



Reclaiming Our Bodies as Sacred Sovereign Ground

BY LAINIE LOVE DALBY

“When you feed yourself that which truly nourishes you, wisely and generously, you shall become one who can also feed the world that for which is truly hungers.”

—ALANA FAIRCHILD

I was still wet with shower dew, my brown and blonde locks hanging heavy and dripping over my left shoulder. My eyes downcast, I had to look away. My heart started sinking with despair to see the numbers were creeping upward, *still*. 2-5-9 stared back at me in bright red from the cheap plastic scale (my own personal torture device). At only five foot two inches, the excess weight was really starting to take its toll on my small frame.

I walked over to the mirror and let my beige XL towel drop to the floor with a thud. There I was, fully nude and vulnerable with splotchy red patches dotting my body from the water’s intense cleansing heat. I hadn’t been able to look at myself in the mirror in months, avoiding it at all costs. But staring at my shape in the glass in that moment, I tried desperately to conjure up a sense of kindness for the woman staring back at me.

Instead, I found myself cringing, desperate and cruel.

All the voices that had shamed and berated me over the years arose in that moment like a vengeful symphony. “*You’re too fat. You need to lose some weight. You should really cover yourself up. What’s wrong with you? You’re a loser. You can’t control yourself. You pig.*”

I started to shake and quiver, tear buds forming at the corners of my eyes. My jaw tightened and I bit my lip until I tasted iron. Blood oozed while the familiar feeling of deep hatred, rage, and frustration emerged from deep within. My own thoughts screamed back in response, *Why me? Why did I have to get this body? Am I being punished? I hate you! This just isn't fair!!?*

I felt like I'd been sentenced to a lifetime of imprisonment in a body I didn't want and might not ever be able to love.

Hatred. The exact opposite of love and reverence.

It always started there.

You see, Beloved, I grew up as an obese, creative outcast and, my spirit was squashed relentlessly through violence and bullying from the world around me, the dieting industry and even my own family. People couldn't handle my big, wild energy, free creative spirit and blinding bright light, so they tried to dampen it. I eventually internalized this violence and over the years turned it against myself, gaining and losing over 1,300 pounds through yo-yo dieting, various eating disorders, unhealthy addictions, and self-hatred. Deeply disconnected from what matters most, my soul was starving: for meaning, purpose, direction, and wholeness. I didn't know how it felt to be truly *full*. I was awake yet sleepwalking through my days, filled with the urge to stuff and placate my deep longing for something more.

In short, I had learned to distrust and disconnect from my own body and inner soul voice, shutting down my free spirit and going into autopilot. I had become a prisoner of the patriarchal social paradigm, a slave to a culture that assaults the body. As author and filmmaker Sharron Rose has wondered, "What kind of diseased culture endorses a cult of self-starvation, self-mutilation, and hysteria in its women?" Sadly, this American life.

I hadn't been taught about the miraculous power of my unique feminine form. No one shared the ancient wisdom of the Moon mysteries around the kitchen table, the magic of blood rites and our connection to the Ocean's tides or the general field of wonder that our body is. I hadn't been told that we are radical creators with every breath, able to focus our life force energies and intentions into manifesting all we desire. I didn't learn in history class or in vacation Bible school about the Goddess as primordial Creatrix, modeling the empowering divine feminine principle of cosmic creation and ability to give birth to all new life. This deep and essential wisdom has all been long suppressed...and to our great detriment.

Instead of celebrating our inherent power and claiming our sovereignty, we are living in a time of deep soul loss. We have an epidemic of individuals today disconnected from their bodies and their essence, being repressed from reaching their full (r)evolutionary potential by patriarchal structures such as the dieting industry, fashion magazine culture, and the media—keeping them weak and stuck in a feedback loop of "*I'm not good enough, attractive enough, thin enough, strong enough to do, x, y, z (insert here: start that business, find true love, write my book, follow my dreams...)*." I know because I was one of those disconnected souls.

I didn't realize then that these systems—especially the dieting industry—are overt and covert forms of violence against women, girls, and anyone else who doesn't fit the mold of what the status quo expects regarding shape, size, skin color, or gender expression.

Patriarchal society has created unattainable success markers and images of "beauty" to keep us occupied and repressed, and like the dutiful dieting daughter I was raised to be, I was always so busy focusing on the next weight loss fad that I completely ignored listening to my own innate rhythms. I was so caught up in the number on the scale that I failed to tap into the sacred wisdom of my body and her subtle communications.

This was all before I understood my body's secret soulful language, her ethereal dance of intuition...before I reclaimed her as sacred and holy sovereign ground. It wasn't until a four-year illness careened unexpectedly into my life that I had no other choice but to walk through the fires of transmutation and *wake up*. That's when walking the path of the body truly called to me—but more on that soon, Beloved.

Heartbreakingly, I know my story isn't unique. Collectively, we have had our life force squandered through the systemic controlling, devaluing, suppression, and disavowal of women, people of color, indigenous people, LGBTQIA people, disabled people, and other marginalized individuals, and the Earth itself in our patriarchal culture. From rape and bullying to deforestation and fracking, our sacredness has been stomped on and snuffed out. (Think about it: rape and fracking are the same thing, just one is forcibly penetrating the human body and the other the body of the Earth.)

It is precisely because of this systematic oppression that we in the West have become severely malnourished, with obese bodies and starving souls.

Because of this we have lost our attunement with both Mother Nature and our own inner natures, which has led to escalating rates of depression, low self-esteem, and an overall lack of self-worth. I know how all too common this is from the thousands of women and LGBTQIA individuals that I've mentored over the years in my spiritual and leadership development practice. Deeply embedded in our culture is a harmful narrative that teaches us to hate and doubt ourselves instead of encouraging us to know that we are precious Divine Beings possessing unique medicine that's needed now. Because of this, countless individuals are hiding their light and deepest gifts—because they're waiting on the weight, or the right partner, or the perfect wardrobe, or to be given permission—wasting valuable energy and creativity that could be used to serve the greater good. Is the obsession with a "thigh gap," for instance, really a "thought gap," or a momentary lapse in consciousness that would make someone even think about something so inconsequential? But this is where we largely find ourselves now, Beloved. It's time we wake up to the insidious manipulation of our minds, bodies, hearts, and souls.

Imagine if even 10 percent of the time that we spend thinking about our bodies, weight, and external appearance was redirected toward solutions for healing our world? What a difference that would make.

For me, the greatest gift of this journey of awakening was an enormous paradigm shift: I opted to ditch dieting for the Divine and focus on deep nourishment instead. I even banned the word "dieting" from my vocabulary. (First of all it has the word *die* in it. I'm here to sustain *life*, thank you very much!) This reframe allowed me to turn my inner fierce feminine fire and life force into a productive renewable energy source to help heal myself and the world through my sacred work. Because, when that life force is not channeled or allowed its full expression, it turns into depression or anxiety.

I also realized that, for me specifically, the excess weight was a cry for help to point out an imbalance in my life and health. **I learned that fat isn't something to be feared. It's a gift.** It was a direct communication from my body trying to say "*Hey! Something is out of balance, Beloved. Let's see what we can do about it in partnership to restore you to peak vitality and life force.*" It was a plea to help me turn inward to find my own truth and wellness. And, tuning within was a salvation from the noise and static of the outside world telling me who I should be, what I should look like, how I was supposed to eat, how much I was supposed to weigh, how often I should exercise, how I should behave, what I should wear...

There is clearly a sickness of our wildness today, a deep suppression and vilification of the Divine and Fierce Feminine as well as the darkness. The predominant systems are continually trying to sterilize and tame that which is primal, messy, wild, or emerging from the pitch black womb of creation—from the literal birth process to our full range of emotions to menstruation to the forthright expression of our sacred rage. They expect us to be buttoned-up, "good girls" and rule-abiding members of society, but, instead, we are numbed out on antidepressants and pain killing opiates.

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH! It's time that we take a stand in our **SACRED NO** against the violence being perpetrated against women, girls, LGBTQIA, people of color, indigenous people, disabled people, and other marginalized individuals—and to our Mother Earth.

The world is crying out for a great homecoming now. A homecoming back to the land, our bodies, and the he(art) of what matters most...

Reconnection is the medicine that is most greatly needed in our world right now. Reconnection to our truth, our planetary family, our sacred purpose, our power, our sovereignty, and our great sentient Mother Earth to avert the ecological crisis upon us. For I am Her and She is me. We are of the Earth, inextricably entwined with Gaia. It's time to awaken to our interconnectedness with Her and all beings, honor the spirit and Divine spark in all things, and act from a higher consciousness.

What we need is a Sacred (R)evolution[®] of love and reverence for self, other, the planet and the Web of All Life.

I believe that it is this sacred reconnection that will bring an end to the rampant violence in our world, both overt and covert, and restore us to our dignity and humanity. We even need to reconnect to our shadow, since without embracing our full darkness we can't experience our full light.

It's time we re-member who we truly are and why we're here, Beloved, so we can end the cycles of abuse on ourselves, our children, and future generations to come. Let us remember that we are Divine creators, connected to original Source creativity and the Great All That Is—this cosmos filled with vast aliveness, multiple forms of intelligence, and consciousness in all things.

I invite you to take a moment of awe, gratitude, and reverence with me now for our bodies. Our hearts beat over 115,200 times per day. Just think of all the effort the heart exerts on our behalf in each moment. When do we ever take time to stop and thank our bodies for their service to our life here on earth? For the majority of us our stomachs are constantly digesting our food so we can have the nutrients we need to survive. Our ears allow in the beauty of piano, jazz and pop music to delight us. Our eyes filter in the color, beauty and wonders of our world. Our bodies are magnificent masterpieces, yet instead of acknowledging this we get stuck on the surface appearance and cutting ourselves down. And the Earth! When do we give gratitude for all She does to sustain us and support *life* on our planet?

The Earth is our original ancestor. Coming home to Her is a way to come home to our own bodies, beginning to see ourselves as a reflection of nature all around us. Our bodies are made of Earth. They are nature, one and the same. The profound beauty of the sunset is in the irises of our eyes closing at night; the grain of sand is reflected in our microscopic cells.

Would you look in the sky and say, “*Stars, I hate you!! You’re so ugly!*” Of course not. Even the idea of that is absolutely ridiculous. But doing that to our bodies *is the same thing*. We are that: stardust and matter in human form. Radiance is the nature of our embodiment here, our soul purpose!

Our miraculous bodies are the altar of our very Being, not the bane of our existence. *They are an elaborate cloak for our souls...*

The next time you speak unkindly to your body, I invite you to put your hand on the part of your body that you feel compelled to criticize and visualize all the organs underneath your flesh that are working so tirelessly on your behalf. Take a moment to say “*thank you*” and send them some love and gratitude. Whisper “*You are sacred*” to each in turn. If you’d like to take this even further, then I invite you to write a love letter or create some expressive art to a part of your body that you’ve struggled with or abused often. *Think: chin, arm skin, thighs, cellulite, butt, excess weight, body fat, stomach.*

The bottom line is that it’s time that we move from violence against the body to deep loving partnership *with* the body. An essential part of that is reclaiming our bodies as sacred and holy *sovereign* ground. It’s the only way we’re going to heal and return to our true nature so we can Sparkle Shamelessly® for the good of all! Let us reclaim and celebrate the parts of us that have been shamed and transform our pain into a greater capacity to love. Especially if there is an ancient hatred that you desire to heal. For as

the metaphysical text *a Course in Miracles* states, “*The holiest place on earth is where an ancient hatred has become a present love.*”

Let this be a HOLY HOMECOMING, Beloved.

Because our world has become a fundamentally unhealthy place, our bodies and souls (and the Earth) are crying out to be cared for, embraced, and nourished by us on a deep level. They yearn for us to be tender, gentle, and loving, a form of mothering ourselves just as our Earth Mother cares for and sustains us. That’s why “Deep Nourishment for All” is one of the core thirteen pillars of what I’ve deemed as the Sacred (R)evolution™. As author and cancer thriver Kris Carr has said, “Staying well is a revolutionary act.” And it is also an individual journey only you can take, Beloved. There is no one-size-fits-all answer. Tuning into your own body and discerning what is true for *you* in any and every moment is essential—having that be the barometer of truth in your life, regardless of what noise in the outside world is squawking in your ear.

Being disconnected from our inner truths and our sacred vessels in this lifetime has kept us disconnected from our power and ability to choose from a place of deep grounded truth. Let’s come back home, fully into our em-body-ment, so we can be the individuals we’re capable of being now... embodied leaders helping to heal the world.

Because if we’re not in our bodies, we can’t be in our full (r)evolutionary potential.

This was one of the biggest elements that was missing for me in the journey of offering my sacred work to the world. I was always in my leadership, but I wasn’t *embodied* in my leadership. I’ve had a challenging time being in this body, feeling safe here and in my own skin. One of my greatest struggles has been channeling the blindingly bright sparkling cosmic dancing firestar Being that I am into a human form in this 3D reality. I was always dissociating from old trauma stored in my cellular memory and leaving my body, so I could go be in the visionary realm where I felt most comfortable. It’s been a continual journey to come back, to return, to spiral back into my earth suit and ground into Gaia. To ultimately welcome myself back home again and again. That’s why I’m sharing this journey with you now, Beloved. In hopes that it may ease your own path.

The healing (r)evolution and road to deep nourishment truly began for me with the call to “Purify the Vessel.” I ask, what might be calling you, Beloved?

The message kept coming for years (in meditations, walking in the woods, in my Dreamtime, on the train) yet I didn't know what it meant. I tried drinking green juice, working out, and eating better, but the truth is that I didn't know the first thing about how to nourish myself in this world filled with plastic food, GMOs, chemical-laden nutrients, fast food, and vast amounts of conflicting knowledge in the field of “nutrition.” So I went on a personal deep dive to learn what my body needed to be sustained. I also began to ask for guidance and pray for a release of all that no longer served me so I could step fully into my spiritual leadership in the world.

This is when everything changed and I truly learned to be careful what you pray for...

What I received as an “answer” forever changed my life and sent me on a journey of surrender and awakening: a four-year illness became my alchemical cauldron and crucible of shamanic initiation. Where I was truly able to turn the lead into gold and the darkness into the dawn, and to start Sparkling Shamelessly in the world once again as an emissary of light, holding a higher frequency and vibration.

Though this was a comprehensive, multilayered healing process that I go into more deeply in my forthcoming book, *The Great Homecoming*, here I want to bring forward a few short insights along the journey that were essential to my own healing, growth, and metamorphosis. Beloved, may these Sacred Seven inspire your own holy homecoming and reclamation of your body as sacred sovereign ground.

1. SLOWING DOWN

Early on I was drawn to work with animal medicine like my ancient Druid ancestors. Turtle was my original guide for this journey of learning how to truly slow down, to feel comfortable in my own skin, and to take my home with me wherever I went to feel safe and protected. I had to step out of the momentum tunnel of life and into greater spaciousness. I was guided during this time to turn within, reflect, and engage in deep rest and restoration from our fast-paced technological society. I regularly turned off my devices,

social media, the news and especially all TV. **I needed to unhook from mass consciousness.** Instead I came into *stillness* through breathwork and other modalities to enter into full presence for the journey that was unfolding. This allowed me to shift from surface existence to the subtle realm of my soul voice so that I could stay close to it in all I do. Ultimately, turtle taught me what I like to call soul-care.

2. PURIFYING

In the spaciousness I was able to release and let go of all that no longer served me, from plastic Tupperware and chemical cleaners to bleach-filled menstrual pads, from toxic foods packed with sugar and other poisons to old energetic skins and memorabilia laden with negative memories. I shed it all like a snake sheds its skin and began to purify my vessel for the journey as I had been originally called to do. **I thought of it as renovating my soul's address for greater well-being and aliveness.** To heal my physical body through food, all roads led me to Paleo, so I eventually developed my own way of eating that was close to the Earth and part of the greater homecoming. It's essentially like the well known Whole 30 protocol but with my own *sacred* twist, or what I like to think of as Shamanic Nourishment focusing in on the spiritual aspect of food. As Hippocrates said so long ago, “Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food.” This was—and still is—a mantra for me. It wasn't about weight loss in any moment, even though I easily shed more than 100 pounds for the first time in my life. It was all about purifying my sacred vessel for the Divine to pour through and inhabiting my aliveness fully while here on earth. It was a great release so I could live fully into my divine legacy and life purpose. I got out of my own way and became the hollow bone that Spirit blows through, the living chalice of love spilling over into the world. I also released any attachment to the number on the scale and my preconceived notions of beauty, allowing my true nature and form to emerge organically and come into balance.

3. RECONNECTING

Once my channel was clearer, I was able to tune into the wisdom of the body and hear her subtle language all the more through consistent spiritual practice. Intuitive movement, free dancing, Qoya movement (I even

became a certified Qoya teacher!), and labyrinths were powerful tools for me to come back into my vessel along with other embodied somatic practices that helped me to drop down from my head into my heart and a greater sense of compassion for myself and our world. As the Native proverb shares, “The longest journey you’ll ever make is the 18 inches from your head to your heart.” I also spent time in ritual and ceremony connecting with the unseen realms and my ancestors for support, as well as tapping into the spirits of the land. Even though I live in the concrete jungle of New York City, I began to spend more time on the Earth as well, “Earthing” with my bare feet in the soil and laying my full body down on the land to help lower my inflammation and restore balance to my body. I began to experiment with herbal remedies, choosing to lean into Earth’s gentle wisdom rather than the blunt and indiscriminate approach of the pharmaceutical industry. I started to make gratitude offerings to Her as well, including my menstrual blood. I became intimately familiar with my main spirit animals that travel with me, connecting more with the Tree and Stone People (aka crystals) and learning to experience all living Beings as my brothers, sisters, and Beloveds, even the Stars. Working with the Celtic Wheel of the year, Goddess wisdom, and ancient women’s ways also helped me to reconnect with my own Earth-based indigenous heritage of Celtic Shamanism, Druidry, and Paganism. Overall, **I literally needed to root into the Earth to rise into my full power and (r)evolutionary potential.**

4. LISTENING

I was returning more each day back home to myself, to the quiet voice within my own heart, which led me to connect with the inner knowing of my body’s inherent rhythms and cycles. I needed to honor the ache to tap into the mystery of life as well as the sacred pulse of ancient wisdom within my own body. I began tracking my body with the help of Lucy Pearce’s *Full Circle Health* book, noting how I was feeling, where I was in my moon cycle, and what was happening with the heavenly bodies in the sky via astrology, knowing that each was affecting me on a profound level. It was a process of beginning to see my body as an accountability buddy instead of an enemy, one who has my back and is just trying to communicate with me in the only ways she knows how—with aches and pains, vertigo, strange ringing in my ears—all just to say, “Hello! Something is out of balance!” With this process

of deep listening, as well as the help of an integrative doctor, my spiritual counselor, and a healer who used muscle testing, I was also able to begin learning and understanding the miraculous foreign language of my body. Instead of using the old masculine model of abusing my body and trying to control it by beating myself up at the gym, trying to ‘top down’ weight loss, I instead shifted to a feminine model of receiving and opening to inner wisdom, guidance, and intuition to do what felt good in my body, opting for ease and flow. This helped me to learn just how sensitive my body truly is and how I’d been bulldozing her for years, which in turn led to some very necessary self-forgiveness work.

5. DISCERNING

Hummingbird was my main inspiration for this part of the journey in learning fierce discernment and getting to know my own *sacred no* and *holy hell yes* feel in my body. That’s where I always find the core truths. Deep within. Hummingbirds are incredible creatures that memorize thousands of flowers and only go back to the ones that nourish them the most. They seek out the sweetness and return, again and again. They also have the largest hearts of any living being based on their overall size, necessary for the extraordinary journeys they take. (It’s also why they are a main feature of my shamanic healing artwork on the cover of this book!) Each day I practice re-focusing my attention and life force energies on the he(art) of what matters most in order for me to fully honor my body temple and my sacred work in the world. “Dancing for Discernment” is also one of my favorite practices I developed to help determine which path is best for me. It’s discernment through *feeling* instead of *thinking*. It drops me straight into my body and her powerful sacred wisdom every time.

6. NOURISHING

Along the way I learned that nourishment isn’t just about food, it’s about overall sustenance for holistic thriving—womb-level nourishment at the deepest level of my Being. Because what you eat, what you drink, what you think, who you surround yourself with, and what you put into your body *matters*—physically, energetically, and otherwise. Where we put our life force energies, and how we show up in the world with our unique medicine

and deep gifts *matters*. If we're not nourished, we're not able to access our full life force energies and creative capacities in service to the greater good. I also learned that **if we're not nourished, we can't nourish the world with our sacred work.** I discovered that one of the core ways that I'm deeply nourished is by coming together in Beloved Community and sacred sisterhood circles to do ritual and ceremony to heal, play, grow, and transform into our full (r)evolutionary potential together. I saw that we are complicit in each other's healing and the greater healing of the world at this time. We are here to serve as intricate mirrors for each other's greatness and brilliant light. The truth is that we are stronger together, amplifying our energy and social impact through mutual support. *I ask you now: What nourishment does your body need to thrive, Beloved?*

7. SERVING

We are not hungry for what we're not getting; we are hungry for what we're not giving. I deeply believe that each and every one of us has a precious human life. We *matter* and we're each here to *do* something that matters. What we say, think, and create makes a difference. Each one of us is needed *now* to show up in the fullness of who we truly are. We each have a unique medicine and what I like to call #SOULSPARKLE that only we can bring. If we don't add it to the great cosmic masterpiece, it will be lost forever. We are living in a time of global crisis. It's time we come out of hiding fully and step up in service to the greater good.

I invite you to try any or all of the practices above that feel resonant for you, Beloved. That's most important—that it feels true for you in *your* body. Because this journey of healing and becoming whole is about stripping away all the constraints that society, family, and others have put on us in order to come back to our bodies' own indigenous roots so we can discover what will best serve us, our vessels, and our life. It's making a choice to no longer accept the rules as they're given, especially from the dieting industry and patriarchal systems of oppression, and instead reinvent them so our own bodies, hearts, and souls can finally *thrive*. Ultimately, it's a journey to reclaim our own inherent Divinity and live from a place of deep inner alignment to heal ourselves and our ailing world.

My prayer is that we move towards Sacred (R)evolution™ on the individual and collective level, Beloved, helping to make LOVE the new bottom line. Most of all, let us be deeply nourished now so that we can deeply nourish the world. And so it is.

Lainie Love Dalby is an embodied leadership mentor, trailblazer of women's spirituality and empowerment, holy ceremonialist, transformational speaker and retreat facilitator, published author, visionary shamanic healing artist, deep wisdom walker and blazing brave He(art) Warrior. She's on a mission to free human spirits that have been oppressed and devalued to Sparkle SHAMELESSLY® and step into their authentic power. As a spiritual thought leader with her own brand of multi-media ministry, she is using daring style, deep substance and Divine #SOULSPARKLE to dismantle old systems, ideas, and ways of being that promote separateness and limit our full (r)evolutionary potential.

She is also deeply passionate about ending the violence we perpetrate against each other and our own bodies by reminding us of our inherent divinity within and helping to bring the Sacred Feminine back into balance in our own lives and the world—in a great return to love and reverence for self, other, our planet and the great Web of All Life. To this end, she is the founder of SISTERHIVE® and the Sacred (R)evolution™ where she gathers women and the LGBTQIA community in both live and virtual sacred circles to facilitate deep healing, sacred play, soul growth, and alchemical transformation through her global community and signature immersion experiences like Ignite the Fierce Feminine Within, Sovereign Sisters Rising Initiation into the Fierce and Sacred Feminine, international retreats, and other sisterhood initiatives.

Like a modern-day medicine woman, her ultimate goal is to help us feel more comfortable in our own skin and remember who we truly are and why we're here at this most powerful time in human history by unleashing our bold creativity, innate wildness and fierce feminine courage. She believes that TOGETHER we can co-create our lives as a great Masterpiece for the good of all and dream a new world into being. Embark on the journey with her free Sacred (R)evolution™ Starter Kit at www.lainielovedalby.com and on Instagram @LainieLoveDalby.



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