



**Marianne Williamson:
Global Citizen from a Global Consciousness**

by
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(Originally appeared in Unity Magazine)

When asked what the path has been that led her to writing her latest book, *The Healing of America*, Marianne Williamson shrugs, "My father was like a cross between William Knussler and Zorba the Greek. Imagine, that's who I sat across from at the dinner table growing up."

Williamson asserts that our political renewal will not come from our bureaucratic system as it now exists, but from within each of us. She encourages Americans to revitalize the spiritual and political tenets of our founding fathers to build a citizen-based political culture.

The Healing of America has some strong implications for creating not only a new American citizen, but what we might call a "global citizen." In the last chapter, Williamson quotes Martin Luther King:

"Now as we face the fact of this new, emerging world, we must face the responsibilities that come along with it. A new age brings with it new challenges ...

First, we are challenged to rise above the narrow confines of our individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity. The new world is a world of geographical togetherness. This means that no individual or nation can live alone. We must all learn to live together, or we will be forced to die together.

...Through our scientific genius we have made of the world a neighborhood; now through our moral and spiritual genius we must make of it a brotherhood.

... We have before us the glorious opportunity to inject a new dimension of love into the veins of our civilization."

In the following interview, we asked Marianne Williamson to explore these ideas more deeply with us. Is a marriage between politics and spirituality possible, and if so, what will the resulting relationship bring forth for the world?

King is calling for a transformation to global thinking. How might you describe global thinking, the consciousness of the "global citizen," especially the "new dimension of love," to which King refers?

Albert Einstein said that our separation from each other is an optical illusion of consciousness. The cornerstone of the worldview we need to outgrow now is the belief that we are separate from each other. And, the cornerstone of the worldview we are trying to evolve into is the thought that we are one with each other. That is a spiritual tenant, of course, because in the physical world we are separate. As long as we think we are separate, we will always be tempted to find guilt in each other. And, as long as we hold the thought of each other's guilt there will be conflict and violence and war. None of us can feel truly safe on this planet until we have accepted our oneness. That to me is love.

In regards to being a global citizen, what do you see is the access to making the passage?

Clearly, everything begins with awareness, which is why I wrote *The Healing of America*. To go from the thought that my neighbor is one with me to the thought that people around the world are one with me. To go from the thought that I must live to the best of my ability and integrity with my community, to taking responsibility for my country's integrity in the world community. To go from the thought that I must serve in my community, to the thought that America must in some way be of service to this world. I think we simply need to widen the circle to which we have applied our beliefs -- same beliefs, just wider circle.

You wrote in your book that power is beginning to recycle back to the citizen because of a change that is happening in us. What change?

I think the biggest change is a maturity factor. Many of us have been, for the last twenty or thirty years, in a period of spiritual quiescence; a period that was appropriate and useful. But, when one is accumulating sacred knowledge, there is a time past which we begin to reap diminishing returns if we don't use our knowledge on behalf of a purpose greater than ourselves. That shift from me to we, from self-reference to whole reference is one which marks our coming into spiritual maturity as well as our political and social maturity. There is meaning to our being on this earth if we behave meaningfully. And, there is no greater meaning than to measure our lives in terms of where history has brought us and where history will go or not go because we've been here.

Haven't a lot of us in this country been lulled to sleep and aren't we still sleeping?

The greatest danger at this point is that because we're so asleep, we tend to not realize the problems that are here. It takes acute awareness and committed alertness to see our own circumstances clearly at this moment in American history. Polls do show though, that even Americans who admit that they're economically better off, still sense that there is something not right at the center of things. This is not a time to deny our gut. It's time to honor it, because it's a trail that leads somewhere important.

In a Quaker exercise during my lectures, we sit silently, with eyes closed, and seek our virtue, as Abraham Lincoln called it. We ask the small still voice within to reveal to us a higher vision for this country. From this exercise I hear, 'I see an America in which no children go to bed hungry, in which our children are the best educated in the world, an America in which there are no prisons, or crime, an America of love and harmony.' And, the power of that exercise, the enthusiasm and emotion with which people have participated proves to me how much we long to be part of a great creative work to restore this country and this earth to its innocence and grace.

How do you see our democratic process blending in with spiritual principle?

Democracy is a very spiritually based concept. It places great trust in something which lies inside each individual. It rests on the power and authority of the individual's wisdom, intelligence and virtue. That is profoundly different than a system of government where power resides in someone's money or other external circumstances. The fact that we have drifted away from governance as a reflection of the average person's intelligence, virtue and wisdom, has as much to do with the fact that we have not expressed that virtue in the public domain, as that there are certainly those who would wrestle it from us.

In his first inaugural address, Abraham Lincoln said that there is no evil that government can perpetrate in this country as long as people retain their virtue and their vigilance. I do not doubt the virtue of the American people but what is critically low at this time is our vigilance. We are not vigilant on behalf of our virtue.

What else stands in the way of our thinking globally, thinking from the whole perspective?

Too often, we think emotion has no place in the discussion of social and public policy. This disempowers women, in particular. We must embark upon a new conversation. Take gang members, for instance. It's true that there's such a thing as "bad kids," young people who would as soon kill you as look at you. But, they didn't start out that way. These are not someone else's children. They are America's children. A critical mass of Americans need to allow ourselves to feel our grief, anger, fear and despair over the existence of a huge, juvenile criminal class. It is when we allow those emotions to surface that we will recognize that the "powers that be" in this country have absolutely no idea how to deal with this problem in any other way than to build more prisons and hire more prosecutors.

If we will allow ourselves to truly open our hearts and allow our outrage, our fear, our conscience, all those factors which make us truly human, to be aroused, then we will come to the understanding that although we have no effective ways to solve this problem using the mental boxes we're now stuck in, or the mortal power we now own, there is a realm of consciousness in us that can take this problem into its hands when we so surrender it.

Martin Luther King, Jr. said 'We must have tough minds and tender hearts.' Many of the toughest minds in America lack heart, but at the same time, many of the most open hearts in America need to read a book or two. Fuzzy thinking is just one step above not thinking. Tough minds and tender hearts. Neither one alone has the power to interrupt the flow of history.

I think it was Werner Erhard who once said 'We can either act out of circumstances or out of vision.' What we tend to do collectively in America today is that we're constantly reacting to circumstances. We have at this time no collective vision. And, that's because we have allowed short term economic gain to become such a national idol, placing it before all things sacred.

The idea of creating a collective vision for this country doesn't appear active in the political arena. How do you see the American people taking part in this?

The reason it's not active in the political arena is that our Congress is presently dominated by those who think the market drives social good. But, the truth is the spirit within us drives social good. And, there will be no visionary leadership until there is a visionary constituency. Leaders arise organically out of a population. When our awareness rises, their awareness will rise.

Are you saying, this begins with each person engaging in these questions and not keeping it to themselves?

That's it, absolutely; step one and step two. I've started this American Renaissance Alliance to help people network. Just like you have support groups for people who have been diagnosed with a life threatening illness. We need citizen support groups to help stimulate a higher level of conversation in the social domain.

In my book I discuss the idea of citizen salons. People getting together, let's say once a week in the homes or neighborhoods, to speak about America in an effort to introduce what is humanely true for us, psychologically, emotionally and spiritually. The American Renaissance Alliance exists to help people connect with other people who are doing this.

Evolution doesn't happen because the majority of the members of the species go in a certain direction. It proceeds because a minority has an idea, or develops in such a way, that it's better adapted for survival. So, the goal at the moment is not to be a majority but to be a profound, enlightened minority.

How does the shift in thinking to a global perspective make a difference in the individual's needs being met?

We cannot take our next evolutionary step and watch a lot of television. We must give up our addiction to meaningless pursuits. It is the only way. Because if someone was to say 'Now wait a minute, let me get this straight. I've got to support my kids, raise them well, clothe and house my family, keep my career going and take part in the collective conversation and participate politically!!' The answer is yes. President Eisenhower said politics should be the part time profession of every American.

Even though in the sixties many of us believed that politics could be a canvass for the expression of higher philosophical traditions, after that period consciousness and politics divorced. If you were to picture America as a house, it is as though those of us who took consciousness, who delved deeper into spirituality, thought of ourselves as taking the upstairs. And, we were content to let people trying to change the world from a traditional political perspective, take the downstairs. We thought they were dealing with lower level thought forms. And, we were happy to be upstairs, the archetypal upper realm. There was a deck up there, we get to see the stars, it was quite beautiful. But, the problem now is that the people downstairs are burning the house down. And, if they do that, the upper deck goes too. It's time for reconciliation.

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