

Introduction to paper: Independent mediation for uniting action on climate change by Janet Salisbury

'The natural thing to do' to secure a safe future for our children

There has been a lot of interest in my paper beyond those of us in the room here tonight. A number of women wanted to be here tonight but were not able to make it.

Some comments from people are here (on papers on floor around circle; see below)

From overseas Petra Kuenkel – an member of the Club of Rome, an international think tank of notable scientists, economists, businessmen and businesswomen, high level civil servants and former heads of state from around the world, said:

We have to get it right this time (different from 1915) and not only demand and suggest, but simply do it and be more successful in women stewarding the pathways into the future. You have my full support and if there is any way I can help, I'll be there.

Our purpose here tonight is not to rethink my paper – that might come a bit later — but to look at some of the key principles together, to inspire each other, and to think about how we can do this big thing together. As individuals, we can also see if this initiative is a fit for us in our quest to make a difference.

My paper is inspired by the work of my spiritual mentor, Julia Grace Wales, a 33-year-old English literature working at the University of Wisconsin, USA. In the midst of WW1, when the norm was for warring parties to cut all communication, she expressed the need to create a safe space for the issues and concerns from each side to be examined and mediated by an independent council made up of representatives from the neutral countries. She said that this was 'the natural thing to do'.

Julia Grace set the principles that there should be no blame for who had caused the war and the negotiations should be a safe space with no humiliation of either side. She said the nations were all thinking separately and this independent group would be like a 'world thinking organ' for thinking together.

This was pretty profound stuff for a young woman to come up with in 1914! Her paper was adopted as the official platform of several major peace conferences, the Government of Wisconsin, and was considered by US President Woodrow, as well as other world leaders, but was never formally adopted.

Building on Julia Grace's work in the context of climate change today, my paper is built around a number of overarching principles:

- Women can take the lead. Some people feel a little uncomfortable with this but I think there are good reasons to try. It has not happened before. It is an experiment. And we heard from the check in circle that it is an idea that resonates with women.
- Accept the science, as recommended by the IPCC, and reflected in the Paris Accord, and therefore need to transition quickly away from burning fossil fuels.
- Accept the need to sustain jobs and wellbeing of people during the transition away from fossil fuels

Then there are a number of other key principles that underpin the idea of mediation

- No blame for where we are at now
- Independence from political influence
- Collaborate across diverse voices
- Bring nurture of life for future generations, wildlife and the environment into public discourse

The problems of climate change, like other societal problem are very complex but political discourse tends to simplify that to short policy statements and slogans. These principles would allow us to address the uncertainties, admit what we don't know and think together about how to secure a safe future.

It seems like the natural thing to do.

As I have already said, I don't want to get bogged down in the details of what an independent mediation process would look like. We can set up working groups to look at that later. I would like to focus on the principles, the energy we are bringing to the process and how we harness that to develop a movement to do this.

Some comments on the paper:

Thank you for sending me the interesting materials. They are a source of inspiration.

It's a fantastic approach and one that is close to my heart!

It looks superb.

Your paper ... puts some difficult issues into kind and compassionate words - thank you for the gems in it.

This sounds like a very exciting initiative and very timely!!!

Just reading your e mail inspired me! This looks amazing, Janet!

So exciting to hear about this approach.

This sounds like a wonderful inspiring project

I was thrilled to read your paper. It is engaging and beautifully written.

Thanks so much for sharing this wonderful piece of work.

This is fantastic! It is well-considered and articulate, and gives a sense of hope ...

Thank you so much for your wonderful paper - it has the story of the 1915 Congress of Women's gatherings running through it like a river of life