

ACTinG Bulletin #13 July 2025

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Two things to bring to your attention this month:

Firstly, it is with both sadness and gratitude for her life that we honour the passing of Joanna Macy on July 19th. A most amazing woman of wisdom, Joanna's life was dedicated to teaching creative ways to engage with the psychological impacts of the environmental crisis upon us.

From the *Work That Reconnects* website we read:

Joanna Rogers Macy leaves a legacy that will long continue to inform and energize both the work of healing the world from the frenzy of industrialized capitalism, and the complementary movements to come home to the true nature of our being. For, as she would say, we are embedded in the web of life. From the late 1970's, in her early mid-life on, Joanna devoted much of her energy to the development and dissemination of the body of work that became known as the Work That Reconnects. Working with colleagues throughout the world, and with the steady support of her husband Fran Macy, this work was enriched by her many related passions: the Sarvodaya movement for peace in Sri Lanka, whose efforts she and Fran ardently supported; the cultivation and connection with her teachers in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, from which root concepts of the Work That Reconnects arose; and her work with nuclear guardianship, for she felt in her bones the call of the future beings to muster all of our wits for the protection of the web of life.

At the height of the "cold war" in the 1970s, after her own awakening to the dangers of nuclear power in particular, Joanna made a discovery: when a group of concerned people spoke to each other their fears, their terror, and even their despair, a spirit of connection arose in the group, and a clarity of focus and release of energy fueled strategic planning and action. Others were making this same discovery (psychologist Chellis Glendinning in particular was an early collaborator). The resulting "despair work," with its "despair and empowerment workshops," countervailed the numbing of terror and overwhelm, and the forces of the military/industrial growth culture which would have us live out our lives entirely within its story of fear and domination.

Joanna was a great storyteller. She had us in the palm of her hand, and we knew ourselves as our larger selves when she told of the Shambhala Warriors (surely we were meant to be warriors too; indeed, surely we had been secret warriors all along, preparing for our turns in the halls of power).

Secondly, I have included in this newsletter the full PDF of my (Cath Connelly) book *Handbook of Hope: Emerging Stories Beyond a Disintegrating World*. It is a very practical handbook, offered as one entry point into exploring a world beyond despair. The chapters in this handbook cover a broad range of topics, from changing agricultural practices, mental health issues, living a life of radical simplicity to how our indigenous sisters and brothers have been able to maintain hope despite all that they have

experienced. Each chapter begins by inviting you to reflect on the main ideas that are relevant to each particular topic. You will then find two or more case studies of actual stories where people have reached beyond despair and found new ways of thinking, new ways of being and some questions for reflection. Work with this handbook alone or maybe form a small discussion group. You will find here the material you need to explore our emerging stories, to begin telling your own stories, to find a reason to hope. I hope you find this a useful, inspiring resource.