

Many Waters Woman:
The Wyndy Knox Carr Story

Imagine all the people living life in peace. You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. I hope someday you'll join us, and the world will live as one.

- John Lennon

As she had done since the age of two, sixteen-year-old Wendy rose early to join her father in the kitchen, where she expected to find him seated at the table reading the newspaper or fixing breakfast. He was an early riser – her mother and brother slept late. She adored her father, a quiet man who seldom spoke. His silence didn't bother her. She was happy to just look at the funnies or watch through the window as the birds flitted around the bird feeders her father kept full.

The physical resemblance to her father was clear: her square jaw, short stature, brown hair, brown eyes, and broad smile. He was Wendell, she was Wendy. She liked that she was named after him. She liked how he said her name, like “Windy”, his pronunciation stemming from Illinois and Kentucky ancestors. These mornings spent alone with her father were the happiest of her life, a life that until this morning had followed the patterns of a typically normal suburban family in a white, Republican neighbourhood of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, a block away from the winds blowing off Lake Michigan. Until now, subjection to any of the larger questions in life occurred only when she attended the Episcopalian church with her father, where parishioners discussed the civil rights movement and introduced Malcolm Boyd's direct and insightful poetry exposing issues of personal freedom, racial justice, and civil rights.

On this particular morning, Wendy walked into an empty kitchen. She glanced at the table where her father had left the newspaper open. Her eyes came to rest on the page, page 3, where she saw the list of 365 dates the selective service of the U.S. Army had drawn the previous evening in the lottery for the military draft of young men turning 18 in the following year. Her index finger touched the first date, then slowly moved down the list and stopped at 279. Her father had circled it. Beside the number, she read her brother's birthday – February 9th. She let out a deep breath. Her brother would not have to kill or be killed, he would not have to bribe a doctor for a health deferment, nor would he have to flee to Canada. Until that moment, she didn't realize she had been holding her breath for a long time. She didn't have the words or ability to make sense of threats and conflicts imposed on families as a result of the war efforts. And she didn't know it then, but she would be searching for peace for a long time.

While her mother, grandmother and grandfather commandeered all political discussions and voiced their opinions, her father never talked about war. Shortly before V-E Day and Hiroshima, he had entered World War II as a young army air force navigator. He wanted to serve his country, but as a slight-framed, Midwestern farm boy, he became a target for brutality from his peers during basic training in Texas. No, he never discussed events of war. And, after the morning discovery of his son's draft number, he never discussed that either, but the war came home to Wendy the morning she entered the empty kitchen, saw the cold coffee cup on the counter and the open newspaper. Her father, she realized much later, probably left early that morning to console and encourage the truck drivers, warehouse-men, and office workers whose sons had not been so lucky.

Wendy wasn't aware that the United States was split over their involvement in the Vietnam War. The people she knew supported the war and, from listening to the news media, she gathered that the opposition comprised of a group of radical communist dupes. She didn't know that American soldiers were, on average, younger than those who had served in World War II, nineteen as compared to twenty-six. Nor did she know at the time that these soldiers came disproportionately from rural, African American, and urban working-class backgrounds or that because the army had a policy of rotating servicemen into Vietnam for a year at a time, soldiers returned home individually rather than as members of a military unit, undermining the cohesiveness found in previous wars. In 1968, the country was divided, with protesters numbering almost seven million. President Lyndon Johnson, a Democrat, decided not to seek a second term and Republican Richard Nixon won the Presidential election with a promise to end the war. Nixon however, escalated U.S. involvement and the war claimed large numbers of U.S. lives, so he instituted the first draft lottery since World War II.

Wendy had heard of Peoples' Park, poetry readings, and peace gatherings in San Francisco. During her senior year in high school, her boyfriend's sister who lived in San Francisco called and told them to get tickets to the Janis Joplin concert. Janis was unknown in the Midwest, but Wendy attended the Big Brother concert in March, 1968 at Chicago's Cheetah auditorium, a converted skating rink. Janis wore a brilliant blue crushed velvet jumpsuit with bell bottoms. Her red hair, free and unkempt, framed her tiny body. She started with a sound that no girl would make – a primal sound, like a banshee or a wild woman – sounds inspired by blues singers like Bessy Smith and Otis Redding. "Take another little piece a' my heart, now, baby!" She writhed, shook,

screamed, yelled, and then regained a semblance of sanity. For Wendy, she was symbolic of all that was repressed and withheld. When Janis exploded in sound on the stage, Wendy saw patterns and colours she had never seen before. Janis uttered a final piercing wail that cut through the auditorium as the music faded. That, for Wendy, was the first crack into her Midwest culture.

She donned orange vinyl boots, cotton shirts from India, and batik jackets. The only blue jeans available were considered working class clothes, but Wendy refashioned them by ripping out seams at the bottom of each leg and inserting a triangle of paisley or black and white fabric.

She planned her future. She mailed her application to the University of California-Berkeley. Admission was difficult, as everyone wanted to experience this new phenomenon of flowers, dancing, and love, love, love. The college admissions rejected her due to her out-of-state status. Heart-broken, she decided to stay home and attend the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, but in the summer of 1968 at a weekend party in Madison, about 70 miles west of Milwaukee, Wendy encountered an unfamiliar world. She listened as some of the New Yorkers, Bostonians, intellectuals, scholars, Brits, Germans, Africans, Indians, Australians, and Argentineans spoke their skepticism, dislike, and even hatred, of the United States government and the President. They didn't like the Vietnam War and many of the American students had burned their draft cards.

Intrigued, she enrolled instead at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The move to campus provided an escape from parental scrutiny. She turned on Janis Joplin, Grace Slick, Joni Mitchell and Jefferson Airplane, tuned in and questioned words and ideas,

dropped out of the life her mother had planned for her, and lost her virginity as quickly as she could.

She engaged in a battle of letters with an editor of the student newspaper, the *Daily Cardinal*, and he hired her as copy editor. Her awareness of world realities broadened even more through the reading of student articles and she realized she had only been using a tenth of her intelligence and personhood.

She was a student at a university which had gained a reputation as one of the nation's most radical campuses. Here, her professors and fellow students organized "teach-ins", large forums to discuss the war. She watched students march from the State Capitol at one end of Madison to the university at the other end and eventually joined the marches of 15,000 to 30,000 people. Although she felt radical, she was still innocent in the ways of war, until the day she watched from her dorm window as a man in his mid-thirties approached a police officer and asked for directions. The officer responded with a spray of mace into the man's face. He crumpled to the sidewalk beside the impassive officer. Until that moment, Wendy's experience with police officers included the friendly neighbourhood officer and those she saw on the television shows of Buffalo Bob and Captain Kangaroo. Wendy's innocence began to wane.

One morning, after one of the student war protests, Wendy opened the blind of her second floor apartment on State Street to see National Guardsmen, outfitted in combat fatigues, helmets, and gas masks, marching shoulder to shoulder, bayonets drawn. This phalanx of soldiers (whom she knew were seventeen to twenty-five-year-old young men who, because they didn't want to go to Vietnam, had chosen to serve in the National Guard) cleared the two-lane street of pedestrians, instructors, students, and shopkeepers

as they carried out their daily routines, either traveling to work or school. These innocents looked up, saw the line of soldiers, registered the reality, took a few steps backwards, then turned and fled.

This was the same street where, just a few evenings earlier, peaceful protesters marched, sang and chanted. At that moment, Wendy saw clearly how the Vietnam War which the politicians kept saying was “over there on the other side of the world so don’t worry about it”, was in fact not just over there in Asia against people who don’t look like Americans – the war was alive in a formerly peaceful Midwestern college town. Here, and elsewhere in America, victims of the war – young men in body bags, crippled, or psychologically disabled – returned from Vietnam to every block in every town and Wendy, along with many other Americans, held a visual image of the war – the scene played out in their own streets and not filtered through the evening news.

In May of 1970, Wendy listened to the news on the radio. The announcer reported that the National Guardsmen had responded to Kent State University students demonstrating against the American invasion of Cambodia. Seventy-seven guardsmen fired their weapons and in a matter of thirteen seconds, killed four students and wounded nine others. The Kent State massacre was where, as a nation, people had the same kind of awareness that Wendy experienced when she saw the National Guardsmen clear the street. The killing, the brutality, and the victimization of innocent people happened in America as well as “over there.” As patriotic as the government tried to make the return of dead soldiers in coffins draped with red, white, and blue flags, Wendy and everyone else woke up to the knowledge that these young American men were dying needlessly and no one quite understood the politics behind the war. Maybe it was because of oil

reserves in the Mekong Delta, nobody really knew, but when the police, the military, and the National Guard beat and killed students, the popularity changed direction, not only for the majority of Americans, but for Wendy as well.

Activated and angry, with an interest in journalism, Wendy crafted letters regarding the senselessness of the war and continued working for the *Daily Cardinal*. Only later, many years later, she realized that she had copy edited articles for two of the four campus antiwar radicals who had blown up Sterling Hall on the University grounds in the summer of 1970, killing a physics researcher and damaging twenty-six buildings. One of the alleged bombers had been a writer for the *Daily Cardinal* and remains at large. The others were captured, served their sentences, and did community service, including one man who was later elected mayor of Madison, but in 1970, the university became one of the nation's bull's-eye for political activism and protest.

Wendy's expectations of a Berkeley-style – mellow, groovy, hippie – experience at college dissipated as she found herself instead in a political intersection. After two years at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Wendy transferred to a small liberal arts college in St. Paul where she wrote poetry, pursued pacifism and walked the inexorable path of global feminism. But this was the early 70s and these activities blew against the core of America. She preferred to be a poet herself, rather than the socially acceptable poet's girlfriend or wife. She wanted to be sexual, she wanted to be financially independent, and she wanted to be a writer, even though misogyny, the Republican Party, global commercial empires, and the budding Christian Right wanted her in the kitchen, the bedroom, the secretarial pool, and the church. She couldn't be the only one who wanted a different world, but she had no idea how to work against the system.

She used the only weapon acceptable to her. She picked up her pen and wrote, hoping to connect with others who felt as frustrated as she did. When Richard Nixon bombed Hanoi in 1972, a very succinct image came to her mind, so she wrote “Strong Man”:

*He has no wings
He walks on his fists
Rocks rise before him
He breaks them
Their dust blows behind him
Covering old women*

*The cameo his mother gave him
froze
There is no face there
Its clasp nurses at his throat*

*He devours small animals
Pisses detergent
Can't shit
Won't make*

*He wants more,
Always more*

She wrote more, always more.

*Well can't you see, how this is all connected
They want me home with baby so you can be selected
And if their sons and their daughters had just stayed home with their moms
Wouldn't be no Irans, babe, wouldn't be Vietnams*

(to the melody of “Surfin’ USA”, which was taken from Chuck Berry’s “Sweet Little Sixteen”)

Wendy later published her poems in a book called *Warring & Whoring*. “Why,” asked Minnesota writer Fred Manfred, “Did you title your book that?” Wendy knew the title would not warrant a window placement in a book store, but she wanted to address

what men and women do when they are victimized according to gender by sexist systems.

*Thomas Jefferson's burning all the words that he wrote
General Washington's turning for each blow that he smote
This country once was for freedom
from King George's decrees
Now the eagle's enslaved here, in the Pentagon's greed*

When Wendy had her first child, a daughter, in 1978, she noticed a biological shift occur deep inside of her that had nothing to do with hormones. She wanted, she needed, freedom, power and support that equaled her body's biological effort and success in childbirth. She wanted and needed that same freedom, power and support from which every person originated and which her daughter, her daughter's generation, and her daughter's progeny deserved.

*God lives in the children, god lives in the work
God's blood is spilled in them, be they Chinese or Turk
God for the masses is getting something to eat
Will we just give them bullets, or will we stand on our feet?*

She craved a community that welcomed self-expression, beauty and integrity. She wanted corporations to cease their dominance of earth, people, and all living things. She wanted corporations to stop doing the "Americano", whereby a minute percentage of wealthy American businessmen ruled with a bottom-line system that crushed the general population and destroyed Mother Earth. As it was, she thought too many people sat in front of their television sets, watching network news, frightened and frozen by what they saw and heard, and didn't know what to do to change the system.

Wendy had met a few people who refused to be kept in positions of victimization by the corporations. She and her like-minded friends turned off their televisions, joined writing groups, conversed, and tuned into thought-provoking films, theatre, and art. They

wanted change. They were being the change they wanted to see in the world. They felt in their guts and in their spirit, fear for the death of the planet.

*No one can be killer who's just given birth
 No one can fire a rifle who knows his own body's worth
 Yes our bodies are mortal, and our bodies are grand,
 What makes us immortal is to reach out our hands*

Wendy scribbled down words as she nurtured her baby and remembered how her lovers and her brother's friends returned from Vietnam, damaged. Danny, the father of Wendy's baby, said that the time served was etched in his psyche like a tattoo: 1 year, 39 days, 17 hours. Fellows entered the Marines at seventeen and eighteen thinking they, and their big, strong buddies, were heroes making way for democracy, or they went because that's what their fathers had done in World War II, or because they were high school graduates with average grades and no deferment. One friend, Larry, as the radio-operator in his unit, had become a walking target. When he returned home, he stayed stoned for six years in an attempt to alleviate the trauma.

Fred returned home with a steel plate in his head, and told Wendy the story of his assignment to guard a jungle path used by villagers to cross the valley. His sergeant commanded him to shoot and kill anyone who came along the path. Supposedly, civilians carried bombs or other armaments back and forth for the guerillas, so he sat there, waiting and watching. Two small children emerged from the jungle, a brother and sister, about four and five years of age, holding onto each other, no basket, no bag, just the two of them. The soldier, sweating and motionless, watched them walk along the path and disappear back into the jungle. He didn't shoot them. He couldn't pull the trigger. The sergeant ran up the hill, punched him in the face, and screamed, "You stupid bastard," as only military men can. "I gave you an order." The verbal attack continued in front of his

platoon. The sergeant sentenced him to the brig for disobedience, but that was his moment of awareness, when he realized he no longer had allegiance to the military, to the patriarchal hierarchy where orders are obeyed. While some friends returned home insane, he did not. He took up carpentry, grew his hair, cooked in a cooperative restaurant, raised his daughter, drank too much on occasion, but never raised his voice or threatened anyone physically or verbally.

One eighteen-year-old marine, in the middle of a hot and humid summer, climbed onto the roof of his father's garage in suburban Fox Point, Wisconsin, waved his gun, cached his ammunition, and for several hours yelled, "The gooks are coming, they're comin' to get us. The ones in the black pajamas, they're out in the dark. I'll get 'em. I'll cover ya, boys." The police talked him down, dosed him with sedatives and institutionalized him.

*Agent orange will rot you with cancer deep in your veins
while the leaves there are droppin' our sons here drop in pain
Maybe napalm-burned bodies will stay on other shores
But GI's will always remember, their minds can't shut the door.*

Life had a way of carrying on. Wendy wrote more poetry and published more books. She gave birth to another daughter and shared custody with both of her children's fathers. She graduated with a Master of Fine Arts degree in creative writing. In 1988, she married Greg, with whom she had two more children, Katy in 1990 and Joey in 1992. Settled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Wendy opened Mother Lode Book Room and Women's Centre. Along with the books, she carried cards, art and crafts made by local women, and offered memberships to the reading room where she housed her own collection of books. In this back room she introduced yoga and meditation to wives and female students. She invested her life's savings into the store and her persistent,

understated marketing skills garnered a popular following. She even brought in Julia Cameron, author of *The Artist's Way*, for a successful reading. Women would come in and tell her, "I saw you read twenty-five years ago. I thought you were talking to me and it changed my life." Other women read the books in the backroom and left them there, afraid to take them home.

Despite her hard work, she just managed to keep the business viable. Her husband's aunt offered to help out financially, but, unbeknownst to Wendy, what were good ideas one day were forgotten the next. The U.S. banking industry pushed credit cards at her, and Wendy, seduced into buying credit to pay her bills, found herself deep in debt, caught in a system of financial slavery. And then, in 1994, the county court called her to jury duty.

She attended several interviews with lawyers, and after being excluded from several cases, the court placed her on a case where the defendant had allegedly beaten and threatened a woman and her five-year-old son. Several of the defendant's friends, including one hefty man and one menacing, sat in court, while his female friends testified. "Oh, he just runs a diaper service," they said. Wendy understood how the operators of a diaper service would have access to suburban homes, hidden keys, and the owners' work and vacation schedules. She was sure they threatened and beat women and minors to do their bidding as a part of doing business in petty theft. As probationers or felons, they couldn't risk arrest.

On Friday, at the end of the trial's first week, Wendy left the courthouse and headed to the bus stop, anxious to get home. After walking a few blocks, she felt uncomfortable, as though someone was watching her. She paused at a store window and

glanced behind her. She recognized the defendant's two friends about half a block behind her. Coincidence? She thought not, and continued walking, slipping into the open door of a department store. She put on a hat and a pair of sunglasses, removed her sweater and looked over her shoulder as she stepped out the door. Sure enough, she spied both men among the pre-weekend crowd a short distance behind her. As she continued in the direction of home, she stopped a few more times and each time she resumed her trek home she hoped she was mistaken, but the two men remained in her sight. Wendy jumped on one bus, jumped off, caught the next one, and zigzagged across town.

During jury selection, she remembered seeing the defendant look over the lawyer's shoulder at the list of jurors. Was it possible that he had accessed their names and possibly even their addresses? Was it possible that from prison, he had retrieved their details on a prison library computer and passed on the information to his accomplices? Did they know where she lived, where her children went to daycare? Wendy didn't go home. Instead, she doubled back to the justice center and asked to see the judge. "I can't be on this jury," she told the assistant. "These guys are following me." The judge excused her from the case and she called her husband to pick her up from the court house.

The following day, at seven in the morning, the front door knob rattled. She pulled back the shade, peered through the window and came face to face with the hefty man. She called the police, explained her predicament, but they told her they couldn't do anything until someone committed a break-and-enter or an assault. "Just keep them away from me and my kids," she pleaded.

At that time, police had initiated a technological surveillance code system and were attempting to set up a digitized intercommunication between the city police force,

state patrol, and the federal and lower court systems. The day after her plea for help, Wendy, in a flannel robe, a baby in her arms, opened the window shade, and saw a couple of men on the porch of the house next door, less than twenty-five feet away. They both held walkie-talkie-sized mobile phones, and one trained a pair of binoculars on her. Her mind reeled. Why was she under surveillance? And who were they? The FBI, the State Patrol, the mafia, or the city police thinking she was involved with the diaper gang? Who was watching Wendy, her family, and their little house in south Minneapolis?

She didn't get answers and the strange events weren't confined to her house. While at work in the backroom of her bookstore on a quiet Saturday, a crazed man ran inside, glanced around the housewives, saw Wendy, and stared at her as though he was identifying her from a photo. She asked if she could help him, but without a word, he retreated. Again, she wondered, who was he? A gang member, friend of the defendant, or sent by the police? She felt like she had lifted the rug and found a seething network of villains and cops.

During the week Wendy had sat through the jury interview and court proceedings, she realized that the gamut of cops included good cops, mediocre cops, and cops who interacted with criminals for the sheer excitement of criminal activity. She discovered that there was a range of criminals as well, from those who were simply foolish enough to make a mistake; those who were in the habit of criminal activity; and those who exemplified evil without regard for gender, age, poverty or vulnerability. Law and order was not as simple as evil people on one side and good people on the other. Instead of good and bad, Wendy identified a spectrum of people who were interconnected, from those interested in criminal activity to those helping society, and any number of

combinations in between. Wendy didn't want to be in the middle of their business. She didn't want to deal with the testosterone-fueled drama and its desperate, warped and terrorized victims. She wanted peace. All her efforts to date were to build peace within her family and within the community.

Her husband didn't understand her concern for their safety, but then he hadn't been in court, he hadn't been followed. He had neither seen nor heard the men as she had. And he hadn't been in the bookstore. "I have to get out of here," she told him. She stayed at a friend's farm for ten days before she returned home to gather up the two younger children and move to southwestern Minnesota where she felt more in control of her environment, their safety, and daily life. She remained uninformed as to the outcome of the trial. Perhaps the harassment had been a deliberate plan to get a mistrial, but in any case, curiosity never drove her to find out what happened.

Within the year, while continuing to live outside the city, Wendy closed her book store. She paid back her suppliers but defaulted on her bank loans and declared personal bankruptcy. This did not in any way affect her husband's financial status, but her father-in-law, who had been a comptroller for a large paper company, was horrified by her financial demise. He believed that the money, her money, she had invested in the bookstore also belonged to his son and that this action financially impacted him. Her father-in-law began a crusade of sorts to eliminate Wendy from his son's life and his grandchildren's lives.

In her effort to reconstruct and root herself, Wendy joined the University of Minnesota's arboretum garden tour of Oregon, Washington, and B.C. In Victoria, the group walked the meandering pathways of Butchart Gardens and breathed in the essence

of the Rose Garden, the Sunken Garden, and the fifty-five acres of floral display. They also visited a private English garden, where the distinguished owner invited them into her well-appointed living room and served afternoon tea to the group. "It's getting a little close in here, I'll open the window," said the hostess, as she flung open the window. Wendy stared through the window to the garden and blue sky beyond. A slight breath of air kissed her face. "There are no screens," she said. "Don't you have any mosquitoes?" she asked the hostess. "No, we have no mosquitoes here, just the occasional fly." The occasional fly, Wendy thought, as she basked in the blizzard-free, insect-free environment. Upon her return to the U.S., thoughts of the West Coast of B.C. continued to haunt her. Perhaps she had found paradise, a place where she and her children could live in peace.

She contemplated the idea of moving to the West Coast as she continued her patterns of daily life, but she suspended those dreams, when, after a long illness, her father died. Devastated by his loss, she took comfort in believing that her father still lived within her. Heavy with grief, she faced her next challenge as she and Greg entered divorce proceedings. Part of the assessment for custody included an evaluation of the parental homes. A conservative, former nun, custody evaluator paid a visit to Wendy's home in southwestern Minnesota, and expressed shock when Wendy allowed six-year-old Katy to dance around in a fairy costume, wave a wand, and kiss her on the mouth. As Wendy maneuvered the legal process, she experienced the side of the judicial nightmare that takes offense to a woman who had two children out of wedlock, married a man twelve years younger, had been financially independent, shared childcare with her spouse even when the children were infants, and had owned and managed women's bookstore,

all in a neighbourhood that purported happy families and no gender prejudices. In the end, the judge granted her ex-husband school-year custody of the children. On a silent, cold, windy day at her friend's farm, Wendy's ex-husband arrived, picked up the children and drove them 150 miles to Minneapolis. Wendy again felt smothered and crushed by the corporate and legal systems. She wanted to talk about citizen surveillance and women's abuse, but no one wanted to listen. Instead, her ex-husband and his compatriots labeled her looney.

Another blizzard whipped at the windows of the house as she suffocated under the emotional and physical weight of despair. She decided to leave and fled to Oregon, moved into a motor home and found work at a garden center. The waters and breezes of the Pacific Ocean, the cleansing winter rains, and the plants and shrubs she worked with spoke to her spirit. She desired more than anything to remain in her children's lives, and brought them to stay with her during the summer and winter holidays, spending every moment of her access time with them.

Time alone in Oregon allowed her to re-evaluated her goals and she gave thought to which profession best suited her skills and talents. During the contemplation, she moved back to Minneapolis to be closer to her children and found a job in a health food store located in a beautiful part of the city. She sold herbs, vitamins, shampoo, and such items as are beneficial for body and soul. Content to a point, she lived hand-to-mouth and knew that if disaster struck, she would be unable to pay her rent, car insurance, health insurance, and a myriad of other living expenses. Living on the edge felt uncomfortable and she sought steady employment that would allow her to save a portion of her income.

As a former bookseller, researcher, and writer, she decided a career as a librarian made sense, and began her search for library schools.

On the clear, cool autumn morning of September 11, 2001, Wendy drove into Minneapolis from the suburbs, passing giant automobile dealerships with their row upon row of American flags. She hummed along to the music on the radio when the broadcaster interrupted and announced that a plane had hit one of the Twin Towers in New York City. Stunned by the news, she held the steering wheel with both hands, intuitively knowing this was not an accident. She wept and pounded the dashboard, screaming, “You fuckers, you fuckers!” at no one and everyone. Drivers of pick-up trucks along side her stared at the crazed woman, but all she could think was, “This is it, this is it. We have been so smug and arrogant for more than thirty years and somebody finally paid us back.”

When the news station reported that a second plane had hit the other tower and confirmed that the disaster had been deliberate and not an accident, she immediately thought that the corporate conservatives behind the Bush-Cheney administration had allowed it to happen in order to gain sympathy for the strategy they had been working on for years. George Bush wanted to be ruler of his people, Dick Cheney or Donald Rumsfeld wanted to be rulers of the oil fields in the Middle East, so they created this crisis, or allowed this crisis, to happen. She believed the idea more and more as the government greeted the horror with silence and instead rushed into Afghanistan and deflected blame of conspiracy onto George Bush Sr.’s rival, Saddam Hussein. Wendy shook her head in disbelief as the U.S. government heads paraded their unsubstantiated propaganda in front of the television cameras.

No one had answers, no one knew where to turn, what to do. Panic pervaded. At the health food store, an attractive, well-coiffed, well-fed, yoga-attired woman entered and, like a dazed sleepwalker, skirted the periphery of the store, gazing at the shelves of vitamins and health products. Ghostlike, she approached Wendy and, with a look of wide-eyed pleading, asked, "Do you have pillows?" To which Wendy asked, "What kind of pillows?" "Meditation pillows," the woman answered. "I feel that if I meditate I will come to terms with this and know peace." Wendy said, "No, we don't have meditation pillows, but maybe you can get them at the Zen Centre." She gave the woman directions. As the woman left the store, the presence of a drone plane caught Wendy's attention. Not a regular airplane from the small airport nearby, but a long, larger one circled the area, round and round all day, protecting the city's ordinance factory.

The factory made bombs or bullets, she and her neighbours weren't sure exactly what they made, but they knew they made weapons that kill people and hurt children far from their own quiet town. They did know a factory had manufactured the cluster bombs that were dropped on Lebanon. The heat-sensitive pieces made at the plant had flown apart into shiny bits littering the ground of what once had been considered Holy Land. When the planes passed, children and women came out of hiding and kicked or reached down for the coloured pieces on the ground. The bombs exploded in their hands or blew off their feet.

She held open the store's door and watched the plane circle. Wendy felt compassion for this woman who thought she could save her sanity by purchasing a pillow and meditating, but despaired at the fruitlessness of that activity. What state was the country in if people believed that buying something would make them feel better in such

insane and shocking times? No one dared mention the attack as a retribution for economic and military genocides and only one congressperson voted against the Patriot Act – a black woman from Oakland, California. In the days, weeks, and months after the attack on the Twin Towers, Wendy sold bottles of St. John's Wort and valerian to women who hoped natural remedies would ease their fear throughout the day and allow them, their husbands, and children to sleep at night. With each sale, Wendy thought, "I have to get out of here."

She had registered for a workshop at Hollyhock on Cortes Island, B.C., and her flight had been booked for September 23rd, two weeks post 911. Friends asked, "You're not going to fly, are you?" Of course she was going to fly. On the day of departure, she walked to her gate at the deserted Minneapolis airport and caught a glimpse of a Muslim woman reading her Koran in a waiting area. She registered fear in the woman's face. The woman's body shook as she frantically read her prayers and her eyes darted from her book to the television screens that played CNN broadcasts of 911 and the aftermath. The media deluged viewers with the constant reanalysis of every piece of tape, every photograph, everything recorded by the media and brought forth by ordinary citizens, the orange flames and black smoke billowing from the towers, the collapse of the towers, the dazed secretaries and helpless city workers, and the interviews with reassuring and damning experts.

Wendy turned her eyes to the mounted televisions and watched for a moment as reporters talked incessantly about the events. No one, it seemed to her, could just be silent and ask, "What really happened here?" or "How do I really feel about it?" let alone, "We're sorry for the mess our stupid greed has made of this world." From what she knew

about psychotherapy and breakdowns of some sort or the other, the first thing that happens is nothing. Shock, often paralysis, occurs in the face of horror or death. She herself had experienced domestic terrorism during and after her jury duty and she had experienced the death of her father. She knew that the first thing to do was stop. Therapists and doctors encourage post-traumatic stress patients to just stop the compulsive or reactive replaying of the trauma, stop the blame and rage so they can slowly feel what is happening in their bodies and brains at the moment of “impact”, before they try to intellectualize and process what has happened. But the U.S. maintained constant national banter, fueled the growing hysteria, and searched for enemies to blame. Through television, Laura Bush told parents to tell their children that everything would be just fine, to which Wendy responded, “Yeah, right.” Wendy felt like the country was on the brink of World War III.

Eager to leave the chaos behind, Wendy boarded the flight to Vancouver, found her seat in the almost-empty plane, and closed her eyes. Upon arrival at the Vancouver airport, she claimed her luggage, hailed a cab, and drank in the tall evergreens that lined the street as her cab sped into the city of glass. In the short time she’d spent in the plane, at the airport and in the cab, she found Canadians to be thoughtful and disturbed about the 911 events, but not to the extent of the anxiety and panic in the States. The Canadians she encountered were a mosaic of ethnicities and she wondered if this Canadian multiculturalism was the reason for the calm and peace she intuitively felt during her first hour in the country. In Minnesota, the population consisted mainly of two lily-white and extremely homogenized groups: Scandinavian or German, Lutheran or Roman Catholic.

Very few Vietnamese, Hispanic, and Afro-Americans lived in the city, and those who did, lived mostly in the downtown core.

How brilliant of Pierre Trudeau, she thought, to have said that if Canada wants more immigrants, then Canadians need to accept that the new arrivals bring with them their heritage, so accept it and get on with life. The United States was supposed to be a uniform melting pot, but the crisis drastically accentuated the cracks in the façade that hid rich/poor, black/white, city/country and men/women gaps of virulent prejudice. Wendy liked how she felt in Vancouver, in Canada. She rolled down the taxi's window and let the mild Pacific wind blow on her face, whipping back her long, grey-streaked hair. She closed her eyes, relaxed into the seat, and for the first time in two weeks was able to just feel from the inside out.

In May, 2002, less than a year after her escape to Hollyhock, Wendy moved to Vancouver to begin her studies in First Nations Core Concentration of Library Studies at the University of British Columbia. She settled into an apartment in Kitsilano, surrounded herself with hundreds of her beloved books, and explored the city by public transit and walked whenever she could. She purchased her clothes at the secondhand and thrift stores and layered the t-shirts, sweaters, and anoraks in protection against the rain as she ventured out to readings by Margaret Atwood, poetry readings by Coleman Banks, whirling dervish dances, choral concerts, theatre, movies, and any other events that brought her a sense of connection and beauty. Through her studies at the Museum of Anthropology and the First Nations House of Learning she listened to the voices of centuries-old cultures that had endured adversity with understanding, truth, and hope.

She changed her name. The decision to change it, made after her acceptance to UBC, seemed most appropriate. When she looked back on her experiences – the bookstore, jury duty, death of her father, bankruptcy, divorce and loss of custody of her children – she realized much had been acknowledged within her and she was not the same person who had given birth to her last child just a decade and two months earlier. She wanted to hear her name spoken as her father had pronounced it – Windy. She also identified with the women’s renaming movement, a group who believed they were something in and of themselves, not derived from, identified with, or the property of “men”. They called themselves “womyn”. She called herself Wyndy Knox Carr.

The divorce had stripped her of “Carr”, her husband’s last name, but she wasn’t divorced from her children and wanted to keep an attachment to them through their surname. Changing her name was a way of declaring herself to be woman-centered and moving towards her goals of bettering the lives of other women. By changing her name, she didn’t have to change herself. She knew that her names were all patronymics, from her father and her husband, and while she didn’t mind being connected to the ancestors, she did mind the male-centeredness. More important than the names themselves was her transformation. She was saying, “Here’s my name and *I* know what the transformation was, so you can call me whatever you want.” UBC and other establishments recognized her as Wyndy Carr, some places referred to Wyndy Knox-Carr, others used Wyndy Knoxcarr. She hadn’t intended the numerous misspellings, but often the combinations made her difficult to locate, and that suited her just fine.

From the Canadian side of the border, Wyndy mourned the devastating effect U.S. imperialism had on its citizens. The war on drugs, the “three strikes and you’re out”

laws, tort reform, “tax relief”, and a host of other Republican laws had criminalized a large number of people, the majority living in poverty, and enriched a few. With the view that people cannot be rehabilitated, the privatized prison system had become the largest slave colony ever to exist in the world. The U.S. healthcare system costs a family \$1,300 a month for basic health insurance, ten times the Canadian average cost. The attack on Saddam Hussein and Iraq after 911 destroyed civilians and soldiers. The Patriot Act, citizen surveillance, and due diligence jeopardized the American Bill of Rights, and allowed for any and all personal information to be sold over the internet to anyone who wanted it for \$49.00. In addition, the U.S. refused to sign the Ottawa Treaty that prohibits any future production or use of anti-personnel landmines and is one of only sixteen countries that continue to produce landmines. The American grandstanding for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness rang false and the more she understood, the more anger she felt. She refused to pretend that what the so-called “Powers” were doing was okay, but for her own safety and the safety of her family, she often remained silent.

Wyndy engaged in conversation within the University, on the bus, in coffee shops, in line at the theatre. Mostly though, she listened and watched. She wasn't the only one with a biological desire to survive, with a need for diversity. People wanted humanity back in life – they didn't want the government, scientists, and CEOs making all the decisions – they wanted the intuitives, the imaginers, the dreamers, the elders, the mothers, the children, the artists, the underprivileged, and the Dalai Lama involved in decision making. They wanted government money invested once again into community projects, churches, schools, neighbourhoods, and psychiatric wards.

Many knew, as she did, from experience, immediate or biological, that not only do things have to change in order for the world to survive, but they have to change peacefully and compassionately. For years, women had continually worked as nurses, teachers, and mothers to keep communities intact, but women would not be able to fix the damage caused by government, science, and technology if something didn't change. In order to negotiate change, groups of people needed to think, dream, feel, and talk about possibilities and actions. These cultural-creatives, these bioneers, these like-minded people who dismissed television, Zoloft, Viagra, and consumerism engaged instead in yoga, listened to interesting people share their ideas, thought unto the Seventh Generation, cared for themselves and their families, and grasped the connection to a society that functions productively and successfully without elitism. For over thirty years, the words of urgency concerning politics and ecology spoken by people like Al Gore and David Suzuki, and the warnings about sexism, war, and fascism by Margaret Mead, Helen Caldicott, and Margaret Atwood, were finally taking root.

Wyndy had quoted Albert Einstein in her book of poems and she still held onto his words:

The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything except our way of thinking. Thus we are drifting toward a catastrophe beyond comparison. We shall require a substantially different manner of thinking if mankind is to survive.

Wyndy embraced her connection to Canada's tradition of pacifism and independence, a place of refuge. Even though she had lived in Canada only on student, work, or visitor visas, she still claimed the Canadian pledge of peace, order, and good government.

On a warm day in July, Wyndy sat in her lawn chair at Kitsilano Beach in Vancouver, not on the sand, but on the grass, under the shade of a giant red maple. Books spilled out from an oversized brown bag set beside her, but she was not reading. Open in her lap laid *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, by Thomas L. Friedman, a book about the tension between the globalization system and ancient forces of culture, geography, tradition, and community – what was needed to keep the system in balance. She stared out at the bay to the motionless freighters, the many white sails, and a few kayakers. Dogs barked, playfully chasing the waves as their owners’ sipped lattes and flirted. Joggers and strollers dodged each other while bodies in bikinis and board shorts littered the beach.

Homeless men (she rarely saw women) pushed their shopping buggies along the wide path that divided earth and water, stopping to lift a garbage lid and retrieve a bottle or can or a half-eaten sandwich. Wyndy adjusted her large wire-framed glasses and her floppy hat, and turned her gaze towards Cornwall Avenue looking for Katy and Joe. She’d given them an hour to walk the few blocks home for lunch. After she scanned the crowds, she turned back to look at the mountains and remembered the first time she stood here and asked a passerby what they were named. “That one is Seymour, way over there on the left. That is Grouse in the middle, and over there is Cypress. You can’t see them from here, but there are two peaks behind the range called The Lions. The First Nations people call them The Sisters and believe they protect the land and call for peace among people.” Wyndy had thanked her.

The information hadn’t surprised her. She’d felt the power and magic radiate from the Douglas Firs, the blossoming cherry trees, the eagles, and the killer whales she

spotted from the ferry as it sailed through the Gulf Islands. The land here was alive and she breathed it in, deeply. The air held the promise of renewal and the rain-soaked concrete, cedar fronds, and damp soil released the sweet and musky perfume of desire and hope. The West Coast had called her here, summoned her to take refuge and remember the strength in land and water as restorative, regenerative, revealing, and even admonishing.

She recalled a poem she wrote decades earlier while taking refuge and finding similar healing energy at the shores of Kitchi-Gumee, Big-Sea-Water, on the North Shore of Lake Superior: “Mother God Speaks”.

*I went to the fields:
the sky was there, and the earth.
I asked for a vision among the weeds
in a dry watercourse, and god said*

*Many Waters Woman,
be not afraid. The song
is within you, in your breath
like water in the earth.*

*I have called you by a name
you will not forget.
Here is a feather
you will lose and find again:*

*It is called friends. But
you will never lose your name.
Paint your face with earth, woman,
and carry many waters within.*

*I am you, & always with you,
that much is true.
Many Waters Woman will speak, water flow.
I am under the earth, always*

*moving, rising, falling, flowing;
I am in the open sky.
I am always with you, Many Waters Woman,*

I am you...

Alone on Kits Beach in Vancouver, she recounted her years of attack, ridicule, disempowerment, and disregard, and the many painful years of separation from her children. Countless times she dipped into the water for strength to continue. How close to finding peace had she come? Her life in Vancouver was not idyllic. After graduating two years earlier from the University of British Columbia with a Masters of Library and Information Studies, she remained unemployed as a research librarian. She found temporary part-time contracts, but her lack of experience in the field, her age, and citizenship proved problematic for potential employers in both Canada and the United States.

During the past few years, she watched and raged at the Sullivan administration, the 2010 Olympic organizers and the container port degradation of the environment, the criminalization of addiction, and the poverty in Vancouver's downtown eastside. She feared that the "evils" – systematic corruption – of the U.S. conservative capitalists had crept into Canada. She wanted to shake each and every Canadian and shout, "You're teetering on the brink of Americanization. Don't allow Starbuckification! At least don't go down without a consciousness-raising, ideal-shouting confrontation!" Why, she wonders, don't Canadians realize the disempowering, anti-democratic effects of privatization and corporate advertisers? Instead, they drink their Starbucks, recycle, and discuss the escalating real estate values, ignorant of the insidious wind of change that blows from the south.

Despite the huge numbers of Americans who voted against Bush in both elections, the majority voted him into office and despite the millions that marched

worldwide in opposition to the bombing invasion of Iraq, things haven't changed. Wyndy could almost hear the gathering of power in the War Room laugh and shrug, "So what?"

Wyndy closed her eyes after checking once more for her children. She will check on them for the rest of their life. She hoped that her input will counteract any possible neglectfulness inflicted by their father, just as she hoped that input from Hilary or Belinda would make a difference on a national level. She hoped someone would step up and say, "Everything is not fine." Not here, not in Baghdad, New Orleans or Minneapolis. Hope lies with those who enroll in non-violent communication courses, the corporate fellows who ethically justify going green, those appalled by the number of coffins returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, those mugged by a Methamphetamine freak. Maybe they will decide it's time to change. Maybe, as a "Many Waters Woman", she and others like her will wear away the stone of poverty, imprisonment, prostitution, and prejudice's walls.

She opened her eyes and saw Katy and Joe, half the size of Katy, walking towards her, laughing. She shielded her eyes and watched as they stopped and ran their hands over, around, and under the eight-thousand-pound granite sculpture beside the walkway. She doubted they knew that Khang Pham-New, born in Vietnam in 1968 and one of the members of the "Boat People" exodus in 1980, created the peace symbol entitled "Realm of Passion". She would tell them.

With the peace-keeping peaks of The Sisters above Vancouver, the Seaforth Peace Flame Park beside the Burrard Street Bridge, and the Peach Arch border crossing south of the city, perhaps this was the closest she would come to living in peace.

Excerpts of “This is all Connected” taken from *Warring & Whoring*:

Memoirpoems, by Wendy Joan Knox. Published by Multi-Medea Enterprises, Minneapolis, MN. 1986. pg. 105-107.

“Mother God Speaks” taken from *Warring & Whoring: Memoirpoems*, by Wendy Joan Knox. Published by Multi-Medea Enterprises, Minneapolis, MN. 1986. pg.13.

Albert Einstein quote taken from *Warring & Whoring: Memoirpoems*, by Wendy Joan Knox. Published by Multi-Medea Enterprises, Minneapolis, MN. 1986. pg. 140.