

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2015

CARMEN WARRINGTON VISITS THE GOLD COAST



Carmen Warrington

peace communicator

author

meditation guide

actor

✧ Carmen Warrington ✧

Carmen Warrington was invited to give a talk at the Gold Coast Meditation Centre on the occasion of International Women's Day 2015. Writer Susan Curran was there for the morning.

A WOMAN BEING FULLY HERSELF

As Carmen settles into her chair and adjusts the microphone you sense the room giving her that mild celebrity status we give people we've only heard or seen on radio or TV or, in this case, in dreamy, mood-altering recordings. But during the next hour in which she tells her life story, guides a short meditation, visits the IWD *Make it Happen* theme and laughs a lot, the idea of celebrity evaporates and we

see only a woman being fully herself: vulnerable, powerful, talented.

Carmen Warrington laughs at the suggestion that if there was a Top 40 of spoken guided meditation recordings she would be on it. Half way through this morning's talk,



when she does drop into the voice that's played to countless meditation groups around the world, you feel

*written by
Susan Curran*

www.carmenwarrington.com
www.peaceaudio.com
www.angelsongscd.com
www.carmenwarrington.bandcamp.com

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immediately comforted, calmed. Later a high school teacher who's managed to get meditation into the classroom tells Carmen his students like her best and that her voice transforms a room of adolescents. Non-english speakers buy her recordings for the feeling conveyed through her voice and the backing music.

'Not good enough roared in my ears.'

She tells her life story plainly with natural flow and pauses and no hint of having rehearsed it. Much like the way she guides meditation. While she was growing up, her family culled its possessions to move every two years because her Academic father couldn't settle. Her first school was in Nigeria. 'I learned to be detached from possessions and for a long time it was hard for me to engage with people. We three kids were painfully shy.' Her older siblings came top of their class making her feel that her second-in-class wasn't good enough. 'Not good enough roared in my ears.'

Her mother was a natural non-conformist who dressed differently and wore no make up. 'She didn't tell me to be myself, to be free, that I didn't have to do what everyone else does,' she tells us, 'she didn't say it, she just lived it.' Her Polish father, 'a virtuous, honourable man', found it difficult to interact with his children due to his horrific wartime experiences.

At university she began with law, fell into the humanities and drama and at last felt seen and heard. After a performance in which she played Juliet, her brother Mercutio and her sister Lady Capulet, she hoped her parents

would say something nice. Her mother came closest when she repeated what someone in the audience said to her. 'Well Mrs Warrington, without you there wouldn't have been a play tonight!' Carmen laughs and her audience today laughs with her. We've all had moments like these in our lives. We women in the room know that if we could find the words the way Carmen can we could tell of similar triumphs and fears, of mothers and fathers who do and don't get it right. The way she tells her life story makes us feel calm and comforted about ourselves.

'I hadn't been connected to myself – it was my spiritual awakening, I began to live'

'Destiny' she says, got her into NIDA (where the country's best are nurtured for theatre, film and television). The rigours of the artist's obligation to look inside, and making new friends, produced her turning point. 'I hadn't been connected to myself – it was my spiritual awakening, I began to live,' she says. And then, with a laugh, 'Is this interesting?' The room is right there with her and says 'Yes!' with enthusiasm.

Her friends started her meditating and during a creative workshop she was asked to speak a few words to help the group to meditate. At first she was nervous and then she liked the feeling of being herself, of finding and speaking from the peace inside herself, of finding the language to convey that feeling. 'It became something I can really offer to people.'

'Say yes to whatever opportunities are offered, even if you think you're not good enough.'

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Of all her work she's most proud of her meditation recordings. 'Say yes to whatever opportunities are offered, even if you think you're not good enough,' she tells us.

She tells of another time and another disorienting move to a new city, when she waited for a sign of what to do. 'The sign came after I worked out what to do. Don't wait for the sign. Be guided by your intuition, your gut feeling. Do what you feel passionate about.' She tells of when her musician partner wanted to introduce meditation into jazz nights at a pub in a tough part of Sydney. She got into her zone, began speaking rhythmically, two men at the bar shouted, 'You're living in fantasyland sweetheart.' 'I kept going but my heart wasn't very open for the rest of that performance! It made me stronger in the long run.'

The picture builds of a woman who's learned to be herself. Fears, knock-backs, lack of confidence – she knows her vulnerabilities are ours too, that hearing the way it's been for her makes our stories okay. She gives us time to think about this. At the end of a long pause she smiles and asks if we'd like a short meditation.

'I look at the world through eyes that see from the peace inside'

We shuffle into comfortable sitting positions, some of us close our eyes. The lights are dimmed. There's silence for a while. Then that familiar voice says softly, slowly, calmly, 'I become aware of myself sitting in the chair, the hum of the air conditioning, the traffic outside. I notice my breathing, my body is

heavy, relaxed and there's a part of me that's light. My life force flows through my body... The source of my energy is a point of light behind my forehead...I look at the world through eyes that see from the peace inside...'

Carmen started and continues meditation recordings with the Brahma Kumaris, a spiritual organization that began in India in the 1930's and now has centres all over India and in more than one hundred countries. (See below for more information.) The ABC (Australia's national broadcaster) commissioned her and her partner to create a series of eight CD's which sell in their shops and on iTunes. And she's a funeral celebrant.

'I learned how to hold the space for people who want to feel the peace inside, to be in touch with that part of themselves that's beautiful. I learned to put the focus on the things that are beautiful about me, what I can achieve. I found and dismantled my fears to become open through sharing.'

About the IWD *Make it Happen* theme she says, 'Women are beaten, raped, caught up in wars and I've wondered, what have I been doing to change that, to make things happen?' Her intangible, invisible contribution, she says, has been to connect people with their highest selves, the energy of the divine, so that they can bring that into the world.

'We can all be instruments for transformation in the world – humans can radiate peace.'

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'Peace in my heart, peace in my mind, peace in the world, peace in our time.'

Carmen ends with telling us that when she was studying to be a funeral celebrant she watched lots of videos on death and one stood out from the rest – a Japanese fiction film in which characters who had died were asked to remember the happiest moment in their life to take with them into eternity. Wondering about her own happiest moment she tells us she remembered being a nine-year-old lying in a tiny tent in her backyard watching the clouds and sky. She stands, turns on the backing music and sings the story of a free and peaceful little girl watching the clouds roll by. 'If you can feel it, you can be it' – her voice is natural, unforced. The chorus broadens the message: 'Peace in my heart, peace in my mind, peace in the world, peace in our time.'

For an hour Carmen has been herself. She's used naturalness and even ordinariness to say so much.

The Brahma Kumaris (BKs) exemplifies a working model of leadership that integrates the male and female qualities; which are the original attributes of the human soul. Women play a leading role in managing the organisation. BK Centres teach a simple silent meditation as an antidote to stress and 'as a method of raising self-awareness leading to self-realisation'. The headquarters, Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University in Mt. Abu, India, is an NGO of the UN, with General Consultative- Economic & Social Council, Associate Status - Department of Public Information and Consultative Status - UN Children's Fund (UNICEF). The local BK Centre is part of Gold Coast City Council's 'Active and Healthy' Alliance.

Carmen's guided meditations, music and books are available from her [website](#), [Bandcamp](#), ABC (online) iTunes and [Hachette Australia](#). Please [subscribe to her e-newsletter](#) to be kept up to date with events and recordings.

