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Mom Power

I am convinced that mother-activism is the key to true and positive change. I also think the concept of Outlaw Motherhood is delicious, since I have become an Outlaw Mother in nearly every sense of the word!

We are all involved in so many righteous struggles and I want you to know that I know, we are all linked in our struggles. One fabulous thing we do as women and mothers is that we struggle with, dare I say it: Hope. Not the Madison Avenue induced Hope-nosis of false hope, but real, hands-on, in the trenches, Hope.

My pretend boyfriend, Jackson Browne, wrote a wonderfully uplifting song, among all his other wonderful songs, called, “*Rock me on the Water.*” He starts the song with the lyrics:

Oh, people look among you, the signs are everywhere, you've left it for somebody other than you to be the one who cares.

Well, I am surrounded by women who have rejected the thinking that someone else will come along and solve our problems for us—or that there even exists such a person out there, somewhere, that cares more about our children, our families, and our communities than we do.

Before I get too far into the theme of my talk, let me tell you a little about my own story. I am a baby-boomer born in the U.S. during the rise of the working-class. However, our lives during these so-called golden times were tainted with the terror of the Cold War, where I grew up diving under my desk every Friday afternoon at the appointed time to apparently give us the illusion that our magical desks would be able to save us from a nuclear holocaust. Did

you all have to do that here in Canada?

The 1960s were a decade that was clouded with one international emergency and scare after the other. As one who was barely four-years-old during the Cuban Missile Crisis, I remember the feeling of tenseness and worry among the adults in my sphere of influence. In fact, the other day, I was talking about a book I downloaded from iTunes to make my daily workout a little less tedious, called: *World War Z*. *World War Z* is about a Zombie plague on the planet (yes, I also do escapism and would like to do more research on the rise of Zombie-culture popularity, and the term “Zombie” is an appropriate metaphor for many of my fellow Americans today—but that’s for a later seminar). Anyway, my three-year old grandson, Jonah, was in the room coloring in a Sesame Street coloring book and he popped up his little blond, handsome, curly head and said: “Hmm, Zombie wars, that thounds thscary.” So I know that these events intrude on our psyches even from a very young age.

So, during the ’60s, as an impressionable, sensitive child, I was assaulted by what we now consider, U.S. History 101: The Cuban Missile Crisis, The Kennedy Assassinations—first one then another. (When I met Senator Ted Kennedy a few years ago, we talked about how I could identify and empathize with his mother, Rose, who buried not one, but four of her children.) Then the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., entered my world—little did I know that exactly 38 years later, on April 04, 2004—the same forces that killed Dr. King would kill my future first born child.

The Vietnam War, the Watts uprisings that occurred just a few miles from my mostly-white hometown in California, the Vietnam war protests—on and on. I clearly grew up in a very unstable world—but was my history unique to that of womankind in general?

Was I literally being groomed to sacrifice my own son on the altar of sexist-racist-violent nationalism as so many of my sisters before me on this male-dominated road to OUR ruin have?

Along with all of the conditioning to accept violence as the norm, I was also conditioned in a very infantile and inherently chauvinistic patriotism, where we are taught to salute and recite a prayer to a piece of colored cloth that hung over the postings of our perfect spelling tests in our classrooms. An era where one teacher sent me to the corner in second grade for admitting that if a “Red Commie” stuck a gun to my head and told me not to recite the pledge of allegiance, that I wouldn’t dare. I may have been a very shy child, but I wasn’t a stupid one. That was child-abuse, right?

What happened in history during the years between the end of the Vietnam War and the War that stole my oldest son from me?

The troops limped home from Vietnam defeated and demoralized and an urban legend grew that they were spat upon by people JUST LIKE me and

called “baby-killers.” Side note: a lot of babies were included in the millions of Vietnamese that were slaughtered during that insane U.S. misadventure.

We saw a president resign and the rise of one U.S. president after another that continued a series of clandestine wars in Latin America and overt “humanitarian interventions” all over the planet that began to be kept farther and farther from the psyche of an American public that was definitely tired of carnage, but this new militarism in an age of the so-called Peace Dividend was out of sight and out of mind.

Not only were these presidents consolidating military power abroad, they also began a concentrated and choreographed war on working-class prosperity at home. Since the beginning with Reagan’s attacks on unions and Clinton’s attacks on “Welfare Queens,” the U.S. has currently become in the unenviable position of number one in income disparity of all the world’s so-called civilized countries.

As philosopher, Jacques Ellul (please excuse my French pronunciation, the first time I came to Canada, I was going to meet with some wonderful women of the Bloc Quebecois, and for the life of me, I thought my Canadian comrade was saying BLAH-QUA-QUA-QUA...) anyway Jacques Ellul wrote: *“The goal of modern propaganda is no longer to transform opinion but to arouse an active and mythical belief.”* So, I was raised in this mythocracy of an America that proclaimed itself, contrary to its reality, a shining example of freedom and democracy and opportunity. In the U.S., we often blame ourselves for our woes, when it’s the system that works us over like sitting ducks begging for more. I know I felt that any problems were isolated incidences and I must be the only mom struggling with the fact that I am not perfect and I couldn’t juggle a job, motherhood, and citizenship without constantly dropping many balls before my son was killed and I was put in the awkward position of being profoundly hurt by a system that I had tried, although unsuccessfully, to be a part of (not apart from, like now) for over four decades.

One of the most damaging and insidious myths that we are beaten with in America, besides the one where we’re the greatest nation in the entire universe, is the one that says that one person cannot make a difference. We are overtly and subversively told that our only part in what has become our national shame is “voting.” Voting is so compromised and crooked, yet we feel if we go to the polls on the required day, within the proscribed times and get our red-white-and-blue sticker, proudly emblazoned with “I VOTED,” then we can go back into our Dancing With the American Idol—McDonald’s mega-meal induced coma—feeling that we have fulfilled some kind of “right and obligation” as good U.S.Aians. It usually never once crosses our minds that the scoundrels inhabiting the halls of power want, no need, our brain dead compliance with their crimes.

Why, if we as mothers thought too hard about it, we would never allow our children to be sucked into the meat grinder of the U.S. military—war or no war, these institutions brainwash our wonderful children into unthinking automatons that put the “sacred mission” before family and common-sense and their very own lives. One consolation that I have is that from eyewitness reports on the scene when my son was killed, Casey refused to go on the mission that subsequently killed him, but was dragged to the truck by his sergeant. Casey was a conscientious objector at the end of his life, and I am very proud of him for that.

Instead of being in competition with each other for rearing the next “super-star quarterback,” or Miss America, we should band together in defense of our families and our basic human rights to healthcare; good, free, and easily accessible education from pre-school to university; housing—in the U.S., one and a half million children fall asleep without a roof over their heads every night, that is a monstrous statistic in the world’s wealthiest (for two percent of us) of nations; another human right is healthy and GMO free food—the same amount of children fall asleep with hunger pangs in the U.S. every night; and two of the most important things we should be organizing and aggressively working together for are: complete and unconditional peace and a healthy and sustainable environment.

Peace and environmental health go hand and hand and cannot be separated. War and militaries are the number one cause of environmental pollution, resource depletion and the current wars the U.S. are waging are for resources, where indigenous populations are decimated to gain dominance over fossil fuels, water and other minerals. If Libya’s major export were broccoli, the U.S. wouldn’t give a flying-flip about Qaddafi and his so-called human-rights violations. Many world leaders practice what Qaddafi is accused of, including and especially, my own.

My life was shattered, changed, and yet transformed on April 04, 2004, when my son, Casey, was killed in Iraq. I am sure many of you tragically know the shock of burying a child that should still be alive, except for lies and institutional violence.

I worked really hard Casey’s entire life to make sure he was protected and safe—as with his three younger siblings. But that was part of the problem, while I was being a typical U.S. Mini-Van Mom, ferrying my children from point A to points XY and Z every day, taking them to catechism, sports, and scouts, etc.—I was neglecting my part in the sisterhood of all mothers.

I outlined my twin-history with my country and I pointed out how the wealthiest country in the world abysmally treats our poorest and most vulnerable, but even the worst off of most of us here in the U.S. and Canada are better off than billions of people on this planet.

My tragedy forced me to be an advocate for mothers and children everywhere, recognizing that a healthy U.S. free from war and other economic and environmental exploitation can also be healthy for everyone on this planet.

This speech is about how one person can make a difference, and I am standing here because after my son was killed, I rejected the myth that I could not—I made a conscious decision that I would not grieve or suffer in silence—that my voice would be heard. So I got up off my tear-soaked couch and took on the most powerful man in the entire world and I won, damnit! I WON!

George Bush and his band of neoconservative criminals lost all credibility and self-proclaimed mandate for disaster. But, here's the sixty-four thousand dollar question: if I won in 2005, then why are we still in these wars and why is the worldwide economy sinking like a ten-ton weight in our contaminated oceans?

Because, although one person can make a big splash and change minds and perspectives, it will take all of us together to actually change policy—and that's what I call a revolution.

So, this speech is not only my story, but also a call to action.

Even though Bush is thankfully gone, and nobody misses him, Obama is continuing his third term and the geopolitical paradigm is being reinforced every day with propagandized and mythologized Americans falling for every obvious lie that spews forth from Obama and his co-conspirators in our Lamestream Media.

Men (and their ladies' auxiliary of War-Women) have been mucking up this planet for far too long.

I don't think I have to inform anyone here that the global elite, male dominated culture of corruption and violence are afraid of women—I have been subjected to horrible demonization campaigns and misogynistic attitudes since I decided to wage a campaign against the U.S. Empire—even from well-meaning male peace advocates.

First of all, since the summer of 2005 when I camped out in front of George Bush's ranch demanding a meeting, never granted, with him—people on the so-called right, from pundits to what I call, Bubbas, speak about me or write to me saying that I am a tool of George Soros or Michael Moore—that one funds me (not true, I have never received a dime from Soros—been waiting for a check that never comes) and one puts words into my mouth. Of course! How can a mere woman come up with her own ideas and theories? Or even, with all the memorizing of recipes and grocery lists can we keep a fact in our pretty little perfectly-permed heads? Men must be supporting me, right? Wow, do I remember the long nights on the phone with Michael Moore when he would drill me on the evils of Empire until it got through to my thick female-skull! (Just kidding.)

The Bubbas are very good at trying to attack me at my strength—my very motherhood. I am forced to read every day how my son is rolling in his grave because I am spitting on it by denouncing the very thing he died for—after I correct his spelling and grammar—what is Bubba’s preoccupation with using “your” and “you’re” improperly, anyway—if I do answer him, I tell him that he is DAMN RIGHT I denounce what my son died for: Corporate greed and evil empire expansion.

Also, there is a myth that is still running around the Interwebs that I “abandoned” Casey when he was two, three or seven—that another, more patriotic woman raised him to be a “good American.” Even if that myth were true, I always counter with—what does that have to do with the fact that Casey was killed in a war based on lies for profit?

Out on the protest trail, I am always exhorted to “go home and take care of your other kids.” If I have time and inclination, I ask them how many of them still kiss boo-boos and wipe the noses and butts of their aged twenty-something children?

Our version of motherhood in the U.S. is skewed to being a good imperial mother who gladly, if not joyfully, sacrifices her dear flesh and blood for the Emperor, and if we don’t agree, we should either shut-up or kill ourselves—which I am often encouraged to do, also—it’s a tie between: “why don’t you do the world a favor and kill yourself?” and “if you hate America so much, why don’t you just move?” I had one of the young patriots message me on Facebook the other day saying she would contribute financially to my eventual move from the States, and I sent her a link to my donation page, but so far she has not obliged with a donation.

Oftentimes women are the worst nationalistic chauvinists. Once, during my run for Congress against Nancy Pelosi in San Francisco, a woman emailed me to inform me that I was “not qualified to run for Congress.” I rechecked my pocket copy of the Constitution to verify that I indeed met the age and residency requirements and read further to find out that I definitely failed her qualification test:

- 1) YOU DON’T HAVE A JOB!
- 2) YOU DON’T HAVE A CAR!
- 3) YOU DON’T EVEN HAVE A HUSBAND!

Elite-militarist, Nancy Pelosi, has all of the above, but she is a friggin’ disaster for women and children around the world!

My ex-husband, Casey’s father, has also been outspoken against the war, not as publicized as myself of course, yet he has not had to face the same condemnation as I have—in fact, he was awarded all our friends and community

status in our divorce proceedings—and that’s another thing, somehow because my marriage succumbed to the statistical averages of bereavement AND the fact that over 50 percent of U.S. marriages end up in divorce anyway—that I am this wicked woman that threw everything away because I had some kind of “political agenda.”

I said that even well-meaning peace-men get all patriarchal in my presence too, from wanting to “protect me” from physical harm to calling me, “Dear, Sweetie, Babe, Honey,” etc. If one more man who is older than me calls me, “Mom,” I think I will forget I am a pacifist and punch him in the face! (Just kidding about that, too—maybe.)

I am pleased to be here at this Women’s Congress, if you will, but this gathering must spread to actually include a peaceful takeover of the places where policy is made: corporations and governments.

We must support the organizations and women that are already organizing these efforts, but we need a broad coalition of women’s groups from RAWA who are fighting two enemies in Afghanistan: the radical chauvinism of religious fundamentalism and a U.S. occupation of their country—to the women of Chiapas who are bravely fighting other chauvinistic policies and actually putting their bodies on the line for us. They actually bang machetes together to show support, or disapproval, and I gather that even though most of them are barely five-foot tall, it would behoove most to stay on their good side.

Women are bucking the corporate control of government and are refusing to use genetically modified seed in India, reclaiming their matriarchal right to use their own seeds that have worked for them for generations.

Women in South America are literally putting their bodies in front of bulldozers that are threatening OUR rain forests and are fighting for the right to collect rainwater and not pay the global piper for IMF-World Bank neoliberalism. Water, like the woman, is a life-giver, yet masculine-capitalism even wants to control the free-flow of Mother Nature’s free-juice.

Women are engaged in struggles for peace all over the world and we need to join our efforts in a global-Matriotism that puts love of all people over love of artificial boundary lines, mostly drawn on maps by dead white dudes.

One woman/mother can make a difference, but billions together can change the world.

In “*Rock Me on the Water*,” Jackson Browne also sings: “*Oh, people, look among you, it’s there your hope must lie.*” My hope lies within myself and with you all, not with the sick institutions that are existentially harmful to life on this planet.

We have the power! Shine on sisters!