

Why Activists Need Home **By Jean Shinoda Bolen, MD**

A new generation of feminists is addressing the injustices they see at home — from domestic violence to inadequate food, water, and lack of housing, in every corner of the world. Over one million NGOs and grass roots organizations now focus on women's basic safety, while helping them to build strong families and sound regional economies.

In **Artemis: The Indomitable Spirit in Everywoman**, I show how the energy of an ancient Greek goddess has inspired this wave of global activism. In mythology, Artemis protected the young and vulnerable. Shortly after birth, she helped her mother deliver her twin brother Apollo. The herb that is named for her — Artemisia — has since been given to ease the pain of childbirth. In her temple, Artemis offered sanctuary to women and guidance to young girls. As goddess of the hunt, she spent many hours with her sisterhood of nymphs, exploring the marshes, the forests and the fields. And as goddess of the moon, she was attuned to the cycles of waxing and waning that govern the natural world.

Artemis was a virgin goddess, meaning that she remained one-in-herself, or psychologically independent. The quintessential tomboy, she was at ease with men, and every bit their equal in strength and skill. In our popular culture, the Artemis figure shows up in Disney's bow-wielding princess, Merida, in Katniss Everdeen of *The Hunger Games*, and in the fiery Dany in *Game of Thrones*.

We also see her in real life heroines on the evening news. In the courageous representatives of the #MeToo movement. In the work of Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani teen who was shot for standing up to the Taliban and supporting the education of young girls. In Emma Gonzalez, a survivor of the mass shooting at a Florida high school, now working for tighter gun control. And, most recently, in the young Swedish activist, Greta Thunberg, who has called world leaders to task for failing to combat climate change and protect our planetary home.

Artemis women are natural crusaders, fired by a fierce will to shelter and protect the vulnerable. They may live through tragedy and trauma, but they refuse to identify as victims. They stand up to bullies of all kinds, from perpetrators of rapes and domestic violence to oppressors of the poor and defenseless, to abusers of the environment. And they never give up. This is the new face of feminism.

The Making of an Activist

Often the modern activist is formed by a challenging event at home.

Between kindergarten and fourth grade, my family moved a lot. I was enrolled in seven different schools in Los Angeles; Kew Gardens, New York; Black Foot, Idaho where children were bused in from the reservation; Grand Junction and Denver, Colorado; and Monrovia,

California. Then it was back to Los Angeles, where we settled down. In United Nations terminology, we were “internally displaced refugees.”

Though my grandparents came from Japan, my parents were born and educated in the United States. My father was a respected businessman, my mother a physician. We went on this odyssey to escape the evacuation and relocation of all people of Japanese ancestry to internment camps, where we would have been kept behind barbed wire, in tar-papered barracks in desolate places in the Western states.

Once out of California, we were again regarded as free American citizens. Our subsequent moves were necessitated in part by my father’s efforts to get his parents and siblings out of the camps. While our country was at war, I enrolled in one school after another, often the only child with a Japanese face. This gave me a first-hand experience of social injustice and racism.

Families today are uprooted for many reasons, from economic recessions to famine, war and climate change. During relocation, children have to cope with new schools and temporary housing. Such experiences support the development of an Artemis woman, and have given rise to a new generation of activists and community leaders. We learn how to survive and thrive in difficult circumstances, vow to make daily lives better for others, helping people whose basic needs for home, security and sustenance have been ignored. Instead of becoming victims, Artemis women seek justice and become even more determined to pursue their calling. They become role models and big sisters, and volunteer to rescue others.

Early on I served as an advocate for women in the American Psychiatric Association and other professional organizations. My book, *The Millionth Circle: How to Change Ourselves and The World*, inspired women who were active at the United Nations to form the Millionth Circle Initiative. I then became an advocate for a UN sponsored 5th World Conference on Women (5WCW). Though we obtained the support of the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly, a UN resolution to proceed with this conference did not come to a vote. However, the idea gained momentum and international support through **Women Economic Forum**. I now expect this conference will be held under the auspices of a joint WEF and 5WCW **Mission Million 2022** in India. And it will have been well worth the years of groundwork and perseverance.

Over the past four decades, I’ve done my share of public speaking, giving lectures and workshops in other countries. Though inspired and energized by these gatherings, I come home determined to clear the decks for a while, eager for some quiet time to write and reflect on my experiences. This is my way of balancing my psyche, making sure that my activism stays deeply grounded in my beliefs and honoring my own internal rhythms. As goddess of the moon, Artemis reminds us of the waxing and waning cycles we see in nature, and experience in our own biology. Her message is that extraverted time in the world must be followed by time-out for self-renewal and replenishment.

Intense involvement in a cause and an affinity for working with large groups are hallmarks of the Artemis-inspired activist. Though such a woman seems to have indefatigable energy and may inspire crowds, she also needs to tend to her personal relationships. Those close to her often wish she would show them the same commitment and constancy she reserves for her causes. Like wildlife in the forest, there can be a “Now you see her, now you don’t” elusiveness about an Artemis woman. She’s so real and present, then gone for long stretches of work and adventure. That’s why coming home is so important. An Artemis woman needs this time of grounding herself in the personal — of honoring her friends, her family, and her inner world.

Making Room for Hestia

Hestia herself was rarely depicted. Her sacred energy was represented by an open hearth. In my books (especially *Goddesses in Everywoman*, *Gods in Everyman*, *Goddesses in Older Women*, *Crones Don’t Whine*), I’m concerned with the way we balance our psychic energies and learn to draw on a wider range of human archetypes.

I’ve found that an Artemis heroine is well served when she learns to honor the wisdom of Hestia, goddess of the hearth. Hestia’s sacred fire was the center of the home, a source of heat and light, spiritual illumination, and daily nourishment. In contrast to the always-moving Artemis, Hestia is introverted, and content to be in the peaceful home that she creates.

Over my living room mantel, I’ve displayed a large painting of Hestia’s ring of fire. On a table nearby are sculptures of wild animals, sacred to Artemis. This is an altar of sorts, where I honor my deep identification with the wildness at the heart of the world, my fierce need to go out into the world and champion the needs of others, and my need to sit by the hearth and simply be. For the modern woman, this need to blend both Artemis and Hestia, the inner and the outer directed aspects of the personality, has led to an interesting trend. More and more of us are living on our own as a way to maintain this balance.

In *Going Solo: The Extraordinary Rise and Surprising Appeal of Living Alone* (2012), Eric Klinenberg describes how living alone fosters a sense of personal control and self-realization, and allows time and space for restorative solitude. According to the 2018 census, 28 percent of Americans now live alone, a percentage that has been steadily rising for the last 50 years.

Many women find living alone to be deeply soul satisfying. We can decide how to spend our time, whether to support a cause or be creative, when to keep our own hours and spend quality time with others. The rising number of younger women who are not marrying at all or marrying later in life, view this as the ultimate freedom, while many in the second half of life are delighted to be on their own, after years of living with parents, roommates,

partners and children. In each case, home takes on a new meaning, as a place where we honor our own values and our contribution to the world at large.

Humanity is at a crossroads because we have consciousness and choice, and at the same time we are facing destruction of our planet by climate change, wars, and weapons of mass destruction. The beauty and ongoing life of the planet need to be protected – the mountains, forests, oceans, lakes and wildlife, from microbe to honey bee, salmon to polar bear, earthworm to eagle — all that lives instinctively and unconsciously in ecological interdependence.

The earth is sacred to Artemis—as is love for wildness in any form, and reverence for life. Being an Artemis-inspired activist requires us to get out there and take on some heroic mission. But it also requires time out for reflection, and a deep sense of home. Every woman who effectively marshals others to fight for a cause needs a sanctuary, a “room of one’s own,” where body and soul can be restored.

As we return from our demonstrations and our meetings and our marches, we need the grace of Hestia, the time to sit by the firelight and be at peace. That is the only thing that will allow us to sustain the gaze — to keep looking at what is broken then do our best to repair a portion of the world.

Guided Imagery for Hestia

*Sit quietly for a while and invite Hestia into your meditation.
Imagine there is a sacred fire glowing in the center of your chest,
then let it spread throughout your body, bringing warmth and comfort.
Take some slow deep breaths and let yourself surrender to the quiet.
Once you are in a receptive, spacious state of mind,
imagine yourself walking across a threshold into Hestia’s presence.
Look into her fire and be open to the images that come to you.
Let your whole being relax, and remember what it means to feel at home.*