

Interviewee: Katie Green  
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**Abstract:** Katie Green was born in Virginia in 1942 and moved to Worcester, Massachusetts with her family when she was 11 years old. She attended college and graduate school in Ohio and received her master's degree in speech and language pathology from Case Western Reserve University. After working in hospitals and public schools, Katie became a professional storyteller. In this interview, Katie discusses her work in opposition to nuclear power plants, such as protesting the establishment of Seabrook nuclear facilities in New Hampshire. She emphasizes the Quaker way of life and how it has shaped her life. Additionally, she discusses her work with the Alternatives to Violence Project, working with prisoners to understand the roots of violence and initiate a healing process. In this interview, Katie highlights the transformative power of storytelling, and the ways in which we can all connect through the powerful use of stories. She is a contributor to *Spinning Tales*, *Weaving Hope: Stories for Peace, Justice and the Environment*.

**BP:** We're here interviewing you for the Worcester Women's Oral History Project. Basically what we're trying to do is to get kind-of an arc of your life story and your perspective as a woman. I guess we can start with your childhood, could you tell us a bit about that, where were you born and raised?

**KG:** Ok, alright. [Laughs] Well that's really hard. Where do you first dig in on that? My parents were both college graduates, which was probably pretty rare in 1942. My mother was one of six children and she was raised in rural Virginia. My father had one half-sister because her mother had died and his father re-married. Then his mother died when he was young, and he was raised by a bunch of aunts, who decided that they didn't know how to raise a boy so they sent him to school in Florida when he was thirteen. He ended up going to Virginia Tech and became a mechanical engineer like his father was. And the reason that's kind-of important to my life is because I was always really interested in math and physics. When I was a little kid my father used to take me into the power plants. It's amazing to think of it now, because they would never let a parent do that today. But I would be going into power plants where they generated electricity or into chemical power plants, and be way, way up in them, walking on the catwalks that you see in movies and uh with the big turbines. I can only say that I had a really blessed childhood. My parents were very loving parents and they never fought.

**KG and BP and EG:** [Laughs]

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**KG:** My mother was from the farm country and my father was from a more sophisticated, affluent family. So I always felt like I had a foot in two different worlds.

**EG:** Mmmm.

**KG:** The other thing about my childhood is that we moved around a whole lot, so when I was a kid, I was born in Virginia, but I lived in Texas, Mississippi, California, and Florida until we came to Massachusetts when I was in the seventh grade. So I was always the new kid on the block.

**BP and EG:** [Laughs]

**KG:** I had a sister who died when I was seven and she was four.

**BP and EG:** Oh, oh, we're sorry.

**KG:** Well, that was a long time ago, but it does it does stick with a person, you know, losing a sibling at age seven is a pretty significant age for a child so that probably influenced my life a lot. We lived in California when a lot of testing was going on for nuclear weapons. Childhood leukemia increased a lot after that. So when I started learning about the effects of radiation, I really felt strongly that my sister was a victim of nuclear testing. . . . So other things about childhood? I spent a lot of time on the farm in Virginia, with my mother's family and a lot of cousins. And since I'm a storyteller that has really given me a lot of material for stories.

**BP:** So how did you come to Worcester?

**KG:** My father worked for a company called Riley Stoker and their main office was in Worcester. So when I was going into the 7th grade, they brought him to the main office where he worked from. He designed power plants and he was a trouble-shooter when power plants were having difficulty. So you know, his main place of work was in Worcester but he still traveled to different parts of the country and the world. My mother was a teacher.

**BP:** So, did you, did you attend college?

**KG:** Yes. I went to a school called Wittenberg University [Laughs] Sometimes I have some flippant remarks I usually make that about that school, but we will just leave it that. I didn't fit in there. I graduated from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland and I also got my master's degree from there.

**EG:** What did you study?

**KG:** I studied speech and language pathology.

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**EG:** Oh cool, that's awesome.

**KG:** Yeah, I was never sorry, but I started out wanting to go to Virginia Tech.

**EG:** Mhmm.

**KG:** I graduated from Wachusett Regional High School in 1960 and when I was applying to colleges and I said I wanted to go to Virginia Tech, my father said, "Real women don't go there."

**BP:** Oooh.

**KG:** Yeah. Yeah, and now the school is more than 50% women.

**EG:** Mhmm.

**KG:** But yeah back then [Laughs]. Things have changed a whole lot and yet they haven't, at the same time. When I started school at Wittenberg, I started as a math major.

**BP and EC:** Oh, right.

**KG:** Yeah and I got tired of hearing people say, "You don't *look* like a math major."

**KG and EG:** [Laughs]

**BP:** So outside of college uh did you go straight into work or, or what did you do after you graduated?

**KG:** Well, I got pregnant when I was a junior in college, so that was a big shift.

**EG:** Mmmm.

**KG:** And my husband was a year older than I was, and he went to law school. He was from Cleveland.

**EG:** Mhmm.

**KG:** So we moved up to Cleveland and he went to law school at Case Western Reserve and that's where I finished my undergrad and then my graduate work. I had three children and I would have a baby, and then I would go to school and take a couple courses, and then I would

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take a semester off. So it took me seven years to get my undergraduate because I was going to school in between having three children.

**EG:** Wow.

**KG:** Yeah, and as it turned out that [Laughs] getting married was not a real good idea. He was not great husband material. I left him as soon as I could see that I was going to graduate with my master's and could support myself. When it was clear that he was not going to visit the children, I came to Massachusetts to be near my parents. They lived in Holden.

**BP:** So did being a mother change your orientation to different issues that you saw in the world, or, or not?

**KG:** Oh definitely. You know it's kind of interesting because when I was a kid, in school in Texas, we had air raid drills. You had to go through all of these things about uh hiding under your desk in case a bomb was dropped.

**EG:** Mhmm.

**KG:** When the Korean War was going on in the 50's, I remember being in the car with my mother and airplanes flew over-head, and I guess it was some sort of war game, they were connected with the military somehow. My mother shook her head and talked about what a terrible thing war was. My father was never in the service, but my very very favorite cousin's father was a Lieutenant Colonel in the Army and he had been in World War II. He didn't really talk about it very much, but I can remember a few stories that he told about people hiding in a barn in France and how, how terrible it was and things like that. We spent a lot of time at Fort Belvoir outside of Washington D.C., where my uncle was stationed. I'd play with my cousin and his friends at Fort Belvoir, and they, they looked down upon me because my father was not in the military. And, and so I always felt like oh, yeah, well yeah my father's not in the military and so there was just that tension.

**EG:** Mhmm.

**KG:** Now, not that I ever thought he should have been in the army, but it was just a difference. I remember hearing my mother say that my father went to enlist, "But they told him that he was needed here."

**EG:** Mmmm.

**KG:** So being a mother. . . I remember being in freshman psychology at Wittenberg, which was a Lutheran school, by the way.

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**BP and EG:** Oh, ok.

**KG:** I was raised Methodist or once we came to New England, Congregational and when I was at Wittenberg, I had a psychology professor—I still remember him, Dr. Rosario—he was telling us about the Roman Empire and how when women had a baby boy, they would put him out in the wild for maybe three days, for a time, and if he survived, then he would be a warrior. Now whether that story is true or not, I don't know.

**EG:** Mhmm.

**KG:** But I do know that when I delivered my first child, and he was a boy, I took one look at him and said there is no way you will ever be a soldier. One of the main sayings in the women's movement, for me, is: I will not raise my children to kill your children. And one of the things a person repeatedly hears as a storyteller is: It is not possible to kill someone when you know their story.

**EG:** Mmm, wow.

**KG:** That was before I was a Quaker.

**EG:** Could you tell us a bit about that?

**KG:** Well I, I became involved in [Laughs] wow, becoming a Quaker. That came about because I was working to promote clean energy. Clean and safe, renewable energy. I was concerned about environmental issues.

**EG:** Ok.

**KG:** And when the Seabrook nuclear power plant was being built in the late 70's, I was working full time at an extended care facility and I wanted to have more time with my children, so I changed jobs to a school system. At the same time there was a lot going on protesting the building of the nuclear power plants up in New Hampshire.

**EG:** Mhmm.

**KG:** And so I wrote a letter to this new group in Worcester called the Central Massachusetts Safe Energy Project.

**EG:** Mhmm.

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**KG:** And I said, “I’m changing jobs, I’m going to be working in a school system and I’d like to give some time to work on safe energy.” And so I got a phone call back from this guy named Phil Stone. I had been to a few Safe Energy Project meetings in Worcester. Phil said, “Oh, you live in Holden And we’re organizing to stop the building of the Seabrook nukes up in New Hampshire by the Public Service Company of New Hampshire [which was called PSCO – pisco]. They’re in financial difficulty, so they’re going around to all of the different towns that have their own electric companies.” Holden was a town with its own municipal electric company, and was a member of MMWEC – the Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company. These towns were being approached to bail out PSCO so they could continue the construction of two nuclear power plants that would generate electricity.

**KG:** So, we were a part of a bunch of people who were trying to stop them from doing it. Phil and I teamed up and we went to visit towns that were members of MMWEC. We had a presentation and we’d go around to the different town meetings and events and talk about the importance of safe, renewable energy and the dangers of nuclear energy. We would tell them why they should not fund the building of the Seabrook nukes. Our courtship consisted basically of going around to all of these different towns telling them that nuclear energy was not a good idea. That renewable energy was much better. We organized a couple of Renewable Energy Fairs. One was in Greenhill Park. There were speakers and music and some local politicians came and spoke.

**BP:** Wow.

**KG:** So that was really exciting. I had gone to Wachusett Regional High School in Holden, you know, and I used to sit and look at Mount Wachusett and I always loved Mount Wachusett and Princeton. I ended up selling my house in Holden and moving to Princeton where Phil and I were married and lived in a house that I designed to be passive solar. But you asked about being Quaker [Laughs].

**BP and EG:** Yes, yeah [Laughs].

**KG:** You never go from A to B in a straight line, you know, thinking about life and stories.

**BP:** Mhmm.

**KG:** Phil and I made a good team and we enjoyed organizing together. I was in love with him and the activism around the Seabrook nukes and there was a lot of civil disobedience that went on about that issue, I became a non-violence trainer for civil disobedience around the building of Seabrook. A lot of the resistance was led by Catholic nuns and by Quakers.

**BP:** Mhmm

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**KG:** And communists. I went to a retreat up in New Hampshire at a place called Avon Lake on Lake Winnepesaukee. It was a retreat that was run by Quakers and the purpose was to look at environmental issues and organizing to promote clean, safe, renewable energy. It was there that I learned more about the American Friends Service Committee [AFSC] and the connections between the Department of Energy and the military. And because it was run by the Quakers, I got to learn a whole lot more about Quakers, and I decided that's really really cool. And my daughter Whitney and my younger son Tyler, they were with me for that week at the Avon Institute. We roomed with a young woman who went to a Quaker school in Rindge, New Hampshire. It was called The Meeting School, and my daughter thought that that was just so neat. When we were coming back home from this week-long retreat, we saw a sign on the road that said *The Meeting School*. And my daughter Whitney said, "Oh can we go and look at it?" And I said "Sure." So we stopped and looked at it and nothing would do, but she wanted to go to that school, so she did her junior and senior year at The Meeting School. So there I was, you know, interested in the whole Quaker way and having a daughter wanting to go to a Quaker school. What do you think I did? Of course, I left the Unitarians and the Congregationalists and went to the Quakers [Laughs].

**EG:** Mhmm.

**KG:** Yes, so, that's that and I will say it has made a huge difference in my life.

**BP:** How so?

**KG:** Oh dear, this is so hard.

**BP:** I know, I can imagine.

**KG:** Did anybody tell you this? This is so hard.

**BP and EG:** [Laughs]

**KG:** That's because I've taken a few oral histories from people, and I know what it was like to try to glean through what they told me and then put it into any sort of readable thing.

**EG:** Mmmm.

**KG:** So ask me that question again, and see if I can formulate an articulate answer okay?

**BP:** How has your faith uh impacted your work or your life, things of that nature I guess.

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**KG:** Yeah, that's good, hmm. Well Quakers are a pacifist religion. I hate to use the word, but it *is* a religion; it came out of Christianity. I consider it to be a way of life. It's one of the few pacifist religions, and I really don't believe in solving conflicts by hurting people.

**EG:** Mmm.

**KG:** So, so that just goes through everything. I like the idea that you don't need an intermediary to communicate or to have a connection with God, with Spirit. I like that. I don't want to go into an evangelistic thing about Quakers, but the basic belief is that there is that of God in everyone.

**BP and EG:** Mhmm.

**KG:** And so it boils down into testimonies that Quakers try to live by, and that's simplicity, peace, integrity, community, and equality. Simplicity because when you want a whole lot of things, STUFF, it makes people greedy and hurts the environment. I mean the whole, society that we're involved in today is at the expense of other people and future generations.

**BP and EG:** Mhmm.

**KG:** If you really think about it. So while it's pretty hard to live a life that really embraces simplicity, but as a Quaker, you know, I *try* to limit my need for material things.

**EG:** Mhmm.

**KG:** And I try to be aware of the environment, you know, and walk softly on the Earth. And, and as I say *that*, I am very, very aware that am not really living a simple life. Here I am with this little house here in Florida and also a house up in Princeton, Massachusetts.

**EG:** Mhmm.

**KG:** And that dependence on fossil fuels makes that possible. Simplicity. But I really love the way Quakers value the family and the children and each other.

**EG:** That's great.

**KG:** So it's very important.

**EG:** Yeah, so I guess we want to shift gears a little bit, and kind of focus on your involvement in Worcester and anything you've done here any sort of activism or any programs you've started so, if you want to elaborate on that for a little but that would be awesome.

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**KG:** Ok. So in Worcester. I don't feel like I've done a whole lot just in the city of Worcester. I was really very active in the Worcester Safe Energy Project back in its day, and when we were looking at the connections between nuclear energy and militarism, I was very involved with organizing for the Nuclear Freeze, I don't know if you are familiar with that. That was when a million people marched on New York City against nuclear weapons.

**BP and EG:** Oh, ok.

**KG:** We organized that, we organized buses that went down to Washington D.C. several times. There was also the Women's Pentagon Action. There were two of those. I took my van to D.C. with seven other women, most of whom were from Worcester, to participate in the Pentagon Action.

**EG:** Wow.

**KG:** It was really very impressive and moving. We women completely circled the Pentagon.

**BP and EG:** Wow.

**KG:** And [Laughs] and we say we levitated it.

**KG and BP and EC:** [Laughs]

**KG:** so I I was involved with that and it's so funny because I had forgotten about that until you asked. And we organized against U.S. involvement in Central America, Guatemala.

**BP:** Mmmm.

**KG:** Yes. I facilitated quite a few nonviolence trainings, one on your campus.

**BP:** Wow.

**KG:** That one I did with Tom Lewis, who is no longer with us. But I'm sure you might have heard his name if you're thinking of some activists in Worcester. Let's see, there were a few arrests for non-violent civil disobedience in Worcester.

**EG:** Oh, wow.

**KG:** There used to be this company called GTE (General Telephone and Electronics). They had a building on Route 9 in Westborough and now it's gone. They were designing the trigger that would target the nuclear missiles aimed at Russia. It was the command control and communication systems for missiles. And the Reagan administration was advocating a Star-Wars

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type of shield. where U.S. missiles might shoot down enemy missiles in flight. We held a weekly vigil there at GTE, like the people in Worcester are doing now.

**BP** and **EC**: Mmm.

**KG**:, Every Tuesday we would stand out there at GTE with our signs saying that nuclear weapons do not make us safer. We chose Tuesdays because it was said that when you work a 40-hour, 5-day work week, Tuesday is the hardest day [laughs] by the time you get to Wednesday you're halfway through the week.

**BP** and **EG**: Ahh.

**KG**: [Laughs] Having to go to work every day. So we stood out there every Tuesday for years with our signs all year round. I think that was before Scott Schaefer-Duffy was involved. I think that was before he was married to Claire. Who else was there? Tom Lewis was there and there were some Catholic women from Westborough who were there with us uh and then some other good Holy Cross folks would come out every now and then. And there were sometimes people and a couple of ministers from Worcester churches.

**BP** and **EC**: [Laughs]

**KG**: It was really kind of interesting because I remember there was one time that one of the workers from GTE contacted Tom Lewis—Tom's name was in the paper a lot—and Tom wanted to meet with him, so Tom and I met with this fellow who worked at GTE. We had dinner at the Pickle Barrel with him and chatted. Tom always had this saying that just because people are working on weapons doesn't mean that they're evil. And it was just a good reminder and then it turned out that one of those people who worked inside GTE left the company. And she is now standing with the vigil every Tuesday in Worcester.

**BP** and **EG**: Wow.

**KG**: Standing there for peace, yeah. Uh-huh so that was just a small example of how things can work., I have all sorts of respect for her.

**BP** and **EC**: Mmmm.

**KG**: She's a very smart woman. With regards to some other things I might have done in Worcester, can't say. It's not really *only* in Worcester. I was teaching—in fact I left my position at St. Vincent Hospital and went into a school setting because I wanted more time with my young children. I ended up being very concerned about learning differences and diversity and racial problems.

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**BP:** Mmmm.

**KG:** As a speech and language pathologist, I could walk down the hallways of the school and I could hear teachers yelling, “Hey Stephanie sit down!” or “Tommy, cut it out!” And, you know, those kids that were getting yelled at, those were *my* kids with communication problems, and quite often I would see children of color or children who were obviously underprivileged...

**BP:** Mhmm.

**KG:** ...targeted. So I became concerned about those instances. I taught classes at Fitchburg State College for quite a few years. I taught Creative Conflict Resolution in the Classroom, and Storytelling, An Integral Part of the School Curriculum because I am a storyteller. So you know I was really addressing social issues. And I did workshops for teachers and educators back in the late 70's. There was one workshop I did with Lydia Fortune, a jazz singer and mediator from Worcester. It was called *The R-Word*, because in the late 70's, you know, people didn't talk about racism the way we do today.

**BP and EG:** Mhmm.

**KG:** I called that workshop *The R-word*, because just like during the 50's and 60's people didn't talk about cancer. People who had cancer - it was the C-word. There was no cure, no cure at all, and so you just didn't say the word, *cancer*. So when I started doing workshops about racism, they were initially called The R-Word. We know there's still not, not a cure [laughs] for racist attitudes that so many people have. When Maura Healey, the Massachusetts Attorney General and the DOJ [Department of Justice] funded the dialogues on race in Worcester--

**BP:** Mhmm.

**KG:** --when was that? The summer before last or so? I was involved. I was honored to be asked to be one of the facilitators. There were six weeks where we met, a different group would form each week. We didn't have just one group.

**BP:** Mhmm.

**KG:** It was just real interesting. I was aghast. I was horrified at the lack of awareness I heard coming out of white people's mouths about what it is like to be a person of color in our *culture*.

**EC:** Mmmm.

**KG:** So in the past few years more of those stories are coming into white people's awareness: stories of racial profiling, police brutality, inequality. And more people are more aware. But even still, you can be *aware* of social injustices that happen every day in our world and yet until

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you walk that walk. I will never know what it's like to be a person of color, but because I have close friends who are and we share stories, I've learned a lot. I understand more than I did when I started out on this path. I was raised in the South in Houston, Texas and Hattisburg, Mississippi, you know, so I grew up with the signs on the water fountains "colored" and all that.

**BP and EG:** Mhmm.

**KG:** And then I remember hearing my mother and father talk about Jim Crow when I was in grammar school. So, that's probably one of the reason why I do volunteer work in the prisons now. And I became aware that the people—I'll just say *men* in prison—they can read—I might say it wrong, but it's either a 4<sup>th</sup> or a 6<sup>th</sup> grade reading level, and many, many, many of the guys inside had learning problems growing up.

**BP:** Mhmm.

**KG:** So it was a natural extension for me to do volunteer work in the prison. And my work in the men's prison is with a volunteer organization called Alternatives to Violence Project. AVP. It was initially started by Quakers and incarcerated men in Greenhaven Prison in New York State. But I've been trying to bring AVP to Worcester communities. Here in the U.S., AVP is mostly in the prisons, but around the world it is a program that brings people together in places where they have been at war, you know, places like Rwanda. So it's a very effective healing procedure. The workshops bring people together and look at the roots of violence and where it comes from, and what our part in it is. We work to develop strategies to resolve conflicts in a more peaceful manner.

**BP:** So could you tell us a bit about how your storytelling became an important part of your life? It seems like it's been a really influencing factor and I'm so curious as to how that started and how it's playing out now.

**KG:** [Laughs] I don't know how it started. It started because I grew up in southwestern Virginia. Virginia has this thing called twilight, and we used to sit on my grandparents' front porch after supper and, you know, tell stories.

**BP and EG:** Mmmm.

**KG:** And when I was a kid, I was one of the older cousins, and so I was told to entertain the little ones and so I would tell them a story. You know the stories: The Three Bears and The Three Little Pigs.

**KG and BP and EG:** [Laughs]

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**KG:** And of course I told my kids stories and read stories to them. But when you *tell* a story it's a whole different thing. When you read a story that's good, there's great literature and people should read to children. People should and adults should read to each other.

**BP:** Mhmm.

**KG:** But when you're telling a story there's a heart to heart connection that isn't there so much when you're reading. When I became a classroom teacher, a speech and language pathologist, I ended up having my own substantially separate classroom for children with language learning difficulties. And besides my regular curriculum that I'd have with these kids, I would tell them a story. And I realized that that story stayed with them longer, and they talked about it more. Sometimes, in free play time, they'd act out the stories that I had told them. Storytelling, listening and sharing stories, promotes intimacy and builds community.

**BP:** Mhmm.

**KG:** And it promotes understanding different points of view because a storyteller, when you're telling a story, you become *everything* in the story. Take the story of Sleeping Beauty, the storyteller is the princess, is the prince, is the vines that cover the castle, is the fairy who says, "if you prick your finger, you'll fall asleep." The storyteller understands every character and part of a story, and understands it in order to share the story. Storytelling promotes empathy, something that is missing in too many people today.

**BP:** Mhmm.

**KG:** So it's one of the basic things: telling stories and our opposable thumbs are what make us human. When I was a kid and my mother would tuck me in at night, I would have three stories. She'd read me a story like a little fairytale or a Golden book or a chapter from one of those chapter books when I grew older. And then she'd read me a Bible story from the Children's Bible, and then she would "story my day." She'd review all of the things we did that day, places we went, things I did.

**EG:** Mhmm.

**KG:** And then she would say, "Tomorrow we're going to . . . ." and she'd say something that we would do the next day. And I think that that's probably one of the main roots of my storytelling. I think that's really, really important. If you ever have children, make sure you story their day for them, it just gives them such a sense of time and meaning, where their place is, and what's going on.

**EG:** So could you tell us about Tellebration?

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**KG:** [Laughs]

**EG:** We were reading a little bit about that so we wanted to know...

**KG:** You've been on my website.

**BP and EG:** [Laughs]

**KG:** Tellebration, gosh, I haven't thought about that in quite a few years. I think it's still going on but it's not quite the way it used to be.

**EG:** Oh, ok.

**KG:** Tellebration was started by the National Storytelling Network to increase people's awareness of the power of story

**EG:** Mhmm.

**KG:** And to promote the art of storytelling. It was originally for *adults* really.

**BP and EG:** Mhmm.

**KG:** And because adults think of "storytelling" as something that's for little kids and yeah, kids love stories, but it's not because they're *kids*; they love stories because they're human.

**BP:** Right.

**KG:** So Telebration was started just to promote the whole idea of storytelling, and now look where it's gotten today.

**BP and EG:** Mmmm.

**KG:** [Laughs] We Mass Mouth and Storycorps, and adult storytelling programs on the radio now. Mass Mouth was started in Boston and at these storytelling events, people come together to tell true stories from their own life.

**BP and EG:** Mhmm.

**KG:** Well that's the way we're gonna learn about each other. I'm glad you asked about this because when I was first becoming a storyteller or even knew that that you could be a "professional" storyteller, I remember going to a rally in front of Worcester City Hall. Annette

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Rafferty had just recently started Abby's House and Tess Sneesby was working there. Well, I went to this rally and Tess Sneesby talked about Abby's House, but she didn't say that Abby's House was about, and she didn't talk about what she did. She told the story of one of the women who *came* to Abby's House.

**BP:** Mhmm.

**KG:** She told the story about that woman and I was so moved. I felt the *power* of that story. If Tess had just stood up and said Abby's House does this and there are so many women who come by and dah-dah-dah-dah-dah, it wouldn't have moved me, I would have thought, "Uh-huh that's a good thing."

**BP:** Right.

**KG:** But it wouldn't have moved me as much as it did. The story made a difference to me. I realized the power that storytelling has to influence people. Storytelling is a tool for social change. I worked with several other Massachusetts storytellers to create a book that was published by New Society Press: *Spinning Tales, Weaving Hope: Stories for Peace, Justice and the Environment*.

**EG:** Mhmm.

**KG:** I remember producing a storytelling event in Worcester to commemorate 9/11. It might have been 5 years afterwards, I'm not sure. I asked five professional storytellers to come and tell a story that promoted peace and I asked five Worcester peace activists to come and tell a story. And I told all of the peace activists, "I want you to tell a story about an event in your life that tells why you're doing what you're doing or a story about someone. Don't just talk about your organization."

**BP:** Mhmmm.

**KG:** That was sort of like a Tellebration. Tellebration was also started as a fundraiser for tellers in the region to tell in hospitals or different places. The event to commemorate 9/11 raised money for a group called Worcester Peaceworks. I produced quite a few Tellebrations in Worcester. Quite a bit of money was raised to purchase books for children who were in need or to supplement the children's library at UMass Hospital. But now there are so many book drives. I think my favorite Tellebration that I produced was for children whose mothers were incarcerated. There was a program for incarcerated women and they practiced reading a storybook for their children because many of these women did not see their children because they were far away. So the moms would read a book with expression to their absent child and that would be video-taped. So they would video the moms reading the storybook and then after she'd read, she could say a message to her child or children. With the money raised at

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Tellebration, we'd purchase really good quality hard-back books for these mothers to read. Then the book and the video would be sent to the child. And that was one of, I guess that's one of my favorite things that I ever did.

**BP and EG:** Mhmm.

**EG:** So I guess we were just wondering if you could tell us about any challenges that you had to face during your times of activism or any sort of you know moments of like clarity or any, anything like that?

**KG:** Ok. One of the struggles was when my kids were younger. It was about balance. And, you know, being present and being a caring mother for my kids and my activism. And that that's a hard thing.

**EG:** Yeah, yeah.

**KG:** I think that especially I think about the nuclear issue. My kids say, "I grew up thinking that that a nuclear bomb could be dropped at any time."

**EG:** Right.

**KG:** And now the issue of the environment is absolutely terrifying to me. And sometimes I really, really struggle to be able to look at climate change and to name it and talk about it. It's a huge, huge struggle for me, and so of course for children. How much, how much, how much information about what's happening can children deal with? And "get it" all, you know? I mean my heart breaks when I hear young people of your generation say, "I don't want to bring a child into the world because it's going to be too hard for them." So that's the biggest biggest challenge that I have, but thinking about what action do I want to take, what action is the best action for *me* to take? Well, would it be like opposing the Seabrook nukes? PSCO never did build the second planned nuke, and Seabrook was the last nuclear power plant built in the U.S. Nuclear weapons. The US involvement in Latin American countries, okay you can put your body on the line, you can get arrested, but is that effective today? Look at Occupy. Look at Standing Rock.

**BP:** Mhmm.

**KG:** It's questionable, that one's questionable. And so I've really struggled with that. Sometimes I think well now that I'm in Florida I can write to legislators down here, maybe my voice could make a difference. Frustration. I guess another frustration would probably go back to that six weeks of racial dialogue. We had a real lovely thing happening and at every single dialogue. Every week somebody in the group would say, "I hope this stuff just doesn't end up

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being a piece of paper on someone's desk, so they can say *look what we did*, but nothing happened.

**BP:** Mhmm.

**KG:** And so that's not quite what happened, there have been some good things that have come about from the dialogues. But it took a long, long time to glean all the information collected from the six weeks of dialogue and then send it back to the community. It didn't include a lot of what I heard in my groups or from other facilitators that I spoke with. For example, in every single group that I facilitated, someone talked about police brutality and inequality of public services. As long as people don't speak out or they don't pay attention to what's happening and educate themselves about social issues, they get what they deserve, and somebody like [Donald] Trump becomes President. I think he's an absolute embarrassment, but that might be too political for what you're doing.

**BP:** [Laughs] No, no anything you share is great. So throughout all of your work what movements or changes do you feel the most proud of?

**KG:** Well, I mentioned the resistance. But the work I feel most proud of is the storytelling and encouraging people to communicate with each other and share their thoughts and experience. A lot of funding for the arts has dried up. Now there used to be a time when there were more artists in schools, and when I would go into a school as an artist in residence, I would tell stories and often I would teach the children to stand up and tell a story. It's amazing how years and years later a parent or even a child will come up to me, or I'll run into them just out in the world and they'll say, "Oh I remember when you did this and it really helped me a lot." There was one little girl from Great Brook Valley who was one of my student storytellers when she was in the sixth grade, and I ran into her six years later and she said "Oh, Katie Green you came to my school and taught us how to tell stories, and now I'm applying to MIT." [Massachusetts Institute of Technology]

**BP and EG:** Wow.

**KG:** And there was another little kid a 4<sup>th</sup> grade boy in a Worcester school. While we were getting ready for the kids to have their storytelling festival, his grandmother died.

**BP:** Oh no.

**KG:** And I don't remember whether he was able to come back to do the festival or not. But his mother sent me a note and spoke to me too, and she said that at the grandmother's funeral, this little boy gave a—how do you call it when somebody speaks at a funeral?

**EG:** Eulogy?

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**KG:** Eulogy! Yes, she said that her son who had always been a shy quiet little boy gave the most beautiful eulogy for his grandmother, and she said it's because of the storytelling.

**BP and EC:** Wow, aww.

**KG:** Yeah so. . . [Laughs].

**EG:** That's amazing.

**KG:** Yeah so I guess *that* that really is what I'm most proud of. I'm proud that I put my body on the line a few times, but I think that the storytelling is a way of dropping a pebble in the pond and seeing the ripples uh go out.

**EG:** Mhmm. And what would you say your inspiration is in all of this work in storytelling and in any of your involvement in activism over the years?

**KG:** That's a hard question, that's not fair.

**KG and BP and EG:** [Laughs]

**EG:** I know that is, that is a hard one.

**KG:** My inspiration is the natural world and how wonderful and loving and caring people really are.

**EG:** Yeah, that's beautiful.

**KG:** [Laughs] Yeah, I ask so many people when I'm doing workshops—mostly with Quakers—“where do you feel closest to God or closest to the Spirit or the Divine”, you know, whatever words a person might want to use. And so many people say, “*in the natural world* or in the woods or at the beach.” or places like that.

**EG:** Mmm, mhmm.

**KG:** I think that the beauty of the world and the way people really deep down really do *care* about each other.

**BP and EG:** Mmm, yeah.

**BP:** So we want to be cognizant of your time, so we want to know if there's anything we haven't asked that you'd like to mention or to say or to talk about before we conclude.

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**KG:** Let me think, well I don't know.

ADDENDUM May 15, 2017

I have a few things that I must add, although it means that this part of the document is not an oral history. The problem with an oral history is that the historian must be prepared. You sent out possible questions, but unfortunately, I was so busy that that I didn't have time to do more than glance at them. My sincere apologies, but planning construction on the little house in Florida and preparing to leave for my trip to Point Reyes in California the morning *after* our evening telephone interview had me quite distracted and very busy. If you include this document after the oral history that was recorded April 27, 2017, the story is a little more complete, and comes closer to the intention of learning about women who are "activists."

You asked about how being a mother influenced my activism. My response was incomplete. When my second child was almost a year old, I was feeding her rice pablum and glancing at the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* which lay opened on the kitchen table. I noticed a very small article embedded on the backside of page five. I read that U.S. airplanes were spraying something called *Agent Orange* on the rice fields in Viet Nam to kill the food staple of the enemy. I froze, holding the spoonful of rice pablum headed to my baby's mouth. I thought, "This is not the way war is fought." I began to pay more attention to the war in Viet Nam.

On November 20, 1969, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* published the awful photographs of the My Lai Massacre [Vietnam]. Some of the pictured dead were children. I was seven months pregnant with my third child. I joined *Another Mother for Peace* and put up the poster "War is not healthy for Children and Other Living Things." My third child, Tyler, was born the following January.

My best friend, Carol, was a doctoral candidate at Kent State University, so when the National Guard shot and killed four people at a protest against the Viet Nam war, it was devastating for us. How could we NOT become activists?

You asked, "How has your faith impacted your work?" I would like to add that being a Quaker has had an enormous impact on my life. Quakers have a book called *Faith and Practice*. For me, that is one word, not three: faithandpractice. I cannot separate my faith from my actions as I *practice* my faith. Many people become Quakers because of the commitment to non-violence and the opposition to war.

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I was honored to serve as the Clerk of the Worcester Friends Meeting (WFM) for three years. Quakers appoint a person to “clerk” the Meeting; we do not have a minister. I’ve been active on committees at WFM and have planned many Spoken Word Events for the public through the Friends Meeting. I edited the Worcester Friends Meeting Newsletter for almost ten years and taught the First Day School [Sunday School] for about the same length of time. I also served on New England Yearly Meeting’s Ministry and Council for several years. Now that Phil and I have become “snowbirds,” it is a joy to see other Friends step into leadership roles and see the Meeting continue to flourish and grow while we attend Quaker Meeting for Worship with Clearwater Friends in Florida.

My storytelling, teaching, political actions are based on Quaker Testimonies, and are not separate. My success as a storyteller is complemented by a group I lovingly call *The Creative Monsters*, or simply *The Monsters*. This is a group that originated 24 years ago when 12 people attended, *A Creativity Workshop*, facilitated by two nationally acclaimed storytellers: Jay O’Callahan and Doug Lipman. Nine of us have continued to meet at least twice a year with Jay O’Callahan. Our last meeting was the trip to Point Reyes in California, where we walked on the beach, wrote, shared stories, and reveled in the love between us.

In conclusion, I must add that the above events in conjunction with the assassinations of JFK [President John F. Kennedy], MLK [Martin Luther King, and Bobby Kennedy contributed to becoming an activist. Learning about each of these deaths remains a memorable static moment in my life. Of course there’s ever-so-much more I could write, but I’ll close now.

Thank you so much for inviting me to be part of this project. You have motivated me to write and tell more stories from my life experience. When we tell stories from our life, we recognize their importance and celebrate the mystery and blessing of being alive. Storytelling can and does change the world. Let us change it for the better.

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