

Cynthia
James

BY JULIE MIERAU



FULL IMPRESSION

FULLY EXPRESSING

*There is no greater agony than
bearing an untold story inside you.*

— MAYA ANGELOU

They strike us as magical, even mystical. They find inspiration in the mundane and the sacred. They transport us across time and space, opening our eyes to the wonder surrounding us. They are writers, dancers, singers, performers. But stripped to their very essence, they are storytellers.

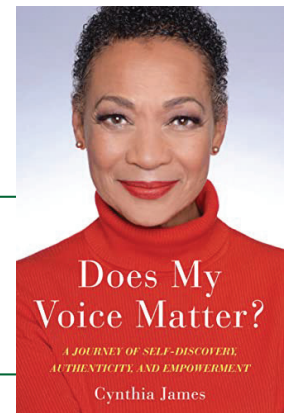
Cynthia James describes herself as a storyteller. She opens her life so she can help others through her own stories, spanning the expanse from childhood abuse to the awakening and healing of her own spirit, whether in written stories or those told through singing, dancing, dressing creatively and speaking. The medium carries her message, however she chooses to express it.

James recounts her life's stories in her new book, "Does My Voice Matter? A Journey of Self-Discovery, Authenticity and Empowerment." As she details her experiences, decade by decade, she reflects on what those experiences meant to her, how they formed her, how they transformed her. She invites readers to do the same, with exercises at the end of each chapter.

"I have been on this planet for seven decades," she says, "and the entire path for me was finding my voice in full expression, through writing, performing, speaking and dressing creatively."

*People in broken systems can surrender
to suffering or activate courage.*

— CYNTHIA JAMES



She describes her childhood with an alcoholic father, a pedophile wife-beating stepfather, a hardworking mother who struggled to provide for her children. “When you are traumatized as a child,” she says, “it can be very difficult to get back your own body.”

She adds, “I shouldn’t be doing what I’m doing. But the child in me had dreams — of traveling, of performing.” And those dreams, she believes, are messengers.

Chosen to Be Ourselves

I exist in limitless possibility.

— ERNEST HOLMES

James is well known throughout Centers for Spiritual Living and other New Thought communities, where she is a frequent speaker and workshop facilitator. Whatever the venue or medium, she invites participants into inquiry, introspection and integration. She holds two master’s degrees, one in consciousness studies and the other in spiritual psychology.

She combines creative art with innovative therapeutic techniques to bring personal growth and expansion to all who open themselves to the opportunity.

“I believe my mission is to support the awakening of humanity,” she says. “I get to be open to how Spirit uses my creativity in that process. The question, for me, became how I can be open.”

Her premise seems simple: “We are all chosen to be ourselves,” she says, “to see ourselves, to dare to be bold.”

She admits to the emotional toll of writing her most recent book, telling the stories of her life, a life that unfolded just six blocks from where George Floyd was killed, where, as she says, “He wasn’t the first but one of so many.” She says she had “lots of moments of tears” while writing the book, “tears of my history, tears of how it resonates now.

“I had to let out the tears to reveal what was underneath,” she explains. “If you feel those feelings, then something beautiful emerges. And that’s where the healing happens.”

As Michael Bernard Beckwith says, “Pain pushes until the vision pulls.”

James describes this as a “both-and” situation: We each live within our small bubble, which is integrated in the big bubble. We all have gifts to deliver, but first we must find our authentic selves before we can stop hiding our gifts within that structure. We must embrace the knowledge that we are, indeed, chosen to be ourselves.

Bring Your Voice to the World

You have to participate relentlessly in the manifestation of your own blessings.

— ELIZABETH GILBERT

“I believe our call is to create the invitation and wherewithal for people to heal the hurts and tear down the fences of separation,” James writes. “Every time someone holds a new vision, makes an empowering decision and moves into action, the possibility for new and empowering systems comes to life.”

While she acknowledges that people want to make a difference in the world, she knows, too, they face broken systems that block the flow of possibilities. Those systems “keep people locked in paradigms that deepen fear and perpetuate a scarcity mentality. These systems communicate that there is no hope.”

She points out that systems get broken when people stop caring, when it seems easier to deny the breaks than to face the challenges of repairing them.

But James refuses to accept those limitations. “If I can move out of that way of thinking,” she says, “others can do the same.”

In exploring ways to bring all voices to the world, James suggests our first challenge is to “wake up and bring our voices and talents into full visibility. My deepest desire is that humanity finds a way to come to the universal table, bringing our varied voices and opinions so that we can learn from each other and remember that we are interconnected.”

Because she believes that in our differences lies our strength, she encourages each of us to embrace our unique characteristics, our one-of-a-kind voices. “Only then,” she adds, “will we remember that all voices matter.”

Find Your Octave

The important focus is that the voice brings to life the authentic and vulnerable demonstration of each human being.

— CYNTHIA JAMES

In titling her book “Does My Voice Matter?,” James reveals a vulnerability too often at play in our broader world. Too often, people silence their own voices in efforts to avoid the critical, sometimes violent nature of society. They may fear being ridiculed or punished if they express their authentic voices. They may feel unsupported or ostracized.

“For those struggling to find their voice,” she writes, “this recipe is the perfect formula for a life riddled with stagnation, stress and disengagement.” The end result is predictable: cynicism, victimization, disconnection and alienation.

“The sensation that you do not matter,” she adds, “do not count and are not here to be heard permeates your very being. And yet the antidote to this experience is to find your voice. To stand up for yourself and demand, in whatever octave necessary, that you, too, are important.

“Then and only then will the illusion that you don’t count be eradicated from your consciousness.”

James says her “creative essence” became her path to changing her reality and to opening “the doorway to step into a world of awe and wonder — a world where I could be anything I chose to be.”

“It has become clear to me,” she writes, “that who I am today is a result of my coming to grips with my history as well as the history of my country and the world, honoring my journey and making choices of personal development and empowerment.”

And in this, she does not believe she is alone. “I want everyone to know that they are an original imprint and that the Universe breathed life into them,” she says. “No one and nothing can take that truth from them.”

By finding our voices, by using whatever octaves necessary, James believes we can answer the call of our times, “to create both the invitation and the stamina to help people to heal their hurts and tear down the fences of separation.” ☘

I’m Curious. Are You?

We are in the Mind Inexhaustible. The Infinite never rests on Its laurels. It never stops creating for a moment. It expects us to do the same. It expects us to be fully alive, using our curiosity to feed new ideas into our consciousness.

— RAYMOND CHARLES BARKER



REV. DR. ANDRIETTE EARL is the founding spiritual leader of Heart and Soul Center of Light in Oakland, California.

It’s Black History Month, and I wholeheartedly invoke curiosity — a healthy, natural inquisitiveness — as our superpower. It is our nature to wonder, be interested in, be inquisitive about exactly how life evolved as it has. This is the perfect time to grab our capes, seek truth and reveal a greater possibility. This is our opportunity to use our superpower to expand our awareness of who and whose we are.

Until we foster an authentic and deep curiosity of the Life of God expressing as humanity, we must have at least a minimum amount of inquisitiveness. We must first express a strong, authentic desire to know and learn about each other. “Using our curiosity to feed new ideas into our consciousness,” we activate our spirit of inquiry and imagination. This, in turn, activates the principle of inclusivity and a consciousness of oneness with all life, forming the basis of a world that works for all.

It is time for us, as a spiritual community, to lean into our authentic interest in who we are. Even if we do not discern how or when our current way of being with each other was first established and under what circumstances, we are still called to make reparations. I am curious about the following questions. Are you?

How can we embrace oneness if do not honor our differences?

To what degree does it behoove us to inquire about the mental equivalent of enslavement, Jim Crow, racial and gender-based supremacy and long-term impact?

What might be the effect of this systemic generational trauma, and what does it mean for us now?

When will we be sufficiently curious and invested in each other to call forth a world that works for all?

Curiosity and the truth it can reveal is our superpower. It can assist us in discerning our roles and responsibilities — what is ours to be and do. I know this superpower, when fully engaged, yields increased awareness, and awareness changes everything. ☘