

## **Midwifery, a Foundation of Transformation - Remembering a New Conversation**

*By Lindsey Jean Stirling*

I am moved to share a story close to my heart and I wonder if in some way it may be a story that belongs to us all. I remember the calling I felt deep in my belly to be with women, hold space for birth and welcome new human life on earth. I remember the dreams and visions, subtle at first, creating a web that would slowly capture my heart. I remember wondering whether the emerging dreams were long distant memories from a life once lived, or of a future yet to unfold. Slowly the dreams would begin to penetrate my day-to-day life. Midwives started to show up and a friend out of the blue would hand me Ina May's book *Spiritual Midwifery*. This was twelve years ago now, and just like the imperceptible growth of life in the womb, my midwife dream was gestating with each passing breath.

Never could I know how this path would bring me to my knees and teach me the art of surrender; that it would show me how being with woman is synonymous with being with my Self. How all the ways in which I was invited to be with women were the ways I needed to embrace in my own relationship within. How holding space for the intense emotional terrain that labour often is, presents an accurate metaphor for the kind of receptivity and foundational capacity I needed to discover in order to Be the kind of human I aspire to and the midwife I saw in my dreaming a decade before.

I know too well the feeling of being on call and praying to God that I don't get called in, not because I don't love what I do, but because it would rip me open from the inside and bring me face to face with those parts of myself that would rather hide instead. I remember too, how scared I felt at times, embedded in a system that I felt fundamentally at odds with, and still having to show up, open, vulnerable, afraid, and full of willingness to be there anyway. I'd be hoping and praying I would find others I could lean into, others I could feel mutual support from and with whom I could express my own humanity and the fragile tender vulnerabilities that come along with it. Blessed I have felt when such angels have appeared, often in disguise and offered me a warm smile, and an understanding ear.

My journey of becoming a midwife has been no less than a deep spiritual, emotional and psychological transformation, one that has been extraordinarily painful, astoundingly joyful, and often miraculous. One in which I have had to dig deep to find my own inner resilience, take courageous steps despite my

fears, and accept difficult emotions like humiliation, shame and disgust as portals of understanding, self-compassion and empathy.

As I walk away now, not from midwifery, but from a system that is at its core fundamentally broken, I walk toward the midwife I saw in my dreams so many years before. Paradoxically though, I can see how the system I now walk away from has acted like a huge cauldron of transformation, within which a kind of dismantling or deconstruction has taken place. Its constraints and superimposed limitations forcing me to acknowledge the same edges within myself and in the process bringing me face to face with the core of my own broken parts. Parts I didn't know were there, that I had strategically managed to control and push away. Wounded parts of myself that I can now welcome home.

Now as I stand on another threshold, transformed in ways I could never have imagined or expected, I am invited to take part in a new conversation, one I remember having in my dreaming years ago. With a felt sense of completion and a willing curiosity to discover a fresh world of Midwifery, I can imagine one that values the whole human being, one that honours our humanity. A world that embraces our unique natural rhythms and pacing, encourages and supports healing, that welcomes wisdom and insight, collaboration and community. A world that acknowledges the reality of human trauma and takes steps toward its healing so that future generations of human Beings may be birthed in love and welcomed in peace. I give thanks to the many teachers, wise women, friends, and fellow humans past present and future that I have and will have the honour of walking and sharing this sacred journey with. May we meet each other in a new conversation, find the courage to heal our wounds and support each other to shine as midwives of peace. May it be so.

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