

## **The Call**

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In 2010, a fateful phone call from one of the alumnae director participants from 'Women In the Director's Chair (WIDC)' inspired a personal transformative experience. For the past twenty years, I have been on a mission to help advance the leadership skills, careers and screen fiction stories of Canadian women screen directors through this Canadian national feminist professional development program which I co-created in 1997 with colleagues from the Alliance of Canadian Cinema Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA), the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, and Women In Film and Television Vancouver. I have continued to lead WIDC and have won multiple industry awards for this work, however 2010 was a particularly vulnerable time in my own evolution as a leader. I was feeling fatigued and not sure of my next steps. Was my work meaningful to others anymore? Did I have it in me to continue onward? Facing this unknown felt ominous and overwhelming.

Scharmer (2009) calls the unknown space the 'blind spot'. He sees the blind spot as a source for a potential future not yet seen or available to our conscious self. Acknowledging the discomfort of navigating the unknown, Mezirow (1991) says an encounter with a "disorienting dilemma" is the first phase of a transformative journey (p. 169). Blind and disoriented were certainly how I felt when, out of the blue, this alumna called to share some exciting career news with me, her mentor. She had received funding for one of her film projects and she particularly wanted to share that she had held onto something she learned from WIDC years before, something I'd said to her. "Don't be afraid to take your space," I had advised this accomplished woman documentary director who was making the cross over to work in narrative fiction.

As I reflected on the profundity of this call, the words kept ringing in my ears and I felt something shift. I realized that I needed to suspend my expectations (Bohm, 1996) about a future that I could not yet see. I needed to enter into a respectful dialogue (Buber, 1996) with that unknown space. As I listened, something seemed to be calling to me from my positive core (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2009); it echoed a sense of purpose, reaffirming a sense of duty and loyalty towards the women directors whose own voices and whose cause I had been serving. An appreciative call from this single individual encouraged me to face that blind spot without fear. Inspired, this poem came pouring out of me.

“Take up your space in this world,” my words of advice recounted back to me; stayed; penetrated deep; heard.

I am proud and humbled.

Where does this come from, this call so loudly ringing?

It calls me but I can’t quite make out the message.

So I try to move closer. I turn my head up, ear to the sky, straining to hear the whisper, the cry, the call. Anything to help guide me, speed me.

“You are made for this now. Now, you are being called to move onward with the next wave,”

Why do I anticipate so?

Fantasies grow, so exciting, new, unbound; the potential lives again.

The spiral wells upward. I am reborn; pure yet galvanized to the core.

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