

Inspiring Women With Soul™

Women's Critical Role in an Ever-Changing World

Jean Houston

Devaa: Hello to everyone from around the world. It is a blessing and an honor to be here with all of you. I'm Devaa Haley Mitchell, I'm the co-founder of the Shift Network and I'm also the founder of this gathering, *Inspiring Women with Soul*. We have an incredible lineup, as you probably noticed, for this year.

I wanted to let you know that if you are not able to listen live to all of the programming, you do have access for 24 hours to receive the recordings for free. But if you would like to own a copy of those recordings, we want you to know that that is something available to you, and when you do that, you'll find the transcripts as well, and you'll also find a number of wonderful bonuses, including some meditations that aren't available elsewhere, but they are with myself, Miranda Macpherson, Anodea Judith, and also Mirabai Starr. There's a couple of other goodies as well. You can access the recordings and all of these materials at inspiringwomenwithsoul.com/upgrade.

Also I wanted to let you know that when you do purchase the upgrade package, a portion of your proceeds will be going to support a wonderful organization that's called ApneAap.org. It's founded one of the speakers in this year's program, Ruchira Gupta, who is someone who has dedicated her life to stopping sex trafficking. That's really something that we here at Inspiring Women believe in and we want to support, so we will be offering a portion of your sales to that cause.

Also, for those of you who are involved in social media, please do connect with us on Facebook. I would love to be answering your questions and engaging with you, as well as some of the other speakers. You can find our Facebook page at facebook.com/inspiringwomenwithsoul.

And then I want to let you know about two new programs we have coming up that we're very excited about. Soon after the end of this online gathering we will be creating something the Inspiring Women Sisterhood, which is an ongoing membership program where you'll have the opportunity to take the pieces of inspiration that you gathered here at this online gathering, and really have the time and space to put it into practice in your own life. We will be having live sessions over the internet and on the phone twice a month. We'll also have a very active community online, where you'll be able to ask your questions of me and other speakers, and we'll really have a place to support each other through the coming weeks and months. Also you'll have a place to ask your questions to

me, ask your questions to the faculty, and really engage with this material so that you are living as an inspiring woman in your own life. That is really what we want, is to create an ongoing, thriving community where you can really be resourced for all that you're up to in your own life. So please do keep your eye on your inbox, and we'll be sending you information about that coming up.

Also I wanted to invite you to save the date for a women's spirituality retreat, an Inspiring Women retreat, that we have coming up in October, October 16-21, here in northern California at a beautiful retreat center where the Shift Network also has its headquarters. We are just putting together all of the materials for that, but we'll be featuring a number of the speakers that you'll be enjoying at this *Inspiring Women with Soul* gathering. So again, keep your eyes and your ears out for more information about that retreat, and we will send you all the details as soon as we have them ready.

With that, please take a deep breath with me – and let's bring ourselves into an open space to receive this next session.

I am really looking forward to our next dialog with someone who has been a teacher and mentor to me in the past named Jean Houston. She is someone who doesn't need much introduction but for those of you who aren't familiar with Jean, I want to share with you a little bit about her. Jean Houston is an international speaker. She is author of over 30 books. She is a philosopher and she's a futurist. She is a consultant to the United Nations and leaders around the world. Her life has been and continues to be dedicated to advancing awareness of the untapped potential that each person contains. She then offers inspiration and practical steps for turning those latent gifts into action and as well as benefits for both the individual and society. One other thing that Jean Houston does is she had created incredible Mystery School really dedicated to this theme of social artistry, the weaving of arts and social action. I was really inspired by Jean's work and ended up training with her a number of years ago in the social artistry work. I've been really inspired by that whole movement so it's a real honor to have you here, Jean.

Jean: Thank you so much, Devaa. It's a great wonder to be in this kind of state of interaction where women and the types of women that you evoke are really looking for the deep feminine truth, the integral vision for a new civilization. Women are, I do believe, the parents and the pioneers of what really is a new civilization and a new society. No old fears are going to hold us back. We are unstoppable. I'm thinking of a Chinese proverb that goes: when sleeping women awake, mountains move. Frankly, that's what I see happening all over the world. My claim to fame is I'm one of the best-traveled human beings who's ever lived. I've worked in 110 countries with men and women of course. Especially with my UN and other related international work, I find that women are rising

everywhere with an abundance of capacities, of compassion, creativity, courage, consciousness, creating the vision of a new kind of civilization, a planetary civilization with high individuation of culture. Several years ago, I with Scilla Elworthy, who's been on some of your programs, and Rama Mani created something called Rising Women, Rising World. I'd like to speak a little bit about the values that we talk about, women's values.

Devaa: Please do.

Jean: I think it's women's values that can save humanity, well, because. It's because some of the values are ubuntu, the reverence for all life, the belief that we are all part of a unified being. Modern physics tells us that indeed we are all entangled. But what is this entangled being? It's the core value. We are part of the universe. We don't just live in the universe; the universe lives in us. The second is compassion. That is not just bringing unity but in a global sensibility much more love. We have to recognize, as we often say, sameness rather than otherness; and wisdom. Women have deep, deep, deep wisdom. Once you really begin to tap into those levels of wisdom, you discover a sufficiency and abundance of ideas, of energy and of creativity that can co-create the world. Then there is justice and sacred courage. Right now, we are watching excruciating things happening in the Middle East as well as the other parts of the world. Women particularly are there, not just being on the receiving end but on the listening and the creative end of the sorrows, the difficulties that are happening everywhere and are looking for solutions everywhere. Then there's beauty and creativity. Our friend who's on our Rising Women Rising World, Chipu Chung, a very great activist, says take the canvas that we have as the world and paint the world we want to live in. It's about creativity, arts, then a voice for the Earth. We've become the voice for the Earth and new ways of being. We are at the stage where the real work of humanity begins. This is the time and place where we partner creation in the re-creation of ourselves, in the restoration of the biosphere, in the assuming of a new kind of culture. I might term this a culture of kindness where we live daily life in such a way as to be reconnected, charged and made more intelligent by the creative source, the spiritual source of our reality. And this is happening now. Those would be my statements about women's values and why what we do profoundly makes a difference as to whether we grow or die.

Devaa: Thank you, Jean, it's really beautiful to hear these values articulated. It really kind of speaks to the conversation that you and I were having before we began this recording which is the about occasion where Jean and I will probably most likely we'll see each other the soonest. That is at a memorial service connected to a man that we both have known and loved named Edgar Mitchell who is the head of the Institute of Noetic Sciences, actually who was the founder of that institute after being an astronaut and seeing the world from space. The point of

this though is that when there's the passing of a great being, there's a moment for all of us to really look at our lives and reflect about what matters most and what do we value. Do we value most or maybe all of these things, the creativity, the compassion, the beauty or some other value that's really inherent in our being? I think we don't often enough have spaces to really reflect until something sudden happens. Perhaps there's a death. Perhaps there's an illness. Perhaps there's something that jolts us out of our everyday comfort zone to really reflect and say: what does matter most in my life? What do I value and what do I stand for?

Jean: Well, you mentioned Edgar Mitchell and of course these were the questions that concerned him. I have a quote because I'm preparing my address right now where he talks about a new awakening in which our civilization shifts because it's all about consciousness and how consciousness fits into the evolving cosmos. This is what happened to him when he looked back from the Earth. You may or may not know that I helped him remember. My husband and I helped him remember what he saw on the moon.

Devaa: I didn't know that.

Jean: He came to our home in then in New York. I think it was very early 1973. It's, by the way, where a lot of the ideas for IONS germinated on our living room couch.

Devaa: Wow!

Jean: We put him into trance so that he could remember the details that he may have missed while he was the Apollo 14 engineer, where he was taken up with so many different tasks. In the deepest state he was able to go back and be there, to pick up things, ideas, patterns and visions of what he actually saw. But one of the things that he said about all this and I think it was about when he was starting to come back. He said, "What we saw in the moon, Jean, was not the most important. What was important was coming back to the Earth". Because he said, "Suddenly, from behind the rim of the moon, with long slow-motion moments of immense majesty, there emerges a sparkling blue and white jewel; a light, delicate sky blue sphere laced with slow, swirling veils of white rising gradually like a small pearl in a thick sea of black mystery. It takes more than a moment to realize fully this is Earth, home." I think it was at that point where he was living and had been preparing for the outer skies. He then became aware also of the inner skies, the inner sky of our being. And the inner sky of our being, when you put the two together, the outer and the inner sky, is that we are universal beings.

We are the stewards of spaceship Earth as my other old friend, Buckminster Fuller, used to put it. And then he said, "Not the spoiled, self-serving brats we

portray, a species not knowing our own potential, who do not see the omnipotence of God or the limitlessness of our creative ability, not recognizing our God-given gifts of intelligent intuition, creativity, the guiding force that makes humankind great." It was from that and the dialogue between the outer and the inner sky that he then began to create there. That's near where you live in Petaluma, California. He landed there eventually, the Institute of Noetic Sciences where the mystery of inner space could be explored with as much intensity and grace and goodness and creativity as the mysteries of outer space.

Devaa: Well, you've obviously been doing this work for such a long time, back in 1973. As I was being born, you were having this conversation with Edgar Mitchell. I'm really curious and interested by what in you is still feeling inspired given we're here as the Inspiring Women with Soul. What is to inspire you about the consciousness movement? What feels like it shifted in a big way and what's still alive in you and in the movement as you are witnessing it?

Jean: Well, of course, there is something that's been going on for some time but has become, in our new global sensibility, even more apparent and that is the harvest of the world's wisdom traditions, not just the ancient ones but the ones that are all over the world. The fact that the internet has gained us immediate access to almost any tradition, ideas, culture or wisdom, I mean, you don't go as I originally did seeking it in bookstores and on my travels, et cetera. You can't replace travels like when you're right there for the immediacy of it all. But we now know so much about the great traditions of both ancient and present worlds so it is as if the world mind is taking a walk with itself. That's on the existential level. On the essential level, there is this call, this need, the hound of heaven that wakes you up in the morning [imitates barking of dog]. It's time to get on with it. A great many women feel this. They feel the call. They are waking up. The mountains are moving and the valleys. We know that we are stewards of this beautiful Earth and if we do not wake up and realize that we are its patterners, its potential, its pilgrims and its parents, then we have maybe, oh, 200 years left. I mean, yeah, there'll be a million and a half of us left. I think that's about all. But we will look awful and we'll be stumbling over abandoned electronic appliances. It is, as dear old Edgar said, that a mind change is required, not just to change our value system but to everything else. A transcendence is vital, the understanding of our connectedness.

Devaa: Right.

Jean: For women, men also but especially the women, willing to live a life of service as opposed to a life of materialism and me, me, me. So it is now, if not us, who? If not now, when? To me, those ancient words speak more potently and poignantly

to women than to anyone else. If not us, who? If not now, when? If not you, who? If not now, when?

Devaa: Yeah, I mean, I think some of these seems we have been talking about for such a long time. I remember way back, the book, *Global Mind Change*, when I was working at IONS, that theme has been going on for so long and that awareness of that is what's needed, this critical shift in people's world view and how we see the world. It can be hard to not get disgruntled or discouraged. A lot of us are still largely teaching or talking to what feels like the choir. The choir has been getting bigger, which is beautiful, but there's still quite a lot of people who are not at all on this wavelength. How to really reach farther, open our arms bigger and really wake up or toward the waking up of those who are not the usual suspects is needed. That's something that I've really appreciated about your work is that you, in particular working with the United Nations and things like that, really aren't speaking to the conscious choir but you're going out into places. One of the great services of connecting with you, Jean, was you put me in touch with a woman named Monica Sharma who I've stayed in contact with. She is such an inspiration in how she's taking these core concepts, or was when she was working at the UN.

Jean: She still is, and still is.

Devaa: And still is in a different capacity. I know that now. But it seems like those are kind of the diamonds in the rough who are really doing this work in far flung places though it's more and more every day. I'm wondering what gives you the energy and the stamina to keep beating the drum year after year, going out into places where some of these ideas are newer and probably well-received sometimes and maybe challenged other times.

Jean: The irony of it all, Devaa, is that when you work in badly called third-world countries, people are much more responsive to these ideas than in so-called first world. I mean, if it's a question of being in Delhi or in Dallas, it's much more responsive in Delhi than it is in Dallas.

Devaa: Why is that, do you think?

Jean: Well, they are closer to the original traditions. Especially indigenous people, they say, "Well, we always knew that. We knew this all the time." I'll never forget talking to a Maori grocer, a man who'd had a small grocery store in New Zealand, a Maori. He was describing to me in the most exquisite unfolding how Maori metaphysics tuned into present-day quantum physics and how they were the same. When you work with indigenous people, you find that this is not an unusual phenomenon but that it is happening. It is something that is true. People who live closer to the Earth, who had time and space to think, to reflect would

then come through with a knowledge that was so astonishing you say, well, you're way ahead of your time. No, you are just very backward, they would say. So we have been operating on a very limited way of knowing.

Let me tell you a story that relates to this. When I was eight years old, I was at a wonderful school in New York City called PS 6. PS 6, the people who were the teachers there, had been the students of the students of John Dewey so they believed in taking us to meet the elders, the great elders. They trotted us across the river to Princeton where we met Albert Einstein. People ask what was he like? Well, he had a lot of hair. He seemed a little vague. I think he had a black sock and a red sock on but he was very sweet. One of our smart aleck kids said, "Uh, Mr. Einstein, how can we get to be as smart as you?" He said, "Read fairy tales." Well, we didn't like that idea at all so another smart aleck kid said, "Well, Mr. Einstein, how can we then get to be smarter than you?" He said, "Read more fairy tales," by which he meant imagination. That's what he was talking about – his inner imagery. He was a person of enormous imaginative capacities and that's what brought him not simply to the enormous breakthroughs in science and cosmology and the nature of reality. But it was also what gave him his deep, deep sense of the humanity in the way that we could nourish our higher nature and our higher angels nurture us so that he was both great humanist as well as great scientist.

I think that part of where we are moving to in a world of so much change, of so much change, is being able to nurture the inner spaces that women have been doing since time out of mind as well as our outer form for oneness because we are still very much in the place of oneness, are we not? If we do not have oneness, quite frankly, we are out of here. When I said that a planetary consciousness, I mean, the arrogant celebration of the human conquest of nature is being replaced by the realization and the imaginative understanding of what does a world that works look like. It's radically different in aims and values from those of an earlier time. It's a culture of kindness. It's a culture in which it invites the emergence of new levels of consciousness to protect, heal, make whole, find expression in ways that can be described as devotion to all forms of life. To me, there is no question but this is what is critical if we're going to survive this, the most fascinating time in human history.

I find it very significant that Albert Einstein, the physicist, who looked at a telescope to the world of outer space, and Sir John Eccles, both were friends, both were people that he was deeply interested in. Sir John Eccles, the neurophysiologist, as he said look at the microscopic world of inner space to discover the same thing, he said, the existence of God, the existence of a great creative form. Of course, I had known John Eccles pretty well and of course I had met Einstein. These are some of the things but women are holding the key. Without women holding the key, I would say, and really rising to full partnership

with men in the whole domain of human affairs, we do not have much of a future.

Devaa: Well, I think one of the keys that you also just mentioned a moment ago, and I know that that was really a thrust of the work that I was doing with you around the social artistry, and that was around imagination. It surprised and delighted me the extent you were telling me that what you are really doing when you're going into work with the United Nations was often training the employees to be more creative, to be more imaginative. And why? Because when we're facing the really pressing problems that we're facing in this world, you have to actually be quite innovative and creative to try to figure out what to do or how to respond to a crisis in a new kind of way. That is something that has been underdeveloped in some places and so really creating a context. It seems like a lot of the people in that training that I was in with you and a lot of the work that we see at Shift Network are the women who are the ones that are stepping forward saying, yes, I want to bring these principles. They are saying, yes, I'm interested in this work and who are really bringing and reawakening a lot of the imagination in various places that really are longing for that energy.

Jean: That's very much so. People say, "Well, what about us men?" say the men. "What about us men? What do women have that we don't have?" This question comes up and I say it's not a question of having; it's a question of emphasis. The emphasis with women often, but not every woman, a great many is on process rather than product, being in the flow of it rather than end goaling, making things cohere, develop, grow and unfold. Maybe that comes from raising children or seeing things as they go from little tiny dots to full-grown beings. But it's also relationship. It's the interweaving of life. It's the connectivity and let's say the process. These kinds of things, it is this emphasis that may have come because the women as the mothers and the ones who take care and who assure continuity. This gives women a particular emphasis now so deeply, deeply, deeply needed in this, the most critical and most interesting time of human history. I realize other times thought they were it. They were wrong. This is clearly it, you see. One of the things that I'm thinking about doing a seminar on, I haven't yet decided but I probably will do it, especially in the light of the Grand Guignol, the black comedy of the current political scene.

Devaa: That's right.

Jean: The idea is electing yourself, really electing yourself. What do I mean by that? It means the identifying talents and gifts that align with who and what you really are. Know yourself as a worthy catalyst of change. Realize that even if you feel down in the dumps, you won the ultimate Olympics. You are the sperm that made it to the egg.

Devaa: You already won by being born.

Jean: That's right, I mean, that is an old Buddhist saying that to be born is such a miracle. It is as unlikely as every 500 years a golden hoop appears and a turtle comes up and comes up through it. He says that's the unlikeliness of being born. You won the ultimate Olympics but now you find yourself cast in the most critical and challenging time of human history where women's ways of knowing are absolutely, absolutely critical if we're going to survive our time and create a world that truly works.

It means taking responsibility. It means realizing, finding ways of nourishing yourself and others. It's never alone. It's always in partnership with the other. This is I think what your programs are about, are they not, Devaa? The forms of nourishment and celebration and even the tactics of how do you grow beyond the old structures, the outmoded ways that no longer work into a profoundly new way of being?

Devaa: Yes, I mean, that's why.

Jean: That's what I mean by self-election, yeah.

Devaa: Yes, I mean, that's why a lot of the programs I specifically work on with women are around developing a whole series of different archetypes of the sacred feminine. Why I focused on that is because I see that as women do that deeply and develop sides of themselves that they didn't really know. There is a whole bunch of capacities that come on line from speaking your truth when it's not popular to unleashing creativity within these archetypes through even healing a lot of deep wounds. It's really important. I feel like to kind of be the change and to elect oneself, there's I think a huge inner component of really developing the capacities of your being beyond what you know yourself to be because the world really is calling for that. You need to have all these different archetypes or parts of yourself on tap and available to really resource you when you need to be bold, when you need to be creative or when you need to be that nurturing Mother energy. It requires really a kind of a renaissance woman, renaissance human which I know is a topic that you talk a lot about in your work as well.

Jean: So what do you want to be when you grow up? That's a question I keep asking myself.

Devaa: Are you asking me?

Jean: Yes, I was born in 1937 so I still feel that I don't know what I'm going to be when I grow up. What are you going to be when you grow up?

Devaa: Well, I feel like that's ever unfolding, an ever unfolding landscape but I feel right now I'm really delighted with the opportunities that I have to inspire, inspire others to live the biggest potential by having conversations like these. The opportunities of getting people to see beyond the weather blinders we may have been conditioned into and knowing that there's something that we were born for usually that is greater than what we might have imagined possible even. I remember a beautiful exercise that I still use, Jean, that you taught to me which was getting people activated with all of their senses. This is really activating the neural pathways so that people could envision, not actually envision but actually build neural pathways to live a possibility for themselves that perhaps is way beyond what they imagined.

Jean: Yes, that's wonderful!

Devaa: I haven't heard you do it in so long. I'm wondering even for those who are listening if you'd be willing to do some version of that exercise that you've done.

Jean: I don't remember which exercise it was because I've come up with so many thousands of them. But in listening to you, I do have some ideas that just came forth.

Devaa: That's perfect!

Jean: Maybe I can put them forward, okay?

Devaa: That's great!

Jean: I think it's the question of what do we want to help evoke in women today? I would say it is the genius of larval minds. I mean, women as superb catalysts, carriers of new genesis as the world is getting ready to move. I mean, women who think in varied postures. They are given to silent contemplation to stock your spiritual incomes so as to have the wherewithal for both ethical and creative expenditures and moral courage. I mean, women everywhere with a sufficiency of intellectual and moral passion to explore new ways of being for their body, their minds, their souls. With this, they have the ability to present the availability of an unobstructed universe, both within and without. Science is not enough. Religion is certainly not enough. Art is not enough. Politics and economics are surely not enough, nor is beauty, nor is action, however disinterested nor however sublime is contemplation. Nothing short of everything will really do.

We find ourselves in the midst of the most massive shift of perspective humankind has ever known, a new set of values, holistic, syncretic relationship and process-oriented, organic, spiritual, rising within us and around us. These are

values native to women and women's ways of knowing. Though the forces of entropy and fear really do seek to contain or regress us, we know there is no going back especially given the massive challenges that face everyone of us today. When I started to talk about this with my two friends, Scilla Elworthy and Rama, a gathering of women to design a world that works from a woman's perspective, I thought about some various things. I thought about how do we inquire and encourage the inquiry into shaping a planetary civilization attuned to nature? How do we go about things that we were doing, training women from all levels of socioeconomic life to grow new ways of being in a world of so much change, to elevate, to deepen the discourse and the dialog on global affairs from women's perspectives? And, of course, how do we support cooperative international efforts that lead to common good, explore new forms of spirituality for a global era and to enhance human solidarity through the honoring of different cultures and discover the ways and means of the woman as a social artist? One who can help individuals, organizations, and cultures and really move into evolutionary and integral agendas and novelty? I mean, we are living in a time of an enormous emerging ecology of minds and psyches, our availability to each other. We are being rescaled to planetary proportion but to do that we have to become resonant and intimate with our own depth. Those are some of the thoughts that occur in some of my earlier writings.

Devaa: Well, Jean, as I know we're coming to the end of our conversation, I'm wondering if you'd be willing to leave our listeners with a few practical thoughts about if people really want to active this full potential and live in alignment with these feminine values that you are putting forward. What would be a few practical things you would recommend to someone who is saying, "Yes. I'm on board. You're speaking my language and now here I am in my daily life. How do I put this into practice?"

Jean: Well, as we know, there is so much that is available now that the issue is what do you do with an abundance of muchness?

Devaa: Yes, that's true.

Jean: First of all, you find yourself a few good friends that are willing to go on this journey of new becoming with you. I think that's very important because it's so easy to fall into the dregs of old ways of being, how old habits are hard to die and they finally die.

Devaa: I think that's why so many people are interested in all these different kinds of online programs and things because they do find a community of people who are interested in the same thing that might not live geographically in their backyard.

Jean: That's right, I mean, between The Shift Network, the Evolving Wisdom network and others that are popping up all over the place, there is the world's wisdom traditions and some of the wisest people on the planet out there. It used to be that you had to search for years and go over mountains and rivers.

Devaa: Or go into a cave.

Jean: Yeah, to find the one person who would say, "I have nothing to teach you but I can show you how to make good shoes" and so you would stay three years to make good shoes. Then maybe he might tell you something interesting and then send you on to somebody else. But now it's all there. Put it out in your mind. Put it out among your friends. The books are there. The seminars are there. The wisdom that each contains for the other is there. We can really be present to each other, to meet in an ongoing teaching/learning club or teaching/learning community. It's not about psychotherapy. Let's say if you have somebody who's just in the dregs of the dregs, that's not what it's about. But it is about people growing together. Read the books. Look at some of the teleseminars. Share with each other what you learn. Grow together and then begin to get a sense of what do I want from the universe? What does the universe want from me? What do we, the universe and I, want together? It's that kind of thing I believe.

Devaa: Beautiful, I mean, what's powerful you're talking about is it's such a huge abundance of possibilities. Then, very simply, you're going back to the basics of learning, sharing and that it doesn't have to be such a ridiculously complex process to play a role. It can be as simple as finding what's really resonating with you, digging in, learning, growing. I would add rolling up your sleeves and not staying in the reading or the growing but then how am I going to really apply this to make a powerful impact for myself and my community? Because we need to also get out of just the meditation huts or yoga classes and really be bringing that wisdom into places in the world that are hungry for it. That is not happening often enough I don't think.

Jean: Well, I think you have said it all. You have given a superb agenda of the follow through of those who are feeling called to the greatness that resides within them and in their existence on this planet as one who is truly growing sufficiently. It's a constant learning experience in order to profoundly make a difference. These are the times and we are the people!

Devaa: We are the ones we've been waiting for. That is true enough. Well, thank you, Jean. It's always such an inspiration and an honor to be with you. I bow down for how many years you've been staying with this and staying really at the leading edge of what's evolving in our humanity. I'm really delighted to hear about the work that you're doing specifically with women around the world so thank you for all that you bring. It's really been a delight.

Jean: Thank you so much!

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