

RIANE EISLER'S STORY



A Holocaust survivor, Dr. Riane Eisler is no stranger to overcoming diversity. As a little girl in Vienna during the infamous Krystalnacht, she watched a gang of Gestapo men break into their home and drag her father away. But she also witnessed her mother bravely standing up to save him. Miraculously, the family escaped to Cuba, making it out of Europe on one of the last ships allowed to land before the St. Louis was turned back, a passage made famous by the movie *Voyage of the Damned*.

The Nazis confiscated everything they owned, so Riane grew up in the industrial slums of Havana. But her entrepreneurial parents provided a powerful example for her during an impressionable time. They started over again from nothing, building a new business and working their way out of poverty. They sent Riane to the best schools, and each day she experienced culture shock as she took the streetcar from

her home in the slums to a school in Havana's best neighborhood. The contrast between the enormous wealth and the dire poverty was dramatic.

So it wasn't only the Holocaust that shaped and shocked Riane; it was also the incredible poverty that surrounded her in the tenements of pre-Castro Cuba. The persistent questions of "why?" haunted her. "Why does it have to be this way?"

In the late 1940's Riane emigrated to the United States. As the perennial "outsider," even when she came to the States, she viewed the world differently. In the 1960's, she came to realize that just as being Jewish had an enormous impact on her life, so had being female. Though a brilliant student, she was never truly recognized because she was a woman. She returned to the questions of her childhood, and embarked on the work for which she is famous: a radically new analysis of human history and human possibilities.

To better understand the injustice and inequalities she had witnessed, Riane examined the concepts of "masculine" and "feminine" and saw how they help explain everything from dominance and submissiveness in homes and societies, to beliefs in superiority and inferiority amongst people. Her research showed that to build foundations for a more equitable and peaceful world, we must "connect the dots" and reexamine – and change – traditions of domination in the primary human relations: between men and women and parents and children.

Eisler's life experiences—the Holocaust, Cuba, the women's movement, writing, desperate housewife, divorce, amongst many other things—led to her ongoing search for justice. Still passionately on this track today, Riane resonates, not to victim-hood, but to what is needed for sustainable change personally and globally. She shows that most of the world's suffering is unnecessary and absolutely not inevitable – and what we can do to make our lives and our world better.

Dr. Riane Eisler is president of the Center for Partnership Studies and the author of the international bestseller *The Chalice and The Blade* (1987), *Sacred Pleasure* (1995), *Tomorrow's Children* (2000), and *The Power of Partnership* (2002). She has received numerous awards and honors for her innovative work including the Humanist Pioneer Award and membership in the World Commission on Global Consciousness and Spirituality. Her newest book, *The Real Wealth of Nations*, is hailed by Nobel Peace Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu as "a template for the better world we have been so urgently seeking," by Gloria Steinem as "revolutionary," by Eve Ensler as "profound and important," and by Jane Goodall as "a call to action."

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