



#11 BEYOND CLIMATE CHANGE

STARHAWK



LE PODCAST

INTRODUCTION

Paola HIVELIN: This is the podcast of Gang Of Witches, this month the second carte blanche to What the feminism. Awaken all your senses, the spirit of witches is coming to your ears.

Sophie ROKH: For this special Samhain episode, we welcome the great witch and eco-feminist activist Starhawk, let the magic happen.

GANG OF WITCHES LE PODCAST - STARHAWK INTERVIEW

Sophie TRUCHOT-BARRET: Hello Starhawk, thank you for accepting to talk in the Gang Of Witches podcast. You're an author, you're an activist, you're a permaculture teacher, you're also a pagan witch and a shaman, your first name was Miriam Simos now you are Starhawk, how did you become Starhawk?

STARHAWK: well I got interested in witches and witchcraft when I was actually quite young, when I was in my first year in college, actually before that, even when I was around 15. One of my dearest friends who at that time was Becky but later became Isis, she and I had a booth at the Renaissance Fair, reading tarot cards together and met some witches in the witches wood.

The fair was like a big fair where people would dress up in Renaissance costumes and they would do like re-enactments and, you know, have things that kind of brought you back to those early medieval times. And it was done as a big fundraiser for our local radio station that was progressive and had progressive news on it. So, it was always a lot of fun to participate in that, and I don't know why we thought we could have a booth reading tarot cards because we'd really only learned how to read them a few weeks before, but that didn't stop us!

And then later, when I was in my first year in college, I was doing an anthropology project with another friend, and we decided to do it on witches and we met some of those original witches from the witches wood who had a booth selling potions and all sorts like that. And they started telling us that witchcraft was actually the old pre-Christian indigenous religion of Europe and the Middle East and then parts of it that had survived – the healing traditions, the folk customs and all of that – had been suppressed under Christianity, but they had never really died out. Kind of like today if you go to Mexico or Latin America, you'll see people are doing things at the church or in the name of the church but what they're actually doing are the old indigenous rituals. They've just changed the elder forms a little bit. And that was the way life was in Europe throughout much of medieval and early renaissance times up until the time of the witch burnings.

And even today, you can still find places where those old healing traditions survive. So, I found that just fascinating and got very interested, and we were researching and reading and learning and decided to form a coven, although we had no clear idea what that mean, started practicing and then eventually started training with some of those older, more experienced witches.

A few years later, the feminist movement really exploded in the US and I got very involved with that, and it seemed to me that there should be a connection between

feminism and an old religion that saw the creator, the great spirit, whatever, as a goddess, as female, and that had women as leaders. And that saw sexuality and the body and nature is sacred. And at first, I thought I was the only person crazy enough to think that, because most of the feminist movement was very ultra-rational and Marxist and religion was the opiate of the people and all of this was just “woo woo”. There is a witch named Z Budapest who had learned her tradition, her family came from Hungary, actually, and they had an old family tradition and she started a group called the feminist Wicca in Los Angeles where I was living, and there were other people who also had the same idea. So, throughout the late 70s and early 80s, we were doing a lot of experimenting, a lot of research.

It was not until the late 70s that there started to be a lot of writing and information available. Merlin Stone’s book, *When God Was a Woman*, came out, I think in 1976 and I met her at a conference, which was one of the first I had been to around the whole idea of a feminist approach to spirituality. I had started writing about this spiritual exploration and finally my book, *The Spiral Dance* was published in 1979.

Another wonderful woman witch Margot Adler, who’s also a journalist who worked for many years for National Public Radio, she published a book the same year *Drawing Down the Moon*. And I think that was when the idea of a feminist approach to Wicca and spirituality really began to grow, throughout the 80s. You know, Marija Gimbutas, who’s the archaeologist who did so much work on the early goddesses of old Europe, her books were published, a lot more writing, a lot more research, a lot more scholarship all began happening around that time. And of course, in those days, it was before the Internet. So, this wasn’t going on... You know, you couldn’t just Google “feminist Wicca”, it was much more challenging to find out this information. But there were books that were published, there was a network of women’s bookstores where people would hold often readings or discussion groups, there were classes and workshops that people would offer, there were magazines, people would xerox articles and mail them to each other. And the information spread and knowledge spread, and it was a very exciting time.

Sophie TRUCHOT-BARRET: Could you tell us a bit more about Covens?

STARHAWK: Covens have web pages, groups have information and public gatherings. The group I work with is called *Reclaiming*. We began in the late 70s and started teaching classes in the early 80s. We were also very much involved in doing a lot of nonviolent direct action around nuclear issues and nuclear war in the early 80s. That was when Ronald Reagan was elected and was talking about nuclear war being winnable. So, our tradition was highly influenced by a way of horizontal organizing that was antiauthoritarian, where people meet in small groups and make decisions by consensus, and now it was always the model for our circles in covens. And we have groups now all over the US and in Canada, in Europe, we have witches in France and in Australia and Brazil and many different places around the world. But in recent years, I think more people have begun to come around to it and coming to it, maybe through the doorway of eco feminism and understanding that, you know, to make the changes we need to make in terms of our relationship with the natural world, that is a change in our deep values, it’s a change in our underlying worldview, how we perceive and experience the world. And to me, that’s... those are the things we mean when we say spiritual. We don’t necessarily mean believing in something that you can’t demonstrate or see; we mean shifting our attitude towards the things we can see. You don’t have to believe in a tree spirit, but you can look at a tree and

see that the tree drops its leaves and the leaves go back to the earth, and microorganisms in the earth take them apart, transform them into compost, into nutrients that feed the roots of the tree and the tree grows, and this is a cycle of birth and growth and death and regeneration. And that cycle is something that fills us with a sense of awe and reverence and beauty. And it connects to all the other cycles that are going on all around us and within us. And that, to me, is what we mean when we say Goddess: it's not a big lady in skirts, but this understanding, the way that nature works in these circles and the deep interconnectedness of all of life.

SABRINE KASBAOUI'S REBELLIONS' DIARY.

«Rebellions notebook» is the creation journal of my documentary web series « Covens ». A coven is a clan, a gathering. In the film, I document all types of circles that are living or moving towards an ecological, economic and social transition. I gather the assemblies which rise up, which resist. In doing so, I try to support and build my own transition, my own change of life.

Outside, at night, between dogs and wolves, in the middle of a wild garden in the middle of Corrèze, I pick up the melodic voices of a circle of women in which I have just participated. Caroline is the initiator, she is a doula, which means that she accompanies pregnant women and those around them. She supports the work of midwives.

She also advocates fertile disobedience, the term is loaded with poetry, it creates.

Where civil disobedience denounces an injustice perpetrated by an institution to change it, fertile disobedience wants to allow the experimentation and the creation of new societies respectful of the living, without worrying about the existing laws nor that its inhabitants are worried by policemen.

Caroline lives independently in nature with her companion and her two young children.

Between fields and forest, they built with their hands the 40 m2 hut in which they live. Made from natural materials recycled and found on site such as earth and straw, they adapt day after day to a lifestyle that requires them to follow the cycles of the ecosystem in which they have chosen to settle. They cultivate their garden, drink the water from the spring which flows below and wash themselves in the river which borders the fields near which their nest is installed.

Faced with the climate emergency, as Jonathan says, they are thus trying to get out of the Anthropocene.

Inside day, early in the morning - I found Caroline and her family having breakfast. Their daily life is not marginal. The herbal tea boils on the gas stove, the little ones babble patiently. The bunk beds are still undone, the dewy light gently penetrates the hut.

Caroline has not always lived this way, she has left everything behind a luxurious life to adopt a more resilient lifestyle, which in fact decreases. For two years, with his

companion Jonathan, they have been defending a light habitat that allows them to live as close as possible to nature. Activists, they regularly welcome the public to the site where they live in order to share their convictions and are very present on social networks in order to relay their initiative.

Outside day - Today, Caroline drew this circle in which a dozen women were able to give themselves up in confidence and remake a world which is too often violent.

She invited this small assembly who did not know each other when they arrived to discuss the place that guilt takes in their lives. Around an altar of flowers, cookies and dried fruits, Women deliver both intimately but also draw up a more global inventory of social injunctions which creates other forms of guilt. Each woman has her say, the talking stick made by Caroline's little girl goes around easily, the timid of the start manage to open easily.

The circle initiated by Caroline forges links, creates connections between people, each one more different than the other, anthropology student, singer, kinesiologist, social worker, it unites by going to seek in them what brings them together, the interior place of their community. Caroline heals. Both individually but also collectively. The circle breaks down the dividing lines of a society that divides and isolates. From this point of view, not far from her role of doula, Caroline becomes a healer once again.

Outside at night, between dog and wolf, end of sequence - Caroline offers us to sing. A spontaneous song. Despite her own shyness, she throws a note. Everything else then flows naturally. The hands are tied to each other, the breaths granted. The voices rise in a harmonious sound that the night does not stifle but releases.

Sophie TRUCHOT-BARRET: Maybe you can say more how you feel about this connection, with the Earth and the sacred ?

STARHAWK: Yeah, for me, that connection with the Earth is, um, it's something that is part of every aspect of life. It's around us all the time. You know, it influences everything I do from the time I wake up in the morning till the time I go to bed. Um, you know, I like to start the day by just going outside and watching and looking and listening and taking some time to be still in the natural world and listening to what's happening, noticing the changes around me.

I spend a lot of time online like everybody these days but I also try to spend a lot of time walking in nature for an hour or so, at least every day. It's partly for my own physical health, but also just to stay connected to changes and to see, you know... In some ways this year of covid-19 has been a blessing because I haven't been able to travel, which I usually do a lot. So, to be in one place and actually get to watch the progression of the wildflowers and the changes in the birdsong and the things that are going on around is the real teaching and the real lesson. And it's those larger cycles that we connect with and understand, it gives us the understanding of how to really work with the land where we are and how to bring it back to life and health. I do a lot of gardening, a lot of land tending, I'm lucky enough to have land out on the west coast of California, so we've got forest lands and grasslands. It's pretty steep

and rugged and it has many challenges, especially water, because we have a very limited amount of water in the summer, and fire, because with climate change, wild-fires have been increasing and becoming more and more dangerous and more and more prevalent.

You know, right now, even today, the sky is a kind of pale melon color, you know, from smoke from the fires that are raging all over the West. And yesterday it was really scary, it was like the apocalypse, I woke up in the morning and it was as dark as it is predawn. I kept hoping I was wrong about the time, but I wasn't and it got darker throughout the day. It was like the sky was like a blood red orange color all day long, solar panels weren't charging. And it was from you know, there's right now, I think something like one hundred fires burning in California, fires all over Oregon and Washington, all up and down the West Coast, there's no escape from it. We are in the throes of climate change and we desperately need to come back into balance with the natural world.

When you're in the thick of it like this, it's very hard to deny this is happening. You know, fire is always part of the landscape in California, where a fire ecology, our landscape is meant to burn periodically. The indigenous peoples managed it elegantly for tens of thousands of years with careful prescribed burning that they did in a sacred way to keep the fuel loads down, to create a mosaic of burned and unburned land so that land could regenerate. And if a fire did come from lightning or from some other cause, it didn't have these masses of brush and fuel and stuff to build on into these firestorms. It stayed lower and cooler, and less destructive, and that created incredible habitat for wildlife. It helped the health of the plants and forests, helped keep down disease. But we've had one hundred and fifty years now of fire suppression, especially in the last hundred years, of our Forest Service putting out fires, people not doing that kind of burning, and that added to the intensive fuel loads and climate change increasing the heat.

Last week we had some of the hottest days ever on record, and, you know, the loss of things like the elk, they used to graze our forests and again, helped keep them open, keep the underbrush down, that creates these tremendously dangerous conditions. So, a lot of what I've been doing over this last year has been teaching people about our resilience, doing when I can on my own land to protect it, trying to figure out the ways that we as communities can come back into balance. And there are things that we can do, there are ways that we can treat the land to create more resilience when fire does come to create more of a likelihood that your home will survive if fire burns around it, to reduce the intensity of the fires when they do get started, etc. But we need the political will in this country to do those things. That's the other front we have to fight on, you can say. Again, it's not so much what we do in the woods, it's the consciousness that we have as people to make the decisions about what we do in woods.

Sophie TRUCHOT-BARRET: Your book, *The Fifth Sacred Thing*, is a fiction which is set in 2048 in the United States, the country is divided and facing a massive ecological crisis. Would you say this is what is happening right now in 2020?

STARHAWK: Yeah. I mean, we are facing a really crucial election right now in 2020

that I think will determine what road we go on. You know, if we elect Biden and Kamala Harris, you know, we have a real potential for bringing us back into balance, for dealing with climate change, for dealing with many other things and kind of coming back into a sane world where we can address these problems. And I just really want to be clear that we can address these problems, we can, we have the options and things we need to do about climate change. It's not impossible to solve this problem, in fact, the things that we need to do to address climate change are actually nice things.

You need to get nasty, dirty, polluting fossil fuels that create incredible amounts of problems and pollutions even beyond climate change, and shift to clean renewables. And we have the technology to do that. And we could do that without even having to give up huge aspects of our current lifestyle if we put our political will to doing it. And we might do well to give up certain aspects of our lifestyle here in the United States, but, you know, but it's completely feasible to do that. What stands in the way are the people who have vested interests in holding on to the current system and the power and the profits that they make in it, and so we need to marshal the political will to oppose them and take that power away from them.

Here we're really focusing a lot on encouraging people to vote and volunteer and to get out to vote. And there is a tremendous surge of energy for doing that. So, I'm hopeful that Biden will win and win big because we need that, especially because our system is skewed in ways that favor the Republicans, even though they don't have a majority. And because there's a real fear that Trump might not leave office even if he loses.

So, we need to be prepared for, you know, how to actually defend our democracy. We need to do that by voting and also by finding ways to organize and be prepared to take action and refuse cooperation with and regime that tries to institute itself illegally.

That's the path I hope we'll go down, because the other path, even though it fits with what I wrote in *the Fifth Sacred Thing*, just because I wrote it doesn't mean I want it to happen, but it's very clear now how easy it would be for the United States to break apart if Trump contests the election or tries to steal the election, in different states. You know, on the West Coast, we tend to be more united as a group of states, partly because we share an ecology and a fire ecology and a more progressive electorate. And part of that, I think, is because when you live in a place like this and you're dealing with wildfires and you're waking up in the morning and the sun's not rising from smoke and this is happening all up and down the West Coast, it's a lot harder to persuade the mass of people that this is some Chinese hoax happening... You know it's happening. And one of the lessons of fire is also that you have to deal with it as a community, you are interdependent, you know, you're completely dependent on choices your neighbors make. If one of your neighbors or somebody one hundred miles away from you flicks a cigarette into the dry brush, you know, you may be breathing the smoke the next day. Your home may go from some, you know, oblivious person who sets off fireworks and the hottest day of the year, which is what happened in Southern California. And you're utterly dependent on your friends, your neighbors, your community for safety, for fire protection. A lot of our firefighters are volunteer firefighters who are just people in the community who give a lot of their time and energy to training and preparing and being on call and responding to fires and they also respond to medical emergencies. So, it builds in a real practical understanding of interdependence. You know, we have this American myth that we're

all in it alone, “I can be the master of my fate”, and you can’t believe that when you are faced with a wildfire, no one can fight a wildfire alone. It takes a community to do that.

Renaud VOISIN: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie wrote and said that “we should all be feminists”, do you think “we should all be witches”?

STARHAWK: I don’t know if we should all be witches because witches don’t proselytize, we don’t try to go around and convert the world to seeing it the same way we do. And because there are so many incredible indigenous traditions that would not call themselves or consider themselves witches. But what I would say is that we all need to come back into a relationship with the natural world. And I think there are pathways to do that in the major religions and in indigenous cultures and folk cultures and through just pure, rational science, learning about evolution and learning about natural history.

All those things are pathways to having a real relationship with nature. Understanding nature is not just something you watch on the Discovery Channel, videos on YouTube. It’s something you live in and experience, and that we need to have a relationship with it that is quite real to the place where we are, to the cycles, to the seasons, to the earth, to the land. Those are the things that actually sustain our lives and that we need to understand and know and come to terms with if we want to actually have a full life as a human being and if we want to make the decisions that we need to make that will allow us to create a society that is more in balance with the natural world.

**« A FULL MOON, A VEGETABLE »,
MUSICAL INTERLUDE BY PAOLA HIVELIN AND SOPHIE ROKH**

**Radish or not, he I comes you can’t hide
I’m gonna find you and harvest you see
Radish or not, he I comes you can’t hide
I’m gonna clean you and eat you slowly**

I eat my radishes full of properties, then I rest
No stress, alkalize, energize
I must confess, their variety’s manifest
They can be black or white if they red it’s for starters
Food orgies with veggies are best
If you can grow them it’s even better, yes
Bless you if you eat mostly plant based
But they’ll trick you with bad chemicals
If you’re don’t care, beware
Pick your food consciously, easy, believe me
Food industry give me hee-bee-gee-bees
So while you think about them criminals
Give me your dish lma unleash the radish

Radish or not, he I comes you can't hide
I'm gonna find you and harvest you see
You can't run away
From my recipes, oh veggie, hey veggie
Cause I got a lot, oh yeah
And anywhere you go
My whole crew's gonna know veggie, hey veggie
You can't hide from the fork, oh no

Radish or not, he I comes you can't hide
I'm gonna find you and harvest you see
Radish or not, he I comes you can't hide
I'm gonna clean you and eat you slowly

Sophie TRUCHOT-BARRET: What does the moon represent for you?

STARHAWK: Um, you know, to me, the moon has so many different symbolic meanings. It represents the beauty of the night and the embracing of the dark, understanding that this metaphor we have in Western culture of light being good and dark being bad, is kind of... underlies racism and underlies the way that we view people who are darker or lighter.

And to me, part of "witchness" is embracing the dark, understanding that we can't have day without night, you can't have light without darkness, and the moon represents that. To me it represents that night is powerful and magical and beautiful, and that also within the darkness there's always the seed of light, like the moonlight and starlight; and within the light in the day there's also always a seed of darkness, the shade and the shadow, that things are interconnected, intertwined and interwoven, and things are never wholly one thing or another.

The moon also represents those cycles of birth and growth and death and regeneration in the way that she's dark and then grows and becomes lighter and becomes the full moon, and then transforms and becomes the waning moon and the dark moon again. So those cycles, which are also linked to women's cycles and menstrual cycles and other cycles in nature, again represents that whole process, represents, to me, that death and regeneration are always linked with one another. And the moon represents magic. The full moon is a time where it's just an energy that floods the world and it's quite beautiful and magical and that awakens deep intuition and deep parts of ourselves.

Sophie TRUCHOT-BARRET: Is this understanding of the moon linked to the rites of passage and the rituals you perform with young girls?

STARHAWK: Yeah, we felt for a long time that, for young girls, those who are born with a female body, coming to terms with all the things their body does is really hard in a culture that kind of despises femaleness and woman and thinks about female, processes like menstruation as something dirty and shameful and nasty. So, we began, back in the 80s, doing rituals for young girls when they first began to menstruate, to honor that, and to help them celebrate that change and that passage of coming into adulthood.

And we looked at some of the other traditions and things that many indigenous cultures would do to celebrate their girls coming of age. And we created something that seemed to fit for our current situation. So, what we would do is we go down to the beach or go up on a hillside and take the girl and her mother and tie their hands together with red ribbons. And they would run together and they would run as far as they could run, as far as the mother could run. And then we cut them apart and let the daughter run on alone to symbolise her drawing strength from her mother, but also now moving into a stage of life where she would maybe go further than her mother was able to go. And then we go and we'd have an afternoon where we would celebrate her and give her gifts and give her special magical tools and offerings and tell her the stories of our own first menstruation. And for many women of my age in my era, that was not a beautiful thing, it was a shameful thing. It was something you were embarrassed about or something that your parents, like, were embarrassed about. I remember my mother telling me that, you know... The old Jewish tradition, which is my heritage, was to, like, slap a girl in the face and they would say it was to bring out, give you rosy cheeks. But really, it's kind of like something much deeper than that. It's like an assault when you reach that crucial time. And so, telling those stories kind of made them become part of the whole chain of women's history. And then we would have a feast, that the men would cook, of red foods and celebration with the whole community. And to us, that was very important to understand that men could also celebrate this engagement. And it wasn't something you had to hide or be ashamed of.

And, you know, nowadays, the awareness that just because you're born with a certain body doesn't mean you identify with that gender. If we want to live in a culture that celebrates all those different varieties and flavors of gender, we have to basically be able to honor what actually is going on in people's bodies and we've got to do that in a culture that honors and that values the body, whatever it is, whatever shape, whatever its form, if we can come into a culture like that, then I think we can actually truly value all the different flavors and varieties of genders and identities. But if we tried to do that on the basis of a culture that hates and despises femaleness, then we're in trouble and we aren't going to really be able to embrace the multiplicity of possibilities in all of their beauty.

**« FLASH COOL » CHRONICLE,
BY SOPHIE TRUCHOT-BARRET AND RENAUD VOISIN**

US Presidential Elections. A record 298 women in total are running for the House of Representatives on a major party ticket, according to the Center for American Women and Politics. 117 women of color are running for Congress as Democrats or Republicans. 71% of them are running as Democrats, the other 29% as Republicans. The number of women candidates exceeds that of 2018's midterm elections'. The 2020 elections could see more women of color come to power, for example in Missouri through Cori Bush, or Candace Valenzuela in Texas.

Ecology. Francis Hallé, a 82 year old French botanist announced at the end of september that his ambitious project of a 70 000 hectare old-growth forest will come

true. Indeed, his initiative is set to receive legal aid from the European Commission. Francis Hallé would like this preserved-from-human-hand space to include «at least three countries». Let's recall that Europe does not have an old-growth forest anymore, except for the Bialowieza forest in Poland. In France, the last old-growth forests disappeared in the XIXth Century. Besides storing CO₂, Hallé's European old-growth forest will allow species to be reborn on our continent.

Ecology. For the first time ever, Europeans have produced more renewable energies than fossil energies. According to analysis by Ember, an independent climate think tank, renewable energies have created 40% of the electricity in the 27 countries of the European Union for the first semester, whereas fossil energies accounted for 34%. This comes from the rise of solar and wind-powered energies and the fall of demand for fossil energies. CO₂ emissions have therefore decreased from 23% in the electricity sector.

Sophie TRUCHOT-BARRET: A question about the election and the necessity to push people to go to vote?

STARHAWK: Yeah, well, here in the US, there are many different organizations. It's challenging this year because normally what people would do would be go door to door and knock on doors and talk to people. Now, with covid, we can't really do that here because we've done such a terrible job of dealing with it that people are still locked down and unable to go out in the same way and afraid to talk to strangers at their doorstep. But we have the capacity to make calls, to write letters, there's a lot of different places where you can sign up and they'll train you of how to call people and you can call people all over the country and talk to them and give them information about how they can apply for a vote by mail ballots, how to fill it out correctly, you know, answer their questions about the candidates. So, thousands and thousands of people are doing that. And a lot of people have signed up to become poll workers because one of the problems has been most people who work at the polls have been older, retired people who are most at risk for covid, so now there's been a big push for younger people and thousands and thousands of people signed up for that.

People can talk to their own friends and their neighbors. I've been doing a magical activism class online, and I'm also going to be doing a free webinar with a friend of mine who is a chef who is going to be offering a cooking class for our Earth activists training program online. And we're going to do Politics and Apple Pie webinar on the twenty third that will teach you how to make an apple pie, which is, you know, we have this saying American as apple pie... And then encouraging people to do what we have done for every election the last few years, which has, you know, generally been gathering a party in person, but this time it would be probably more on Zoom, sharing some dessert and talking about all the candidates and all the propositions. Here in California, people can put a proposition on the ballot, and often there's like dozens of them and it can be very confusing to go through them. So, we'll sort of assign different people to research what all the propositions are, and which we want to vote for, which we don't, who all the minor candidates are that nobody's heard of for things like the water board or the judges that, you don't get a lot of publicity around

them, but they're actually very important in making many of the decisions that affect people's lives.

So, getting a group together and everyone does the research and then we all come together and share their information and help people fill out their ballots and eat dessert and have fun. And the beautiful way to encourage people is, again, to vote or to volunteer.

I've always in my life been more the street action, you know, get out and protest and that's also really important. But right now, here in the US, like voting is just, whatever your issue is, the most important thing we can do right now is to get the Abuser in Chief out of the White House and elect Biden and Harris and bring back, you know, it's not like they're going to bring the Great Revolution, but they'll create conditions where we can make the changes that we need to make, to bring us back into balance.

MEDITATION INTERLUDE

STARHAWK: So I'll share. This is what I do as a personal practice every day, we call it "grounding", it's a way of energetically connecting to the Earth. I like to do it outside every morning and then just spend some time listening and looking and noticing what's happening around me. But to do it, just find a place where you can sit and be comfortable or stand if you prefer that and take some deep breaths down into your belly.

Really feel your diaphragm work so that breathing is a whole body-activity, filling your lungs very deeply and pushing that breath out very completely.

And you might imagine yourself like a tree, with roots that go down into the earth, down to your legs and feet and down to the base of your spine, and imagine them pushing down into the soil and the land around you, feeling the qualities of that soil, feeling the waters that are held in the soil and under the Earth and down through layers of rock and gravel, all the way down to that core of fire in the heart of the earth, where the rock is still molten hot and liquid from the Earth's formation.

And you can take a breath and if there's something you want to release and let go of, something that's worrying you or bothering you, you can take a deep breath and just let that go down those roots, down into the earth, let that fire take it and transform it back into pure energy.

And now taking a breath, draw a spark of that fire up, up through your roots, up into your feet and legs, up into the base of your spine, your belly. Your spine starts to grow and stretch like a beautiful tree trunk growing up and energy, take a moment to feel it in your heart and let your heart open and expand.

Reel it up to your shoulders and down through your arms and hands, reach up and out, and imagine it coming out the top of your head like branches reach up to the sky. And feeling like a very old tree that those branches go all the way down, so they touch the earth again, they make a circle, a cycle.

And then through those leaves and branches, you can feel sunlight or moonlight, starlight. Take a deep breath and just draw some of that light and sky energy down

from the top of your head, down through your leaves and branches, down to your heart, your hands, then your belly, all the way down to your legs and feet into the earth. And just take a moment, feel that energy running through you, how your energy is connected to the earth's energy. You have energy stored in the earth you can draw on if you need it, but you don't have to carry it around. You don't have to be filled up with anxiety or nervousness. You can be calm, you can be relaxed, but you can have energy available to you, and feel that sky energy coming down and mingling with the earth energy, and feel yourself as a bridge between Earth and sky.

And now that we're grounded, now that we've got our energy connected to the earth energy, let's take a moment and bring ourselves into our physical senses. Notice how your body feels with gravity, maybe where it's touching a chair or touching the ground, or the weight of your body is falling, maybe where there's tension and relaxation, feel the air on your skin, whether it's warm or cool, whether it feels different, whether you've got clothing.

Take a deep sniff in and notice what you smell. What does it tell you about the world? Imagine you have the nose of a dog or a wolf, who smell 30,000 times as much as we smell.

And notice what you taste. Do you still have a little coffee in the back of your tongue? Open your ears and notice what you're hearing. Are you hearing sounds of the city? Are you hearing birdsong.

And then open your eyes and notice what you see.

And that's the practice that I do every day, and then I spend some time in that state of prison awareness, just, again, watching, looking, listening, noticing what's going on around me in the natural world. And that's what I recommend we do to help bring us back into a relationship with nature. And I'm lucky. Many times, I can do this out in the woods, but sometimes you might do it in the middle of the city. Sometimes the nature you might be looking at might be just what it's growing out of the cracks in the pavement. But there's many times when I've led this in the city and noticed what's growing out of the cracks on the edge of the parking lot are actually healing herbs. There's always nature around us.

Sophie TRUCHOT-BARRET: Thank you very much for your time and for your kindness.

Renaud VOISIN: I have to say that, yeah, it was very incredible to have you. So thank you very much.

THE END

Sophie ROKH: It was the podcast of Gang Of Witches, carte blanche to What the feminism. See you at the next full moon, until then, take care.

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