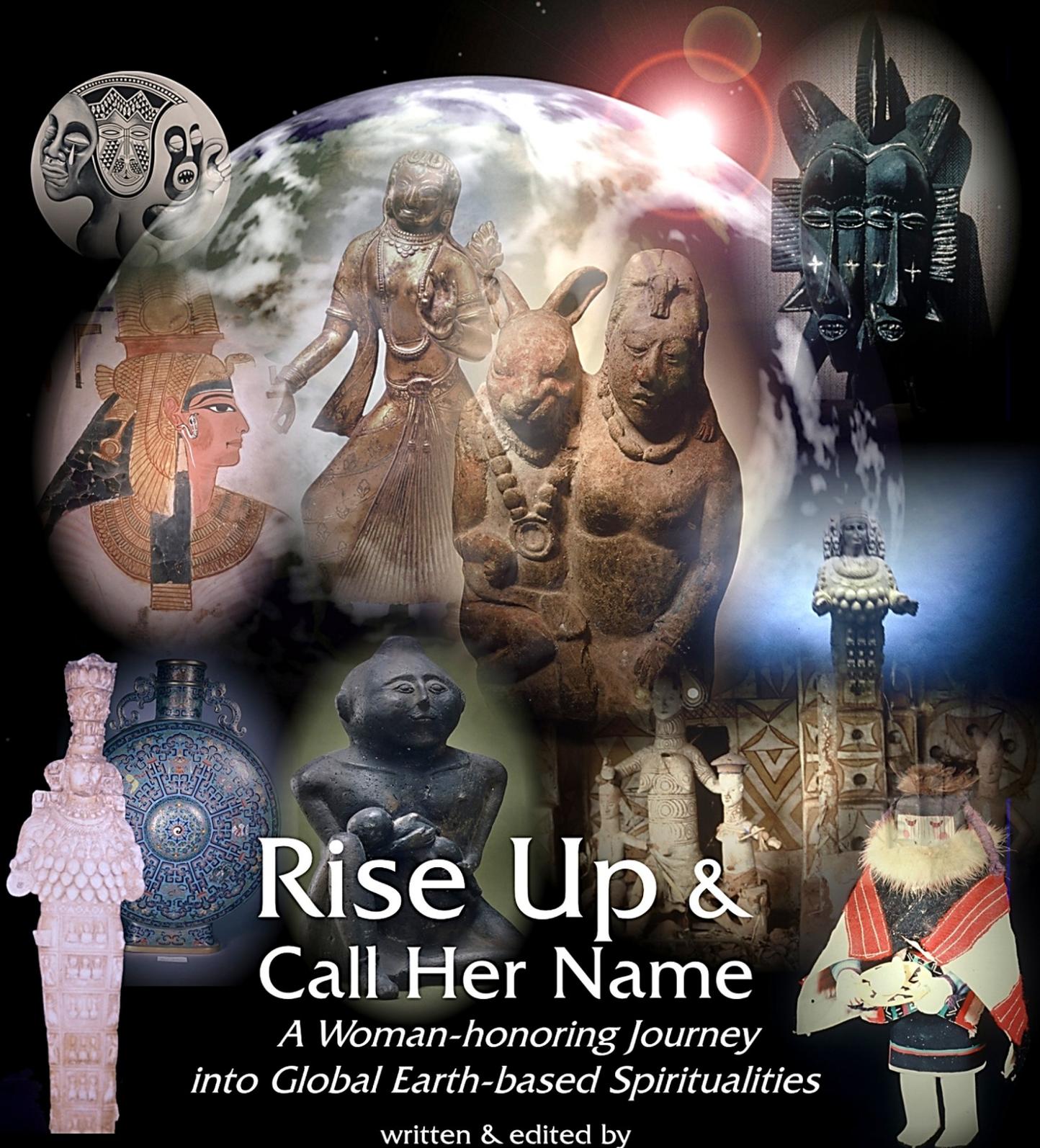


OVERVIEW SNAPSHOTS



Rise Up & Call Her Name

*A Woman-honoring Journey
into Global Earth-based Spiritualities*

written & edited by
Elizabeth Fisher

Rise Up & Call Her Name

OVERVIEW SNAPSHOTS

RISE UP & CALL HER NAME

A WOMAN-HONORING JOURNEY INTO GLOBAL EARTH-BASED SPIRITUALITIES

by Elizabeth Fisher

In honor of **MAYA ANGELOU** (April 4, 1928 – May 28, 2014)

A brave, powerful, and inspiring voice who spoke despite adversity. May we all do so.

STILL I RISE (excerpted from her famous poem)

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise....
Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high, still I'll rise....
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise...I rise...I rise

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The website www.RiseUpAndCallHerName.com contains lots of information and additional articles related to the themes of this program. Check it out!

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WHAT'S IN THIS BOOKLET?

For a full description of the components of this course, open the back cover of this booklet and read the flyer, including its reverse side.

Key insights and helpful tools from the *Rise Up & Call Her Name* experience make up this booklet. These selections provide a taste of the wide-range of important spiritual and cultural material available in this course. Evidence of its impact well beyond the groups who undertook this journey is also included as well as links to related writers. The sections are:

Two bulleted lists conveniently summarize: **earth-honoring beliefs** and the **process of taking a journey**.

Map of the Journey provides a quick overview of the cultural aspects and places represented.

Discoveries on the Journey Gathered together here, these summarize the material to be presented in each session. They appear in the *Leader's Guide* at the beginning of each session. By reading these in sequence and meditating on the images, you will experience the flow of the journey and can envision the activities that are included.

Lasting Impressions summarizes the fundamental concerns of this program. Priority is given to the values of equality, compassion, nurturance, creativity, self-expression and contributing to the common good. Central are: exploring the meanings of process, and interconnection; and examining the interplay between diversity and individuality and overcoming racism.

Spiritual and Cultural Sensitivity Notes Each session includes a note or two that highlights an important social justice consideration which arises when dealing with the cross-cultural material contained in the session, illustrating concern for accurate representation of social realities.

A biography of Elizabeth Fisher and a listing of the *Thirteen Most Influential People in Women's Spirituality* which includes both Liz Fisher and Shirley Ranck (author of *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven*), provides an overview of this important and lasting spirituality movement, highlighting several other central authors and ideas.



INTRODUCTION

Rise Up & Call Her Name: A Woman-honoring Journey into Global Earth-based Spiritualities was first published in 1995 and reissued in 2007 in up-to-date technological formats while retaining the original material. This booklet gives you a taste of what it is like to travel with the female divine in her many guises. We are reminded She can be outraged at injustices as much as She can understand and forgive.

Thousands of groups and individuals have taken this journey. It has become a **prominent feature of an international movement to reclaim the importance of diverse forms of the female divine** cross-culturally.

Knowing about the existence of positive female religious imagery can be a major revelation for those raised to believe male-centered monotheistic religions were the only possibility when looking for meaningful perspectives on ethical considerations.

In 2013 a widely circulated list of the *Thirteen Most Influential People in Women's Spirituality* includes both Elizabeth Fisher, author *Rise Up and Call Her Name* and Shirley Ranck, author of *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven*. It reads:

Elizabeth Fisher and Shirley Ranck—authors of germinal religious education curriculums focused on feminist spirituality and woman-honoring traditions, originally published by the UU Women and Religion program, their work with *Rise Up & Call Her Name* and *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven* continues to change the lives of women around the country by introducing them to a vision of what the world could be like if the divine was imaged as female.

These two programs, which are companion projects starting in the 1980s (*Cakes* was first published in 1986, revised 2005), **synthesize spiritual tools with information** from a variety of sources into carefully crafted multimedia sessions. Testimony abounds that these programs open doors to further creative efforts on the part of on-going group members and individuals who went on to exert lasting impact on their communities.

Rise Up also **explicitly uplifts the widespread occurrences of women in leadership throughout history** as fully engaged participants in the ethical,



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spiritual and community concerns often reserved for men. Exploring the diverse qualities assigned to goddesses—while addressing modern day misogyny —quickly boosts the self-esteem of women and girls.

Collaboration throughout the development process makes this program uniquely representative of diverse wisdom. **Conversations with women from a variety of racial backgrounds informed the structure** and selection of material. Personal stories, creative writings, songs, and chants authored by numerous women (and a few men who appreciate women) have been included in the fabric of this experience.

The course is also about **social justice and advocating for full human rights for women**. It provides a method for honoring the real women who went before us, the ancestors who upheld justice. *Rise Up* implies taking action and *Calling Her Name* combines appreciating female honoring spirituality with valuing each person's – and especially women's – intrinsic worth and dignity. This is a powerful and much needed practice in these times of disrespect and violence toward women worldwide.

The name of this course *Rise Up and Call Her Name* is a chant composed by Carolyn McDade which is part of the ritual "Seeking the Goddess in Ancestral Faces" written by Adele Smith, an African-American Unitarian Universalist minister, as a tribute to the strong women leaders in South Africa and North America. (The ritual is in the African-American session of this course.) Smith reminds us that each of the women honored made sacrifices to express her individual truths. As part of this ritual, participants are asked to remember women who have inspired them, and call out their names as well. As the journey progresses, the honoring extends to all participants, as each discovers the power of her or his individual gifts and talents and how to express themselves effectively.

Perhaps it is time for you to travel with her and discover that She responds to our inquiries, dialoguing with us as we solidify key values which shape our actions.

Elizabeth Fisher, Pacific Grove, California 2015



PRAISES FOR *RISE UP*

The following comments from leaders contain reflections of the impact of this course. Valuable observations reveal what can be gained from leading and participating in this journey.

Rev. Gregory Stewart is a former senior minister of the Unitarian Universalist Society of San Francisco and a seasoned religious educator teaching a range of materials over many years. *Rise Up* was taught in several congregations he served. He says: “What is most significant to me about *Rise Up* is the way participants are bonded to each other in and through the learning process. In every case, the use of *Rise Up* has led to on-going groups—some focusing on study, others ritual, and still others for personal support.

Rise Up has also served as a bridge between pagans and more “traditional” UUs within congregations I’ve served. When the need for pagan worship, rituals, and celebrations has arisen (and it always has, of course), I have often recommended that the exploration begin within the educational ministry of the church, as an adult Religious Education course—specifically, *Rise Up*. This opens up doors and increases everyone’s comfort level so that the exploration may continue through the worship, music, and outreach ministries of the congregation. Finally, the curriculum is simply so rich in the areas of pre-Christian and world religious approaches in theology/thealogy, and is presented in such an engaging way. Everybody will benefit from the spiritual and social transformation that the curriculum makes possible.”

“*Rise Up* provided me with freedom, clarity and energy I have not known in almost 50 years since I learned to “be a woman.” *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven* highlighted the dilemma and that it was shared. *Rise Up & Call Her Name* gave me the imagery and the symbols: the strong, powerful female who is nurturing, compassionate and vulnerable. I am no longer empty and alone...not angry, not afraid. I am alive...I have a voice. This is my voice.”
~ Rene Bond Collins, clinical social worker, participant in *Rise Up*



Rise Up & Call Her Name

From *Names of Endearment, Names of Love*, Sunday sermon preached by the Rev. Lilia Cuervo, First Parish in Cambridge, March 28, 2010

“A major experience with the names for the Holy happened in seminary, where I received an invitation to attend, *Rise Up & Call Her Name*. This curriculum honoring the feminine side of the divine is an approach to Earth-based spiritualities. It is not only exciting but very enriching culturally and religiously speaking. It promotes ecological awareness and inspires hope by helping those participating, change many old paradigms about race, women, and nature, into new, healthier paradigms.

At first, however, I was very reluctant to attend a workshop about the Goddess. Although I considered myself quite liberated at the time, still, old fears of the consequences of deviating from the all-powerful, masculine image of God confronted me. Now, I feel ashamed confessing, that in my ignorance, I was convinced that anything concerning Goddesses or Earth spiritualities was a thing of backward and simplistic people. For me the most powerful argument against attending the workshop however was that it had taken me years to finally erase from my mind the idea of God as a man with a beard. I did not want to start thinking of the Holy as a woman with long hair and addressing her with feminine names.

I knew, however, that one important challenge that we Unitarian Universalists face is the free and responsible search for truth and meaning, wherever we can find them. Therefore, wanting to be open and responsible, I put away, at least momentarily, what I thought were insurmountable doubts and attended the workshop. It was exciting to learn that many women and men in my own Unitarian Universalist religion had already overcome the old patriarchal teachings and provided a loving mother and Goddess for themselves. I could do the same.

One of the first things that impressed me the most was the staggering amount of names given to the Goddess; 11,000 according to one account; another surprise was the qualities expressed by those names. The awareness of the existence of the Goddess and of her different names and attributes in



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so many cultures, has added new dimensions to my spiritual life. It is enriching loving a cosmic mother in her different manifestations. I especially love her as Hecate, Isis, Kali Ma, and Kuan Yin. To this day, for me, the best effect from attending *Rise Up and Call Her Name* was that finally I could accept without a trace of doubt that, as a woman, I was not inferior to men, as I had been trained to believe. This for me was a huge source of inner peace and liberation.”

“*Rise Up*’s innovative approach skillfully integrates a variety of spiritual and intellectual methods of exploration...a model for woman-centered programming.” ~ Dr. Elinor Gadon, author *The Once and Future Goddess*

"I'm so glad you are re-issuing it. *Rise Up* remains one of the best works in the field." ~Dianne Jenett, Co-Director, Women's Spirituality MA Program at Sofia University, Palo Alto, California

“This curriculum teaches itself it is so well organized!” ~ Andrea Paulson, group leader of *Rise Up* in Belmont, Massachusetts.

“*Rise Up* has been an awesome learning experience. It is a truly wonderful program.” ~ Debbie Kirkland, Toronto, Ontario

“*Rise Up* has been a huge help to me in understanding the Goddess and worshipping the Divine Feminine. Personally, I feel everyone should participate in the curriculum and form his/her personal relationship with the Goddess.” ~ Marvin Brown, Athens, Ohio

“Thank you so much for this wonderful program. As a leader it is easy to follow and quite dynamic.” ~ Michelle Fischer, Atlanta, Georgia



EARTH-HONORING BELIEFS

As we experience aspects of traditions that have honored the Earth as a teacher for centuries, we begin a profound dialogue with ways, people, and practices we may never have heard of before. This is a beginning—the first sentences in a continuing conversation with those whose cultures, practices, contemporary artists and thinkers have something quite valuable to say about how they experience themselves on the Earth.

Rise Up is an attempt to delve into the following characteristics of these systems. Although during our journey we often explore these characteristics in connection with only one culture, these qualities and beliefs appear in many traditions that exhibit Earth-honoring beliefs.

- A spiritual journey has both an inner and outer nature.
- A healing power is often made available to us through honoring the female and the Earth.
- Spiritual communication is multi-dimensional.
- Sacred and secular worlds are one.
- Passive and active is not a true female/male dichotomy.
- Spiritual knowledge can present a key to fearlessness.
- Appreciating the process of life, death and rebirth, both in the physical and metaphorical sense, is central.
- Compassion is an important quality to develop.
- Direct experience of the sacred, sometimes called intuition, is of great value.
- When acting, it is important not to be attached to the outcome, but rather to be concerned with integrity.



BEING ON THE JOURNEY REQUIRES

- Engaging from the heart in a way that is different from intellectual study alone
- Undergoing without always understanding or being able to fit what we see or feel into a predetermined explanation
- Seeing with fresh eyes and the ability to remember what it was like to learn something new as a child
- Accepting a partial picture with the faith it will become more defined later
- Being able to tolerate ambiguity without losing track of a sense of meaning
- Being able to, over time, build a more complete picture from blocks of experience
- Respecting what may seem strange, compared to what we normally experience
- Feeling rather than thinking at times
- Trusting the process of discovering and becoming
- Appreciating mystery
- Experiencing inner and outer journeys which stimulate one another
- Holding a belief that experiences on the journey contribute to realizing our full potential
- Understanding that encounters on the journey enrich us while sometimes demanding that we change our outlook radically
- Returning to our communities and working to communicate the truths we have learned is an important aspect of a spiritual journey.



MAP OF THE JOURNEY

Rise Up & Call Her Name: A Woman-honoring Journey Into Global Earth-based Spiritualities is a journey of thought and activity. It uses various forms of art, dialogue and reflection to explore together what we believe and feel. It carries numerous qualities. Most important among these are:

- ✚ *Bringing awareness of the processes of nature into our contemporary spiritual life*
- ✚ *Nurturing self-respect in women and respect for women in men by making known the range of emotions and actions attributed to female deities and the respect accorded them in many spiritual traditions*
- ✚ *Expanding appreciation and respect given Earth-based spiritual traditions as well as the Earth-honoring aspects of several well-known religious belief systems*
- ✚ *Opening doors to cross-cultural interaction by fostering a respect for the richness of diversity*

Beginning the journey, we contact the Jewish/Semitic first wife of Adam, Lilith. We learn the lesson that many religions considered patriarchal may indeed have strong feminist roots as well. We also explore the inner and outer nature of a spiritual journey.

We learn the inherent worth of darkness by honoring the Dark Goddess Hecate from the ancient Mediterranean/Pre-Hellenic region. We encounter the three faces of this Goddess -- maiden, mother, and wise woman -- and begin to appreciate the processes of life, death and rebirth as central to existence, both in a physical and a metaphorical sense.

We next move toward Africa, the cradle of civilization. We become acquainted with the formative and central influences of black Africa in the highly developed Egyptian culture. We enter the temple of Isis, the ancient primal Goddess that was the source of much of the original Egyptian mythology. We consider healing power which is often made available through honoring the female and the Earth.



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The stories of three Yoruban orisha that originate in West Africa next capture our attention. They are: Oshun, Goddess of the River; Yemaja, Goddess of the Sea; and Oya, Goddess of the Winds of Change. We dance to drumming rhythms as we begin to experience the multi-dimensional aspect of spiritual communication.

Following the movement of African people to the "new world," we experience aspects of contemporary African American culture. We honor the Ancient Ancestral Mother and the belief that the sacred and secular are one. The experience of improvisation is brought alive through the uniquely inspired method of Afro-traditional quilting.

Continuing our global adventure, we arrive on the Asian sub-continent and hear of the power of Kali, a Mother Goddess in India, and explore the creative power of Shakti, the feminine principle, which teaches us that passive and active is not a true female/male dichotomy.

Moving through Asia we stop in Tibet and China and meet the popular Goddesses Tara and Kwan Yin, becoming familiar with some of the female-honoring aspects of Buddhism and Taoism. These religions teach us that compassion is an important quality to develop and that direct experience of the sacred, which is sometimes called intuition, is of considerable value. Many of the teachings of these traditions also demonstrate that when acting it is important not to be attached to the outcome, but rather to be concerned with integrity.

Culminating our Asian visit, we arrive on the islands of Japan and encounter the Shinto Goddess Amaterasu and her lessons of self-empowerment. We learn from the tale of her withdrawal and then return to society that our impact on our communities can be significant even though, at times, it is difficult to accept the behavior of others.

Next we move toward Central and North America. We first land in Hawaii and contact Pele, the exciting Goddess of the volcano. Here we acknowledge the ties between ecology and Earth-based spirituality and consider how the processes of the Earth are held sacred by some indigenous peoples.



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Arriving in Mesoamerica, we also meet the Goddess Tonantzin who is at the core of contemporary devotion to the Mexican Virgin of Guadalupe. We also discover the ancient Goddess Corn Mother and meditate upon the ways the fruit of our harvest becomes the seed of our future undertakings.

We next touch the roots of the First Peoples of the Americas through the stories and masks of a Lakota Sacred Pipe Woman. We discover the North American continent is steeped in ancient female-honoring traditions as we encounter the American Indian Goddesses White Buffalo Calf Woman, Spider Woman and Changing Woman. We also consider how sacred truths sometimes come directly to individuals if they are able to recognize them.

Knowing that we must return to our everyday lives, yet realizing how we have changed, we share what we have learned and explore where we wish to go from here.

DISCOVERIES ON THE JOURNEY

The following thirteen pages, entitled *Discoveries on the Journey*, are the first pages in each session in the *Rise Up Leader's Guide*. Each features a narrative description of what is going to happen in the session, providing a quick overview of the session's structure. An image of a goddess from the area of the globe focused on in the session is included as well.

By reading these narratives in sequence and meditating on the images, you will experience the flow of the journey and can envision the activities that are included.



LASTING IMPRESSIONS

FROM *RISE UP & CALL HER NAME*

Many themes are explored in *Rise Up*. The essential ones are introduced here; the longer curriculum provides extensive opportunities for exploration. When developing *Rise Up*, I encountered a wide range of attitudes within all cultures I reviewed. In addition to a focus on woman- and earth-honoring perspectives, I searched for aspects of varied traditions where a commitment to the values of equality, compassion, nurturance and creativity were openly expressed; and where a priority was placed on maintaining the common good as well as exploring individual spiritual growth and fulfillment.

Honoring the Female

Over the years, as I read and studied in the field of world religions, occasionally I would see a mention of a goddess. However, these mentions were minimal at best. Yet, thousands of powerful female religious images have existed throughout time all over the globe, a startling fact for most people raised on the male-only imagery of Christianity, Judaism and Islam, the three branches of western monotheistic religion. A dictionary published by Oxford University Press, covers 11,500 goddesses from locations all over the globe. According to the author, Martha Ann, who also contributed to *Rise Up*, this is just scratching the surface!

As I approached the task of crystallizing my vision of *Rise Up*, I discovered and uncovered essential aspects of Earth-based Spirituality, past and present, which honor the female divine around the globe. While *Rise Up* focuses on prominent goddesses from select areas of the globe, what is being explored is far larger than the lore of individual deities. When goddesses are not only honored, but are seen as powerful, they provide modeling for a wider variety of female behavior. This range of qualities creates a much richer array of behavior for women to emulate, and men to appreciate in women, and perhaps if they are able to overcome gender typing, in themselves.



Awareness of Interconnection

Spiritual journeys are about all kinds of webs—linkages between ideas, impressions, feelings, and beings. These webs are not linear but multidimensional and multidirectional. Providing ways to bring awareness of these interconnected webs, which are the processes of nature, into our contemporary spiritual life is a chief purpose of this curriculum. In their healthiest forms, natural systems are complex, subtle, diverse and inherently beautiful. To respect this beauty and to feel a part of it is to be Earth-based.

Many contemporary ethical thinkers are also realizing the profound connections between attitudes held toward the female and those toward the natural world. A positive attitude toward nature encourages a holistic vision that respects all humanity—regardless of gender and ethnicity—while also valuing the multitude of life forms in the web of existence.

Numerous spiritual traditions, past and present, around the globe build their beliefs on a respect for these natural processes which exhibit interdependence. An active concern for the well-being of all parts of the web of existence is a central precept of the religious practices explored in *Rise Up*.

So often we are lead to believe success in life is more about human society and construction and not primarily about the processes of nature and protecting diverse biological systems. Today we are learning the harsh lessons of ignoring the realities of the planet we are a part of. To be Earth-based is to come humbly to the truths of nature and to seek to understand and live according to their dictates. Earth-honoring spiritualities find these positive and enriching, not obstacles to overcome or realities to dominate.

Past, Present and Future

The new paradigm of interrelatedness has two faces, one that turns backward toward history, and one that looks forward to a fresh mode of living. For thousands of years, people the world over held a common belief: the Universe was alive. For this reason, continuity with the past is part of the new pattern. Earth-based spiritualities often reach back into history to a time when change was a part of the understanding of how the world works. We



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honor natural based change when we speak the name of goddesses who embody natural processes. Honoring these goddesses also reclaims a sense of continuity upon which to base a future vision.

Process Is an Important Key

I have found that goddesses are about process. For me, they are close to the Earth, rarely transcending the planet on which we live. Rather, they live *with* us, advising, not dictating—drawing us into an understanding when we are ready, showing compassion when all seems lost. They are fierce defenders of their people and powerful role models. They are not in contrast to gods but live among them. They are collaborators who need humans to work with them. In these times of trouble globally, goddesses are offering us wisdom. In the words of the Japanese American artist Mayumi Oda, “*Goddess is Coming to You; Can You Come to Her?*”

Why Multicultural Exploration?

Rise Up, by opening some doors to cross-cultural interaction, is fostering a respect for the richness that diversity of all types can bring to us. The ability to dialogue with an emotionally open attitude that supports interconnectedness, while honoring maximum diversity, is crucial. By becoming more aware of the contributions of a variety of cultural traditions and racial groups that share Planet Earth, diversity can begin to take on its proper identity as a gift rather than a problem to be solved. It is my hope *Rise Up* will pique interest in continuing cross-cultural exchange that fuels outer exploration and inner growth.

Cultural Appreciation

Another essential theme is the expansion of appreciation and respect accorded Earth-based spiritual traditions as well as the Earth-honoring aspects of several well-known religious belief systems. These cultures, which honor goddesses and respect the processes of nature as valuable teachers, venerate both continuity and change. They accept the primary process of nature which is birth, life, decay, gestation, rebirth and remember



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that new life grows from the spent energy of previous effort. Shamanistic cultures and more traditional religious approaches that incorporate some of the wisdom that has been shared by peoples who observe and appreciate the workings of nature teach us to appreciate a wide range of phenomena we may not have considered previously. By appreciating we honor and respect these peoples, reversing some of the damage done to these cultures by attitudes that reduce sacred beliefs to superstitions.

Shared Values

We must also be willing to recognize our similarities, especially in the important psychological and spiritual category of shared values. Affirming similarities as well as honoring differences creates the possibility of drawing people out of the continuing isolation of closed systems.

When creating this curriculum, I came to believe it is far more important to judge a person by their ethical intent than the particulars of their personal belief concerning supernatural forces or deities. Atheists can sit down next to deists, animists and monotheists can conceptualize the existence of spirit differently and still interrelate to the benefit of both. All that is needed is the ability to tolerate, even appreciate, a position that varies from their own, while agreeing to standards of fairness, equality and mutual respect.

Diversity and Individuality

Individuality is a highly prized value in our society. No one wants to be treated as a representative of a group just because they are a particular color, ethnicity, or sex. But, what makes up our individuality, in some part, has to do with our roots and how we express and utilize the gifts of our cultural heritage. One challenge we face as North Americans is reconciling an appreciation for roots while developing our own unique individuality that is not bound or determined by our ancestry. Part of this challenge is also finding ways to enhance our individuality through contact with others who may spring from very different roots. How do we begin to enact our desire to accept and value a wide variety of roots as positive influences, while learning to interrelate for our individual and mutual benefit?



Global Community and Local Diversity

Even though *Rise Up* takes the form of an international journey, this curriculum is both an international and a North American encounter with a two-fold purpose. One is to enhance our feeling of connection to Earth-based cultures on all continents so we can become more sensitive to global realities. The other is to tap into the variety of ancestral roots that form the contemporary North American community.

Multicultural America

As we look to the future, North America will become even more multicultural. In reality, America has been diverse since its very beginning and is becoming more so. Currently, almost half of the American people do not trace their origins to Europe. (These people are concentrated in major cities across the country such as New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Detroit, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Los Angeles although other parts of the country are becoming increasingly diverse as well.)

Indigenous people are a small part of the population but a group that is reasserting its claims to its own identity and land-dwelling. By 2056, demographers claim most Americans will trace their descent to almost anywhere but white Europe.

Rise Up offers a unique perspective which is not often represented. The synthesis experienced when appreciation for diversity is coupled with women-honoring attitudes stimulates fresh understanding.

Overcoming Racism

Racism and ethnocentrism are two of the most difficult topics to confront in an increasingly multicultural North America. Past injustices that continue to control the present social realities often block interaction. African American author Toni Morrison asserts that race has functioned as a "metaphor" necessary for construction of "American-ness." Morrison feels the myth of "American" is defined as white and does not allow for the diversity



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"American" should represent. As visibility of people of all races and ethnicities increases and opportunities to participate in society becomes more widespread for a variety of people, this definition of "American" is becoming more inclusive.

Still, it is almost as if, as racial diversity becomes more prominent, challenging long held assumptions about "the other," we are still lacking safe forums where our feelings about racial issues can be shared openly and resolved. This course provides multiple tools for opening up this conversation. Anti-racism work has also surfaced the need to confront and eradicate racism within ourselves, no matter what our DNA contains. One of the best ways to do this is to learn of the contributions so many cultures have made to our common heritage. *Rise Up* is a rich collection of these gifts which have enlivened all of our lives, often without acknowledgement.

Is Guilt The Answer?

From the UUWF publication *Racial Justice: For Such a Time as This*.

No one is born a racist Racism is not a genetically transmitted disease. It is a systematically transmitted disease. Think about how that word is constructed "dis" and "ease." This disease is in our culture and we incorporate it just as unconsciously as we breathe in polluted air. Our move toward racial justice is a move toward wholeness, toward health, toward becoming at ease with one another.

Don't confuse guilt with responsibility Responsibility is our responding ability; it is taking responsibility for the world as we would re-create it. Guilt, on the other hand, robs us of the strength to respond because guilt undermines our self-esteem. Guilt is the glue that holds our painful emotions together and causes us to face change with despair or denial. Our self-love is our strength—the very strength we need to be responsible. Blame is pointless, but understanding helps us find reasons for our actions in the contexts of the situations and allows us to choose differently.



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Elizabeth Fisher is the author and producer of two major popular educational programs, *Rise Up and Call Her Name: A Woman-honoring Journey into Global Earth-based Spiritualities* and *Gender Justice: Women's Rights are Human Rights*, focused on global feminist spirituality and international social justice advocacy.

Her experience provides a unique synthesis of:

- wide-ranging scholarship with an emphasis on women's history and social status;
- in-depth conversations with many women from varied social backgrounds;
- exploration of diverse spiritual beliefs which honor the female in religious imagery, narrative and iconography.

Her personal insights are informed by:

- participating for 30 years in the Women and Religion Movement, providing sophisticated programming which incorporates experiential techniques;
- facilitating groups as well as developing written materials and workshops on the Shared Leadership concept;
- advocating for political and social actions that protect and expand equal rights for women, minorities and immigrants globally;
- combining social welfare advocacy with exploration of ethical, spiritual and religious themes which support social equality and woman-honoring practices.

Liz's professional experience includes mental health counselor, administrator of legal services to low income individuals, and senior editorial and acquisition positions in major publishing firms. She holds a Bachelor of Arts (1969), University of Michigan, with major in Psychology, double minor in History and English; and a Certificate in Publishing (1986), University of California, Berkeley. Liz attended the University Of Connecticut School Of Law (1971-72), completing core legal education courses.



Top Thirteen Most Influential People in Goddess Spirituality

<http://goddesspriestess.com/2013/03/29/top-thirteen-most-influential-people-in-goddess-spirituality/>

See Number 13 – Elizabeth Fisher and Shirley Ranck

March 29, 2013 by [talkbirth](#) (posted at [Theapoetics](#) : Exploring the intersection between Nature, the Goddess, art, and poetry)

Earlier this month I was very interested to see a series of posts on [Raise the Horns](#) about [the top 25 most influential people in the birth of paganism](#). When I read Mankey's post, it reinforced my own conception of Goddess spirituality as having a distinctly different lineage and flavor than much of contemporary paganism. His list, while extensive, useful, and accurate, involves a distinct lack of Goddess scholars, highlighting to me that Goddess spirituality IS a different movement and isn't actually just a Goddess-oriented branch of contemporary paganism. Indeed, almost everyone on his list I'd either never heard of, not read, or don't enjoy their writing. I immediately started to draft a list of my own and came up with 13 women, which seemed delightfully appropriate. We in the Goddess feminist community have our own path, herstory, and lineage, one that really only began in the 1970's in direct connection to the feminist movement, rather than the pagan movement.

Not necessarily in a particular order, here is my own list of the top thirteen most influential people in the development and articulation of Goddess Spirituality as its own distinct path. (I've been scrambling to finish collecting my thoughts in time to post this list while it is still Women's History Month!) Only one of my own picks also appears on Mankey's list.

1. **[Carol Christ](#)**—this feminist scholar is the most skillful and intelligent theologian of the present day. Christ's influence on my own ideas and concepts has been profound. Her work is academic, focused, and deep, and she wrestles with heavy questions. I particularly enjoy her books *Rebirth of the Goddess* and *She Who Changes*. A brilliant, thoughtful, amazing writer, Christ's essay [Why Women Need the Goddess](#) remains, in my opinion, one of the most important and influential articles of our time.
2. **[Merlin Stone](#)**—author of the classic *When God was a Woman*, this professor of art history changed the landscape and understanding of ancient cultures and their relationship to the Goddess (and, yes she drew on the work of Murray and Graves, but moved into feminist theology rather than pagan practice).
3. **[Riane Eisler](#)**—author of *The Chalice and the Blade*, she made a significant contribution to the understanding of the history and development of patriarchy as well as offering a solution in the form of a partnership model of society.
4. **[Marija Gimbutas](#)**—scholar and archaeologist and author of several books chronicling Goddess figurines from around the world, including *The Language of the Goddess*, her work has come under scrutiny and criticism, but remains a potent contribution to the lineage of the Goddess movement.



Rise Up & Call Her Name

5. **Starhawk**—the first of two on my list who bridge the gap between more “classic” paganism and feminist spirituality, Starhawk had a huge impact on the development of a female-oriented spiritual tradition. Her book *The Spiral Dance* was the first introduction to the Goddess for many women. In keeping with what I find to be a personal lack of **click** with a lot of pagan authors, I did not particularly enjoy *The Spiral Dance* and actually read it much later than most of the other books about feminist spirituality that I reference in this post, but regardless of personal taste, her influence on the Goddess movement is profound.
6. **Z. Budapest**—considered by many to be one of the first mothers of the feminist spirituality movement in the U.S., like Starhawk, Z’s writings are not my personal favorite resources because of their heavy Wiccan orientation, but they are undeniably classics in Goddess circles. Z has taken heat from many pagans for her position on transgender people.
7. **Patricia Mongahan**—recently departed author of Goddess-specific resource books like *The Goddess Path* and *Wild Girls*, Patricia’s writing is more practical and less scholarly/theology-oriented than some of my other favorite authors.
8. **Monica Sjo**—radical artist, ecofeminist, and Goddess scholar, Sjo wrote *The Great Cosmic Mother* and one of my other favorites, a critique of New Age spiritual paths called *New Age Armageddon*. Her classic and awesome painting [God Giving Birth](#) narrowly avoided ending up in Court on the charge of “obscenity and blasphemy.”
9. **Hallie Iglehart**—while less well-known and influential than some of the other women on my list, Hallie was personally very impactful to my own Goddess path, since her books were some of the first, personal and experientially-oriented Goddess-specific books that I read. She is the author of *Womanspirit*, a synthesis of feminism and religion, and of *The Heart of the Goddess*, a visually stunning collection of Goddess images and meditations/reflections.
10. **Cynthia Eller**—while Eller’s book focused on debunking the “myth of matriarchal prehistory” made her lose popularity among many in the Goddess community (see her clarifying comments [here](#)), her scholarly engagement with the complexities of articulating the concepts of feminist spirituality and of theology is challenging, illuminating, and offers the opportunity to dig deeply into one’s own perspectives. Her book *Living in the Lap of the Goddess* is a thorough exploration of women’s spirituality and the Goddess movement.
11. **Charlene Spretnak**—another rocking writer with a thorough grasp of the sociopolitical and cultural context, value, and purpose of Goddess spirituality, her classic anthology *The Politics of Women’s Spirituality* is one of the best and deepest explorations of the concepts, personal experiences, philosophies, and theologies of *why Goddess*.
12. **Karen Tate**—through her weekly radio show, [Voices of the Sacred Feminine](#), I would venture to say that Tate is one of the most influential and dedicated “Goddess advocates” of the present day.
13. **Elizabeth Fisher and Shirley Ranck**—authors of germinal religious education curriculums focused on feminist spirituality and woman-honoring traditions, originally published by the [UU Women and Religion](#) program, their work with [Rise Up & Call Her Name](#) and [Cakes for the Queen of Heaven](#) continues to change the lives of women around the country by introducing them to a vision of what the world could be like if the divine was imaged as female.



Rise Up & Call Her Name

I find that feminist spirituality can be distinguished from paganism because of the inclusion of a core *sociopolitical orientation* and distinct sociocultural critique. Feminist spirituality to me is the **intersection of religion and politics**. It is *religious feminism*. It may or may not include literal experience of or perception of the Goddess, but it names the female and the female body as sacred, worthy, and in need of defense and uses Goddess symbols, metaphors, stories, and experiences as primary expressions of divinity and the sacred.

Also deserving of mention are:

[SageWoman Magazine](#) (and her editors)—this specifically Goddess-women oriented publication is a treasure and a delight.

[Feminism and Religion blog](#)—daring to explore the intersection of religion, scholarship, activism, and community, FAR is not specifically Goddess-oriented, but includes Goddess scholars amongst their contributors and weaves a beautiful, living, organic tapestry of the multifaceted web of feminist spirituality in the present day.

Molly Remer is the author of this list. Here is her interesting biography.

Molly Remer, MSW, ICCE, CCCE is a certified birth educator, writer, activist, and ordained priestess who lives with her husband and children in central Missouri. She is a newsletter editor, a breastfeeding counselor, a professor of human services, and doctoral student in women's spirituality at Ocean Seminary College. She blogs about birth, motherhood, and women's issues at <http://talkbirth.me> and about theology and theapoetics at <http://goddesspriestess.com>

Her personal statement:

I am a doctoral student in women's spirituality at [Ocean Seminary College](#) and ordained as a Priestess with [Global Goddess](#). My roots are in birthwork and I find that this root is intimately tied to my interest in the Goddess and in feminist theology. I've began this blog as a place for me to share my musings on women's spirituality, theology, theapoetics, the Goddess, and a little touch of sociopolitical commentary. This blog also serves as a place for me to store readings/poems/prayers that I'd like to save for later or for future reference.

I am also a blogger at [Pagan Families](#) on Patheos and at the [Feminism and Religion website](#).

Comment by Elizabeth Fisher about Molly. (one of Molly's thirteen most influential)

Molly is a woman who is much younger than the women she names as influences in Goddess Spirituality. While this makes sense, so often we are told that younger women do not know and do not care about the contributions of older women to any facet of the women's movement. Molly proves those observers wrong. Her commitment to being aware of the sociological as well as the personally empowering aspect of this movement is to her credit and to our betterment. I hope empowering women's spirituality practices are intergenerational whenever possible. This will add to their dynamic and stimulating possibilities.

