

Mothers Save the World

The View From 2020

by Oralee Stiles

*Women have the most unrealized potential
to change what is happening in the world.
I want to inspire visions and possibilities.
Visions lead and actions matter.*

Mothers matter.

Mothers can save the world.

*Add your inspirations to this book.
And pass it on.*



With gratitude for my mother and grandmother

My mother drew this pen and ink sketch from my grandmother's porch swing. It captures cherished childhood memories of being embraced and loved by my mother and grandmother. The beauty of the earth, the warmth and safety of my home and the new gift of technology encircled me.

The power lines entered the picture after World War II as part of the Rural Electrification Act. There was a vision to bring electricity across the United States. It happened.

May all children be embraced by the beauty of nature, the benefits of technology and the safety of a loving home.

My mother, Elsa Horn Stiles, was one of two women to get a Masters of Science degree at Oregon State in 1926. She used pen and ink sketches to illustrate her master's thesis in botany.

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It is Mother's Day in the year 2020

The fresh smell of hope fills the air. This is the year of CLARITY. We see with 20/20 vision. We hear encouraging news of the changes taking place. Our spirits lift. There is purpose in our stride as we gather together. We are mothers and grandmothers taking our stand in silence in the parks, at schools and in churches, mosques, synagogues, temples across the country and around the world.

Why do we gather? We are standing as we have for 15 years. Some of us stand every day; some on our Holy days - Friday, Saturday, or Sunday. The biggest gathering in the United States is on Mother's Day.

As we stand in silence, we feel our unity. We stand for our children and grandchildren and for **all** children in the generations to come.

It all started very simply. Two grandmothers stood in silence in a park all day. If people asked what they were doing, they said they were standing to save the world. Many people laughed, some scoffed and some begin to stand with them. In a few days, women were standing all around the earth to save the world

No one remembers whether this was a true story. Some say it was a grandmother's vision and gift that took hold in the hearts of women. Sharon Mehdi wrote a story for her baby granddaughter in 2004, **The Great Silent Grandmother Gathering**. It inspired people, was widely read and is still in print. People shared the story through e-mails. Women in Ohio created a web site in many languages to spread the idea, standingwomen.org.

As women standing, we began to think about what it meant and what it would take to save the world. Possibilities began to spring forth from our fertile minds. Standing in silence together gave us time and space to gestate, carry and give birth to our creativity. Inspiration made it flourish. Action made it real.

On this Mother's Day in 2020, we stand in the park in West Linn, Oregon, and around the world. We reflect on the myriad of absolutely amazing projects and connections that have happened in the last 13 years.

Mothers Mourning

There is **Mothers Mourning**, created by women who are healing the enormous grief carried in the hearts and bodies of mothers and grandmothers whose children have been killed in wars.

In December, 2008, the very first connecting began. A planeload of mothers and grandmothers from the United States landed in Baghdad. All of them were grieving the death of their military sons and daughters.

Mothers and grandmothers of Iraqi sons and daughters killed in their own country met them at the airport. The Iraqi women housed the American women in their homes.

The mothers and grandmothers based their reaching out to each other on the deeply embedded, universal and instinctual power of motherhood. They recognized in each other the **pain** of this ultimate sacrifice.

They often did not speak each other's language but they all spoke the grief of the heart. They shared pictures of their children. They hugged and cried in each other's arms.

They used universal language:

silence,

laughter,

tears,

smiles,

touch,

humming,

lullabies,

sighs,

and pantomime.

They all knew that conversations about right and wrong in religions, politics, and values have kept us apart. If a mother began talking about who was right and who was wrong in the death of her child, the other mothers put their finger to their lips saying "Shhhhhhhhhhh" and begin to hum lullabies.

The mothers stayed with what connected them: the love of their children no matter how different they were from one another in other areas of their lives. They mourned together not only the loss of their children and grandchildren but also the children who would never be born to those who died.

Out of that profound grief, these mothers decided to share the children and grandchildren of sons and daughters who were still alive. Now there are Iraqi children who have an American grandmother. She writes to them, sends gifts from her community and is saving airline miles so they can visit her in the United States. Now there are American children who have an Iraqi grandmother. She writes to them, sends gifts from her community and hopes they will come to Iraq to visit her.

Newspapers around the world picked up the story of this visit. The power of the way the women opened their hearts to one another moved readers to tears, to

compassion and then to action. Other mothers who had lost their sons and daughters in war contacted mothers in the countries where their children had been killed.

Now there are **Mothers Mourning** groups grieving together and sharing their children in Ireland; in North and South Korea; in the United States and Viet Nam; in France and Algeria; in Russia and Germany; in Bosnia and Slovakia; in Sudan and Darfur; in China and Tibet; in Palestine and Israel; in Russia and Chechnya; in Lebanon and Syria; in Greece and Turkey; in England and Argentina; in Afghanistan and Russia; in the United States and Afghanistan; in . . .

(Where are the war-torn areas in your heart?)

As other mothers and grandmothers witnessed the deep grief and compassion shared by the **Mothers Mourning**, they realized they could also take action. There were children who were alive and yet slowly starving to death. This was no longer tolerable. The debilitating agony of those who could not feed their own children made it imperative for others to step in.

Mothers Feeding and Nurturing

Amazing work has been done by **Mothers Feeding and Nurturing**. These women met in 2009 and began a serious study of the costs involved in feeding the hungry children of the world. They thought about calling their campaign "No child left hungry" and then decided on "Every Child Sacred."

They looked at the costs of supporting local farmers and food distribution in each climate region. They examined the costs of proper food distribution around the world. They studied the costs of wells in villages that did not have clean water. They looked at the costs of filtering water.

To everyone's surprise, the total cost for enough food and clean water for every starving child in the world was less than the money spent by the United

States in just two months of fighting in Iraq. And there was **enough food already** available in the world to feed these children.

They saw that part of the problem was getting the food to where it was needed. So, they drew up a plan to use the military system in each country to transport and distribute food and water instead of weapons of destruction.

These plans and the costs for the food were published in newspapers and magazines and websites around the world. Mothers of the top military brass in each country began to demand that their powerful sons and daughters take on this project.

"All our children fed!" became the chant of women around the globe. They gathered in circles around military bases and chanted. They felt the strength in each other. More and more women joined them.

The military in the Republic of South Africa was the first to respond to their call. Mothers and children went along with the food to help distribute it in areas where children were starving.

When the soldiers saw the difference this made in the desperate villages, they wanted to do more. Soon they were transporting tools and seeds for farming. Some of the soldiers took leave from their military duties to help start family and village farms.

Then the military in Viet Nam, Bangladesh and Ethiopia did the same thing. Hope and inspiration began spreading to other areas of the world.

An open space for your inspiration:

Mothers Teaching

Mothers and grandmothers who had taught school began to visualize how they could contribute. Could they reach out so all children in the world could read and write in their own language?

By 2010, teachers in Japan began **Mothers Teaching**. Soon there were groups in Europe, South America and Asia. The mothers began in their own countries and then shared ideas, methods and teaching tools with mothers in other countries. The Internet served as their connecting and supporting space.

By 2012, **Mothers Teaching** had global exchange programs to support literacy in mothers who could then teach the children of their village.

Mothers Shareholding

Wonderful things happened when **Mothers Shareholding** began inspiring others to take action. The mothers were all shareholders in major corporations. The mothers owning Exxon stock began the movement. One mother was outraged when gas prices were over \$3.50 a gallon while Exxon was reporting profits over nine billion dollars in one quarter. She began contacting others.

They flooded the annual shareholders meeting and presented a totally new proposal. Take half the profits and fund alternative energy projects in parts of the world that have no electricity. It took a while to gain the momentum for this change. As more and more mothers saw the possibilities, more joined the effort. Solar power and wind turbines are the biggest successes. There is now electricity in remote villages and on islands around the globe.

Soon mothers in other corporations caught the vision. They proposed changes and cast their votes. Then the publishing and broadcasting companies used half of their profits to support literacy programs, libraries and computer labs started by **Mothers Teaching**.

The food conglomerates used half of their profits to support sustainable family and community farms and the efforts of **Mothers Feeding and Nurturing**. The pharmaceutical companies used half of their profits to create and support health clinics and bring medical teams and medicines to areas that had none.

The companies producing weapons and military equipment used half of their profits to repair terrible war destruction to people and land. Soldiers defused unexploded bombs and land mines in Southeast Asia and Africa. Grants helped communities restore the land with trees, flowers and food crops.

Children who had lost arms and legs in land mine explosions helped design playground equipment and toys they could use. Military men and women returning home wounded used the profits to design and create clinics and centers for their physical and emotional needs. Funding went to brain research to help the large number of returnees with brain injury. The staggering and **on-going cost** of waging war and compensating for the wounding became more apparent to everyone.

Mothers Acting

Mothers in sports and entertainment began to tithe their earnings to support the energy and creativity of children. The model of "Habitat for Humanity" was used to build environments to invite children's imaginative play. People in crowded neighborhoods built enticing and collaborative play spaces with equipment and materials from **Mothers Acting**.

Entertainers mentored children in acting and theater. Children wrote their own plays and produced them. Sports stars put their prestige to work. They led children in teamwork in their communities. They helped schools understand how important physical activity is throughout the school day. They understood that kids need to move. Teachers created lessons plans that included learning while being active.

All of us have had a MOTHER

While not all of us ARE mothers, all of us HAVE had a mother. More and more people connected with the excitement of these projects and wanted to be included. Soon they were acting out of love for the children. The innate energy of motherhood was emerging and becoming visible. People experienced how deeply precious the children are, how much joy and laughter and aliveness they bring to all of those who love them.

Gradually, and at first imperceptibly, the cultural values of the Western world began to change. All the professions that cared for children were highly valued and acknowledged. Creative people looked at these professions in new ways. The pay for teachers and childcare providers began to match the pay of professionals in computer and medical fields.

T-shirts that said "He who has the most toys wins" were remade into T-shirts that read,

**"We All Win
When Children Win"**

Qualities of Mothers and Grandmothers

The qualities we experienced as the norm began to shift. Qualities of mothers and grandmothers **at their best** became the norm.

Greed transformed into **generosity**.
Sarcasm transformed into **compassion**. The use of **intuition** to make decisions was honored as much as intellectual analysis. **Truth telling** became more important than covering ones behind or looking good.

Inviting people to our homes for shared meals and engaging conversations became a favored way of entertaining. People slowed down. Families ate more **home cooked meals**. People valued **artistic talents** and the gifted ability to **improvise**. The **ideals of indigenous peoples** and their inseparable **passion for nature were valued** and taught to their own children and the larger society. **Loving respect** was given to all people.

These were the qualities of my own mother. All the words in bold are gifts she lived and gave me.

As you think about **the best** of your mother and grandmother, what would you put in bold?

As these attributes, attitudes and qualities become the predominant part of our culture, we **KNOW** that

Mothers Save the World.

Epilogue

The year 2020 reminded me of 20/20 vision. What if we could clearly see possibilities for change? The story looking back from 2020, is straightforward and hopeful. It is an unfolding story.

The actions needed are complex. These will emerge from a ground swell of maternal energy and inspiration in both women and men. They will not come from existing governments. They have not. We can no longer wait or hope for that to happen.

It is **we** the people; **we** the mothers and grandmothers; **we** the fathers and grandfathers; **we** the lovers of children and the earth that can and will save the world. **The skills, resources, and technology already exist.** Why and how we use them will come from our inner strength and values. **We each have a unique contribution to make.**

The **sacredness and potential of children** can unite people across the differences to take action on their behalf.

This will enhance life for all of us.

* * * * *

I invite you to add your inspiration to this story
and pass it on.

I would love to know
what your imagination says;
what your vision shows;
what possibilities you hold.

Please email me at Oralee.Stiles@gmail.com

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About Oralee Stiles

“Grandma Oralee” plays with and engages her precious grandchildren and their friends in Denver, Portland, Detroit, Boston, Amherst, and Berkeley. They fuel her passion for a world in which children flower in their own beauty and are embraced, loved and cherished by all.

She is a Spiritual Director at the Interfaith Spiritual Center in Portland, Oregon, www.InterfaithSpiritualCenter.com and offers groups and spiritual direction in Portland and Bend, Oregon

She is in awe of the inspiration given and of the support from family and friends that have come to her in writing and presenting this story. She is filled with gratitude to be part of this vision and for the possibilities ahead.

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