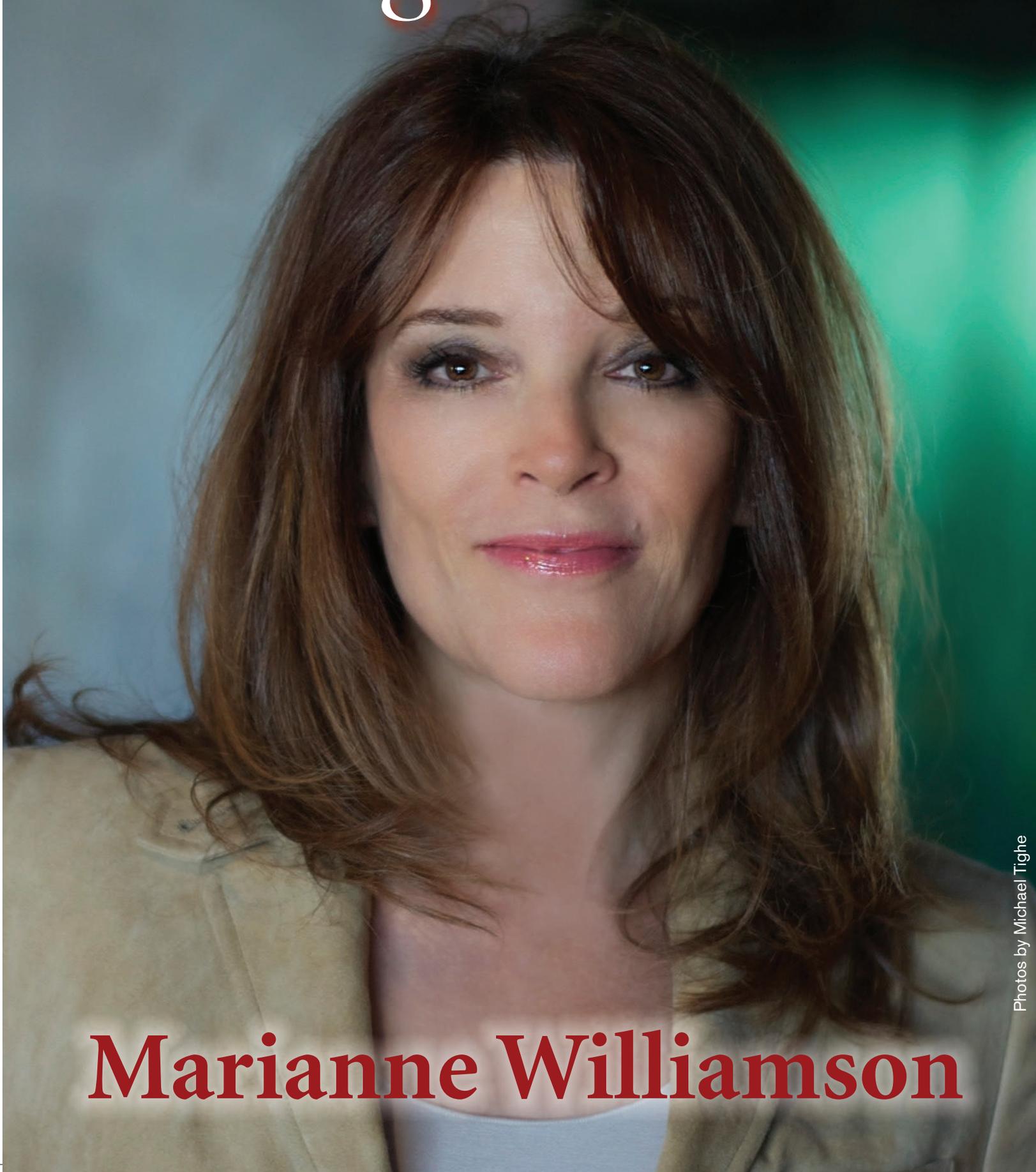
Marianne Williamson:

The Power
of Positive
Transformation

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Listening in With ...



Photos by Michael Tighe

Marianne Williamson



A Vote for Transformation

Marianne Williamson has long been an agent for positive change. She founded a Los Angeles meals-on-wheels program for homebound AIDS patients, cofounded the Peace Alliance (supporting legislation to establish a U.S. Department of Peace), sits on the board of directors of the antipoverty RESULTS organization, and founded the Sister Giant program to motivate women to run for office. Six of her 12 books have been best-sellers, starting with the 1992 blockbuster *A Return to Love*. Now she's running for Congress in California as an independent, with the primary in June. Below, she talks with *Unity Magazine* editor **Katy Koontz** about the intersection of politics and spirituality.

Katy Koontz: You've been addressing the relationship between spiritual evolution and political action for quite some time, so your run for Congress is not exactly unexpected. What compelled you to take this new direction now?

Marianne Williamson: I don't really feel I'm moving in another direction. I'm having the same conversation I've always had; I'm simply expanding it to include our collective rather than just our individual lives. I've always been concerned with a moral dimension of social and political issues.

I think people with an understanding in spiritual or personal growth are the last people who should be sitting out the great social and political issues of our days, because if you have a clue as to what changes one heart, then you're the one with a clue as to what changes the world.

All of us want to feel like we're useful. I simply felt that this is the way I could be of greatest use at this point in my life.

KK: You've said the government has lost its ethical center, and we need a more humanitarian politics, where conscience has a greater influence than deep pockets. That's a tall order. Can we really get there?

MW: Of course we can! Abolitionists abolished slavery, women suffragettes gained women the right to vote, and the Civil Rights movement ended segregation in the American South. Now it's our generation's turn to show up for our country.

It will be difficult to interrupt the now firmly established pattern by which money wields such undue influence on our politics, but it can be done. It will take a lot of effort—a people's movement both in and out of Congress—leading probably to a constitutional amendment. But I believe getting the money out of politics is the greatest moral challenge of our generation. The corrupting influence of money on our politics threatens democracy itself.

KK: How long do you think it will take to put a woman in the White House?

MW: I have no idea, but I know that the country is ready for it. I also think it's equally important to move closer to an equal representation of women in Congress, which is now made up of just over 20 percent women.

KK: Not even one-quarter.

MW: Right. But the question is, when women do gain political leadership, do we mimic old patriarchal paradigms or do we actually bring with us the values that women hold most dear? For instance, a woman in most any household is most likely to believe that before all else, she needs to feed, educate, and take care of her children. To me, that needs to become the bottom line for our nation as well as in our individual households. I don't think the average American realizes that among advanced nations of the world, we have the second-highest child poverty rate—

second only to Romania. One in five American children live in poverty. And internationally, the facts are stupefying. For instance, 17,000 children around the world starve every day. For \$100 billion spent over 10 years—one-eighth of America's annual military budget—we could eradicate deep poverty from the face of the earth. We should be leading, not trailing, the international effort at eradicating deep poverty. The United States is seen as a nation that leads more with our military than with our moral principles.

disasters here rather than abroad. We're not addressing them adequately anywhere, because our money goes elsewhere. And for those who say we don't have the money to help the poor—we can't just keep spending, spending, spending! I wonder then why we keep spending so much money helping the rich. It's crazy. We cut \$8 billion in food stamps from children, the elderly, and veterans, but we give billions of dollars in subsidies to an oil and gas industry that is already making a trillion-dollar profit. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "If

KK: Yes, and change, after all, is inevitable—it's even reflected in nature.

MW: I agree. It's interesting to me when I hear people say they fear change, because what I fear is *lack* of change. Life is always changing; no one moment is ever the exact same as the moment before. So, if we're not surrendering to that movement, we're not surrendering to life. Nature turns the embryo into the baby, the bud into the blossom, and the acorn into the oak tree. Nature turns morning into night and night into dawn. The same invisible force is at work on our personal lives too. I think the changes in life are God's gift to us—one lesson in love followed by another, all perfectly planned for our growth, our enlightenment, and our self-actualization. Change is simply the handwriting of God.

KK: Trust must be a big part of that.

MW: Trust is simply based on knowledge. I trust the law of gravity, so why shouldn't I trust the law of cause and effect? There are objective and discernible laws of the inner world, just as for the external world. I don't simply trust the law of gravity; I *know* the law of gravity. So trusting spiritual law is simply knowing that any love we put out into the universe will come back to us. Faith isn't blind. It's visionary.

God's universe is self-organizing and self-correcting. Our job is to surrender, to relax into the arms of God, and to enjoy the ride. That ride will take us from one moment of miraculous opportunity to the next. God will deliver the moments to us—our job is to open our hearts within that moment. When we do, we are cocreating with God the next beautiful moment. If we close our hearts in any moment, then

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KK: Those figures are truly sobering.

MW: We're wonderful in an emergency, don't get me wrong: if a hurricane happens, or an earthquake, or a tsunami, we are the first there. We're on it like no other nation, and we should all be proud of that. But when it comes to the silent emergencies—like the suffering of a billion people around the world who live on less than \$1.25 every day—the United States trails rather than leads international humanitarian efforts.

Some people would say, "But we have so many problems at home." But it's not like we are addressing humanitarian

they give it to the poor, they call it a handout. If they give it to the rich, they call it a subsidy."

KK: Your decision to run for office will undoubtedly inspire others to make whatever changes or transitions their hearts have been telling them to make. What advice do you have for people who get stuck because they fear change?

MW: Love replaces fear the way light replaces darkness. When a Western woman speaks her mind and stands on her convictions, she's making a move not only for herself but also on behalf of millions of women around the world who don't have a fraction of our opportunity to express ourselves. American women have so much power that we are not wielding. We should be a moral force on the planet.

we're denying ourselves the experience of the next beautiful moment. That's simply how consciousness operates.

KK: What do you think happens on a spiritual or energetic level when we don't follow our guidance or when we don't take an opportunity that is given to us?

MW: We can misuse our power, but we cannot diminish it. So if we use our mind to love, we create miracles. But if we use our mind to withhold or to deny love, then we manifest chaos, fear, and suffering. We deflect the miracle that would have otherwise occurred.

KK: How can we best teach ourselves to let go of our attachment to the outcome? That's where a lot of us, myself included, get caught.

MW: I think we have a pretty good reason to believe that nature knows how to deliver itself to perfection. God's Mind not only holds the vision of the perfect thing, but also the blueprint for how to make that perfection manifest. All we need to do is allow Him to work through us in any moment. Our greatest power to affect the future is to give all we can in the present. In any moment that I'm grasping at the future, I am by definition withholding from the present, and therefore, diminishing my prospects for the future.

KK: So staying present is key.

MW: That's why we meditate, pray, and read inspirational literature—so we can experience the Holy Instant or the power of now, the power of the present. Past and future are only in our mind. The present is what's real: you and I, showing up in this moment for each other, you bringing your gifts and me bringing mine,

collaborating in order to synergistically create something better than either one of us could create by ourselves. This is it. This is everything. And in ways that we can't even consciously know, we are both healing the past and preparing for a better future.

KK: You have written that as long as a person is working against something they hate instead of working for something they love, then they are of the old and not of the new. I think if more people understood that paradigm shift, it would be truly revolutionary. How can we keep that perspective in mind?

MW: Well, that concept can be weirdly interpreted, I'm afraid. Some people say, "I don't want to look at all the dark, painful things, because then I'm adding to the negativity." But there's nothing transcendent about that view, because there's a difference between transcendence and denial. *A Course in*

you're not in transcendence, you're simply in denial. If you refuse to look at the suffering of the world, then that hardly means you're more spiritual than the rest of us. We can't just bring light to the darkness; we have to bring the darkness to light. We heal through a kind of detox process. Things have to come up in order to be released.

I think if you look at the state of the world today and aren't grieving, then you're not really looking. But if you're not



The present is what's real: you and I, showing up in this moment for each other, you bringing your gifts and me bringing mine, collaborating in order to synergistically create something better than either one of us could create by ourselves.

Miracles says, "Look at the crucifixion but do not dwell on it." In other words, it's true that if you get all wrapped up in a problem and all you do is talk about what you don't like, then you're adding energy to it. But if you don't look at it at all, then

rejoicing in the possibilities of what could be, and how miracles can and do happen, then you're not yet aware of the power of the mind. That's why I believe that those of us schooled in spiritual principles have so much to offer the world right now.

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KK: Because change starts with ourselves?

MW: Well, it starts with ourselves, but it doesn't stop there. The point of thinking differently is that it leads you to behave differently. The world is merely a projection of our thoughts. But even though the world is a great mortal illusion, that doesn't mean we're to ignore it. Children's suffering is an illusion in a metaphysical sense, but the effects of that illusion are very real in the lives of the children. It's not enough for us to say, "Since it's all an illusion, I don't have to feed the starving." No, we don't go from an unhappy dream to an awakened state; first we have to transform the illusion, going from an unhappy dream to a happy dream. Then we can awaken.

KK: I've also been intrigued by your proposal to establish a U.S. Department of Peace.

MW: The Department of Peace would be a cabinet-level position in which the president would be given nonviolent options with which to deal with violence, both domestically and internationally. We need to evolve beyond simply allopathic

KK: Any parting thoughts on your campaign?

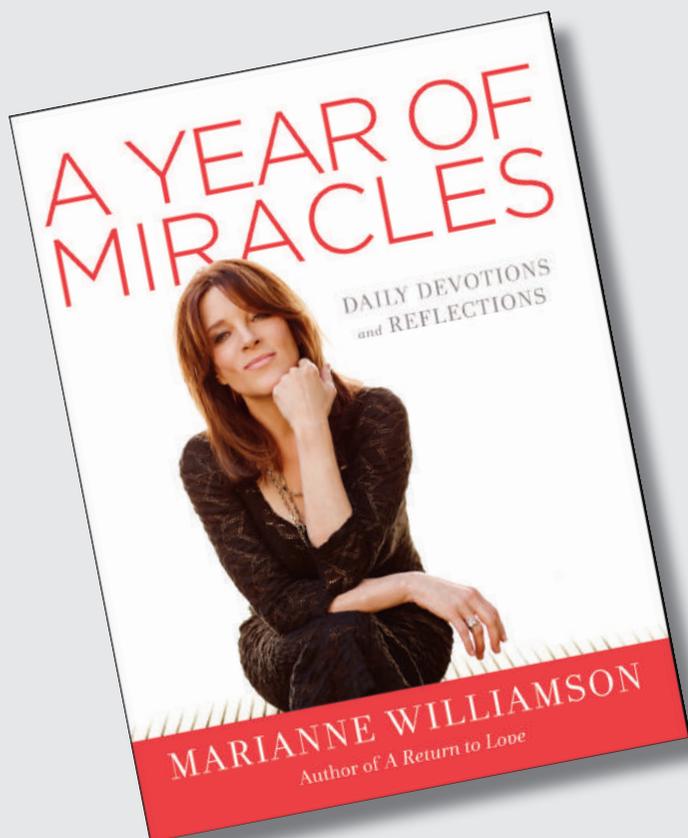
MW: I hope my campaign helps to create a political container for the values we hold dear. This is not just about sending one

Faith isn't blind. It's visionary.

politics, the way we evolved beyond strictly allopathic medicine. You could liken our military to a good surgeon. Sometimes we're ill and invasive measures are necessary, but wouldn't we check out other options before rushing into surgery? We need to develop an integrative model of peace-building so we're not jumping into war all the time. We need to proactively cultivate peace, for one thing. We can't just treat sickness; we have to cultivate health. And we can't just build more bombs and prisons; we have to cultivate justice and love.

person to Congress. It's about grounding a certain kind of philosophy in the ethers at this time.

Many of us want to live more conscious lives—being conscious about our bodies, nutrition, relationships, and so on. But we can't be "selectively conscious" and truly call ourselves conscious. The tenets of New Thought have saturated practically every area of our civilization, and it's time to bring them into areas where we've not yet shed that particular kind of light. As Gandhi said, "Is not politics a part of dharma too?"



I consciously participate in the world's transformation.

Inertia means the tendency of the object to move in whatever direction it's been moving, until there is the introduction of a counterforce. Today I consciously and proactively participate in a counterforce to the world's despair: a field of peace and love.

When enough of us love, fear will dissolve. When enough of us find peace in our hearts, war will cease. When enough of us stand on what we know to be true, falsehoods will no longer hold sway. May my thoughts and actions today help get us to "enough of us." May my entire being read, "I'm in."

I choose to be awake, though many slumber. I choose to stand on the truth of love, though many are lost in fear. I choose to be part of the solution, though many are at the effect of the problem. I choose to be a vessel of courage, though accommodation be the order of the day.

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