

Lumin

Whether they drew strength from their spirituality to advocate for a better world, enriched our days with beauty and light, or simply guided us toward richer, more meaningful lives, these **10 leaders** were our beacons of inspiration in 2013.

BY DAMON ORION, ILIMA LOOMIS, AND KAREN BOURIS

"I AM LIGHT"

India.Arie

Since introducing herself to the public in 2001 with her refreshingly candid single "Video," R&B singer-songwriter India.Arie consistently has used her music to promote self-acceptance, empowerment, and a sense of connection to spirit. Blessed with a smooth, soulful voice that seems to seep into the spaces between the beats of her songs, she brings a dose of wisdom and authenticity to a music industry in which glitz, materialism, and the ego are applauded. And her message has struck a chord: she has sold 10 million albums and won four Grammy Awards from a total of 21 nominations.

Arie returned to the music business in 2013 after a four-year hiatus. Explaining her departure from the spotlight, she says that she needed to give herself some distance to reflect on her life and her music. "I had been a commodity all my adult life," she says. "I had other people trying to tell me how I should be."

The public scrutiny was magnifying the feelings of alienation that she had been carrying around since childhood, she adds. "So I went on a journey to let myself look at

*"Let me use
my art for
the healing of
humanity."*

RANDEE ST NICHOLAS

aries



everything, feel everything, and not try to avoid the pain or try to heal it before it happened.”

This long period of introspection culminated in a spiritual breakthrough that Arie has chronicled in her new album, *SongVersation*. Here, she sings of her newfound courage to let other people see her true, unfiltered self (“I heard a voice that told me I’m essential/How all my fears are limiting my potential/Said it’s time to step into the light and use every bit of the power I have inside”) and celebrates her hard-won ability to see the hidden teachings in painful experiences (“I show you my burns; you show me lessons learned,” she sings, and later, “What did not demolish me simply polished me.”).

Arguably Arie’s most overtly spiritual work yet, *SongVersation* finds the songstress contemplating the fundamental unity of all religions (“One”) and offering herself and her music to the divine force (“Thy Will Be Done”). On the album’s poignant closing track, “I Am Light,” she sings from the perspective of a soul that transcends temporal form: “I am not my age, I am not my race . . . I am the God on the inside.”

Arie says she prays for each of her songs before she begins composing. On the auspicious date of December 12, 2012, “I said a prayer that I would write a song that would show everyone their divinity,” she recalls. What came to her, she says, was “I Am Light.”

“That is the only song I’ve ever created that I listen to. I play it every day before I pray; I play it at meditation time; I play it when I want to stretch in the morning. I play it like it’s not even my song. I like knowing that my prayer is being answered and that people are able to feel the essence of who they are while the song is playing.” —DO

“My speaking is meant to shake you awake, not to tell you how to dream better.”



MOMENT OF TRUTH

Adyashanti

Although his spiritual training is in Zen Buddhism, California-based Adyashanti says he doesn’t teach any particular spiritual tradition but instead draws on numerous experiences, including his Christian upbringing, for his talks on awakening and enlightenment.

The author of books including *The Way of Liberation* and *Falling into Grace* always reminds us to live in the present moment. Although he is at work on many projects, including a new book and an upcoming online course, Adyashanti says he’s not focused on the future. “Currently I am writing these words, so there is no experience of a project other than this that I am passionate about,” he wrote in an email to *S&H*. “Whatever I am doing is my passion—there is no past or future to it.” —IL

STRETCHING BOUNDARIES

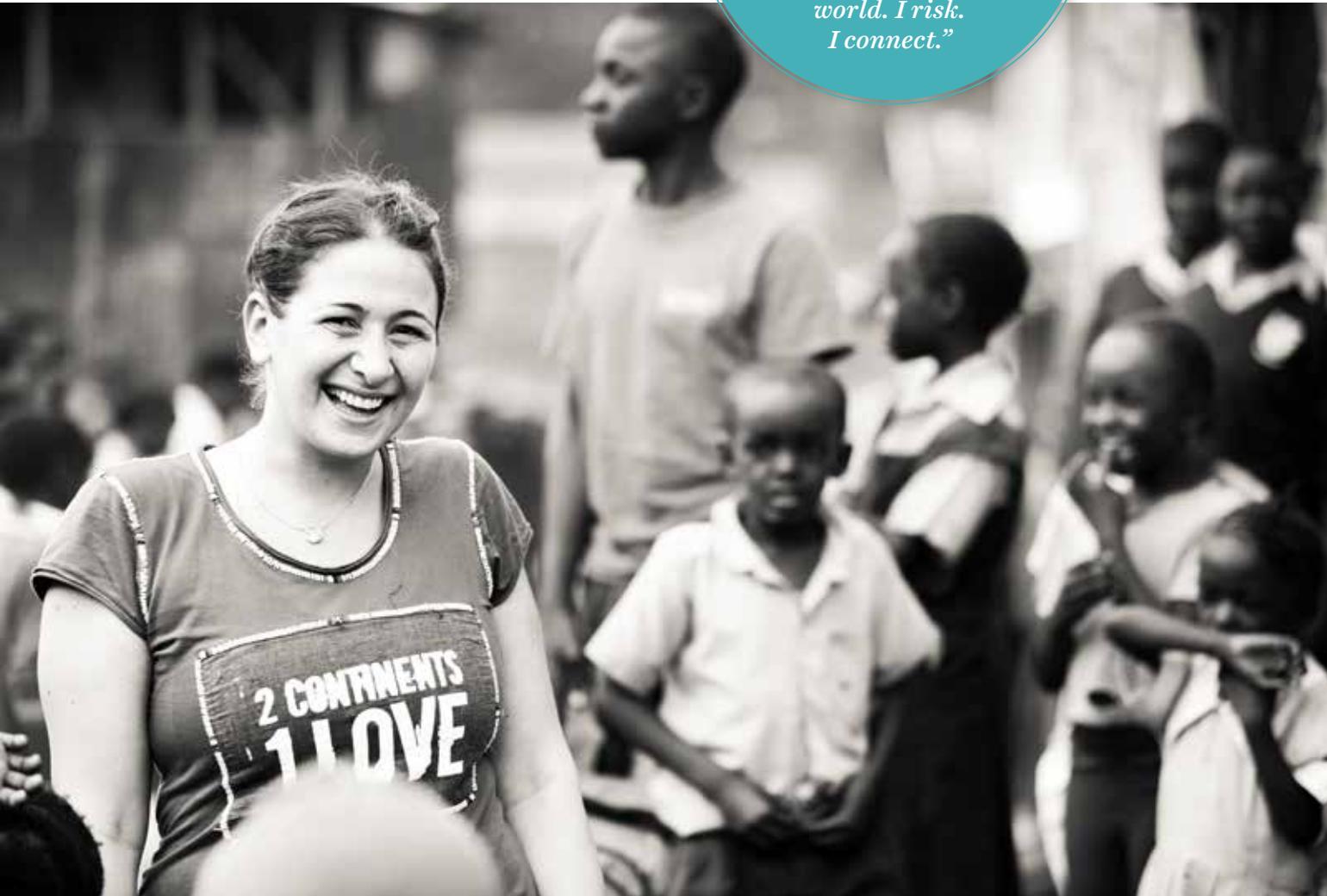
Paige Elenson

When Paige Elenson describes herself as “just a girl who fell in love with the power and transformation of yoga and wanted to share it with the world,” she means it literally. Elenson, with the support of teacher Baron Baptiste, moved to Kenya to start the Africa Yoga Project in 2007, just as post-election violence was sweeping the country.

Six years later, the grassroots nonprofit organization reaches an estimated 6,000 Kenyans each week through free community yoga classes. It also trains the next generation of teachers; more than 70 local yogis have been certified as instructors, providing employment and spreading the organization’s message of connection, empowerment, and positive change throughout the country.

“I have seen many things in my short life,” says Elenson, “but the one thing that I have seen over and over is the transformative power of yoga.” —IL

When I sit in contemplation for too long, I tend to get caught up in the many paths I could take. I analyze. I doubt. When I am in action, I take my prayers and make them my promise to the world. I risk. I connect.”



GUIDING VOICE

Chief Oren Lyons

As a faith keeper for the Turtle Clan of the Onondaga Nation in the Iroquois Confederacy, Chief Oren Lyons has always reminded us that environmental responsibility is profoundly spiritual.

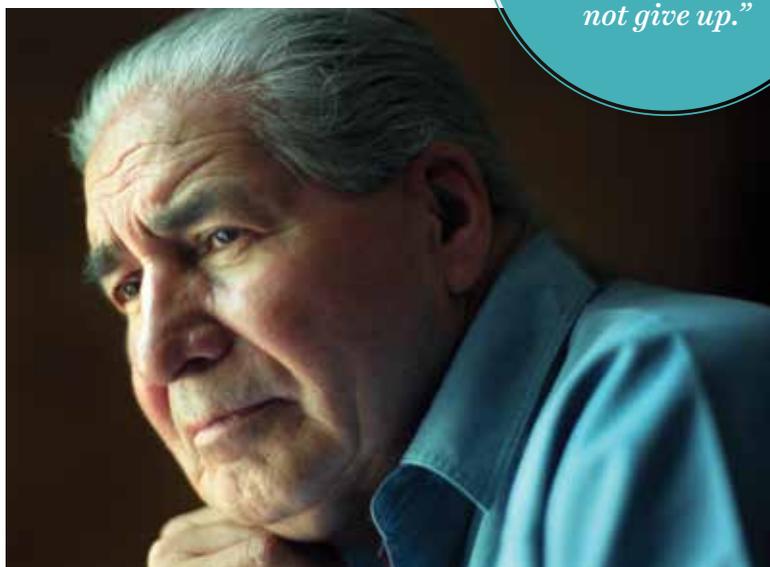
“So often you’ll hear us call the winds our grandfathers,” he has said. “You’ll hear us call the thunder and the lightning our grandfathers, the moon our grandmother, the sun our eldest brother, and the earth our mother. We say that because it denotes a relationship of love.”

In August, Lyons, the editor and coauthor of *Exiled in the Land of the Free*, participated in a 13-day paddle down the Hudson River to raise awareness about Native American land rights and environmental conservation.

A quiet but powerful advocate for environmental protection and indigenous rights for the past 35 years, Lyons inspires us by embodying the “seventh generation” principle—the idea that chiefs must make every important decision with the welfare of the next seven generations in mind.

“The Peace Maker said, ‘Make your decisions on behalf of seven generations,’” Lyons has said. “If you can stop thinking about yourself and begin thinking about responsibility, everything is going to get better.” —IL

“As long as there is one to speak and one to listen, one to sing and one to dance, the fight is on. That is hope: to not give up.”



NUN SENSE

Sister Simone Campbell

Even after her group of nuns was singled out by the Vatican last year in a report warning that their advocacy on social justice issues was contrary to church doctrine, Sister Simone Campbell continued speaking out. After leading a coast-to-coast Nuns on the Bus tour in 2012 to support immigration reform, the executive director of NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby traveled to Capitol Hill this July to testify before Congress against harsh cuts to food stamps, Medicaid, housing assistance, and other critical programs in the social safety net.

AP PHOTO/SOUTH BEND TRIBUNE, JAMES BROSHER

ONE WITH NATURE

Stacey Kennealy

Growing up devoutly Catholic, Stacey Kennealy once thought she might become a nun. Then a series of early traumas, including the loss of her father at age 12 and a home life made unstable by addiction and mental illness, left

her reeling and spiritually searching. Eventually she found solace in the outdoors and turned to meditation and Zen Buddhism to rebuild her emotional life.

Now in formal training under Seijaku Roshi, and pursuing the path of ordination as a Buddhist monk, Kennealy's spirituality is deeply connected with her work at GreenFaith, where she helps houses of worship make their religious communities more sustainable. The "green" certification program doesn't just save money and make churches more ecologically responsible; it also mobilizes congregations to speak out on environmental issues and forges connections between groups of different faiths.

"As I've moved into my adult life, my love of the natural world has fueled me," she says. "I want to protect it and allow my children and all future generations to experience the same beauty and wonder."

—IL

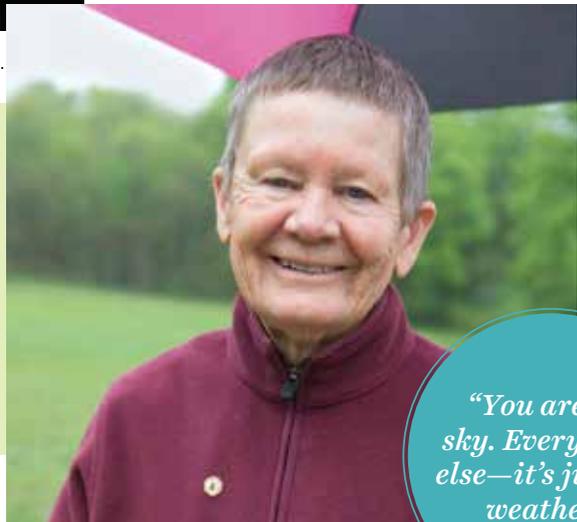
"It is not up to me to solve the world's problems, but it is up to me to do my part, even if I may not see the results in my lifetime."



"In this richest nation on earth, we do not suffer from scarcity of resources for government programs meant to help [the poor]. We suffer only from a lack of political will to do what is right and compassionate."

"This commitment for me is rooted in my Catholic faith and Jesus' demand that if we are to follow in his way, we must respond to those in need not just out of charity but also in justice," she said. "Our faith tells us that individuals and their governments have a responsibility to act on behalf of the common good. This is what it means to live our faith." —IL

CHIEF: OREN LYONS; THE POST STANDARD; SISTER SIMONE CAMPBELL; AP PHOTO; SOUTH BEND TRIBUNE; JAMES BROSHER; STACEY KENNEALY; KONRAD KOLEN PHOTOGRAPHY; PEMA CHÖDRÖN; SUSAN LIRAKIS



"You are the sky. Everything else—it's just the weather."

READER CHOICE

Pema Chödrön

We asked, and S&H readers chose **Pema Chödrön**, whose latest book is *Living Beautifully*, as their spiritual hero for 2013. Find out why at spiritualityhealth.com/reader-hero.



MOVING ENERGY

Robert Peng

The ancient Chinese healing art of qigong is among today's fastest-growing holistic practices—in addition to use as a spiritual practice for inner balance and peace, qigong movement is gaining acceptance as a gentle treatment for chronic illnesses and pain.

Few teachers embody the authentic cultural and spiritual roots of this 3,000-year-old practice more than qigong teacher and healer Robert Peng. Now based in New York, Peng grew up in China and began his training at the age of 8, when he was diagnosed with heart disease. He went on to train in a monastery, where at age 15 he was asked to endure a 100-day water fast in an underground cell, an ordeal he later said was a spiritually transforming experience.

Today, Peng is internationally recognized as a qigong healer (his latest book is *The Master Key: Qigong Secrets for Vitality, Love, and Wisdom*), but he says some of the most profound benefits of qigong are spiritual. “Thanks to qigong practice, I don’t have to go to the temple or deep into the mountains to enjoy my peacefulness and happiness, but right in the center of the city,” he says. “You can get inner peace anywhere.” —IL



“Without spiritual life, we are only living half of our real life; the primitive half.”



MYSTIC WISDOM

Sandra Ingerman

At the forefront of a rekindled interest in shamanism, Sandra Ingerman has been a leader in the use of ancient spiritual practices not only for personal healing but also to heal the earth.

In books like *Medicine for the Earth* and *How to Heal Toxic Thoughts*, she outlines simple shamanic rituals and principles that make us more connected to one another and to all beings, and that restore our balance and harmony both inside and out.

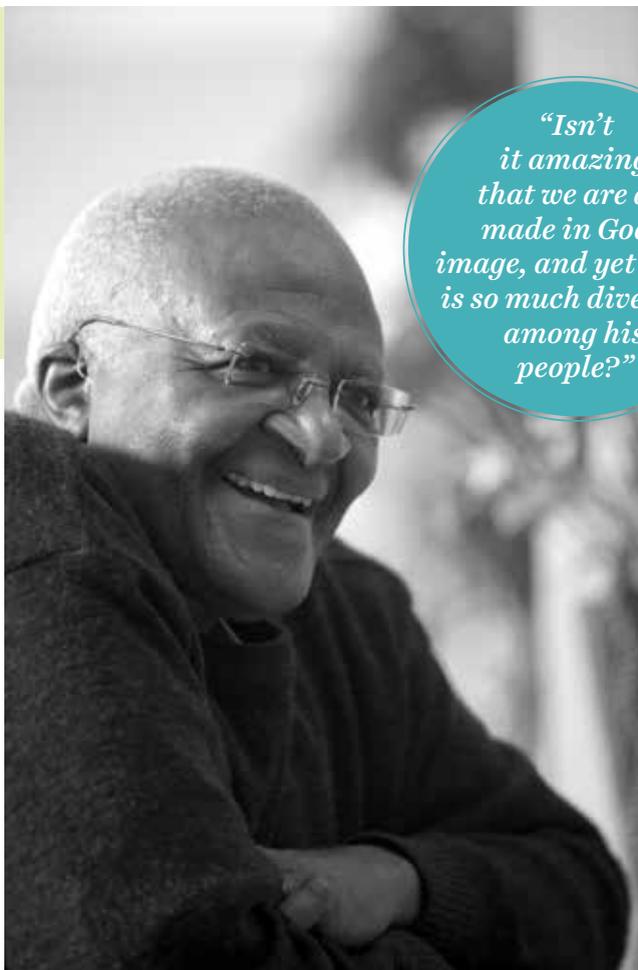
Ingerman’s teachings remind us that we are not powerless to effect change and that, in fact,



“We are not separate—rather, we are connected to one source and to a web of life.”

our thoughts and intentions are critically important.

“Before we can truly heal the planet, we must transform how we think, daydream, and speak, so that we plant seeds of love and light into our earth garden and learn to feed those seeds so that they grow into beautiful, healthy plants,” she says. “What we feed grows.” —IL



“Isn’t it amazing that we are all made in God’s image, and yet there is so much diversity among his people?”

MORAL COMPASS

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Although he officially retired in 1996, Archbishop Desmond Tutu has remained a voice of conscience for South Africa and the world, speaking out on issues including poverty, AIDS, women’s rights, Syria, and world peace.

This year, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate took a strong stand in support of gay rights, saying that he would refuse to enter a “homophobic heaven” and would rather go to hell.

While same-sex relationships are legal in South Africa, gays and lesbians still face discrimination

and brutal violence, and homosexuality remains illegal in 38 countries across Africa, according to Amnesty International.

Tutu said today’s struggle for gay rights is as important as the 1980s movement he helped lead to end apartheid, and he called on his fellow clerics to support the principles of human dignity and equality.

“I would not worship a God who is homophobic,” he said at the launch of a United Nations-backed gay rights campaign in Cape Town. “That is how strongly I feel about this.” —IL

4 QUESTIONS FOR ARCHBISHOP DESMOND TUTU

The Anglican leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner, whose book with daughter Mpho Tutu, *The Book of Forgiving*, is due out in April, reflects on God’s love for all humanity.

Do you have a favorite quotation, prayer, practice, or credo from which you draw strength or inspiration?

Two of my favorite biblical quotes, which underscore the same point, are Jeremiah 1:4, “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.” This is saying: I’m not an afterthought, not an accident. I exist only because God wanted me, wants me, and will always want me, forever and ever. Also Romans 5:8, “Whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” God did not wait until we deserved to be died for. God’s love is prevenient. I don’t have to earn it; it is a free gift, a grace. Both of the above apply to all of us. Fantastic.

As for practices, I try to receive Holy Communion daily, observe fasts regularly, and I try to practice the Jesus Prayer. The Dalai Lama meditates for five hours every morning! I can’t emulate him, but I try to have substantial prayer time. I would have collapsed long ago otherwise.

What current project are you most passionate about?

I am consumed to remind us that we are members of one family: the human family. God’s family. If we really believed this, we would not invest so scandalously in arms, when a small fraction of those budgets of death would enable all God’s children, our sisters and brothers, to have clean water to drink, enough food to eat.

In our part of the world, we believe in something we call *ubuntu*, which teaches that a person is a person through other persons. We can be human only together, for our humanity is bound up in one another.

What motivates you to do the work you do?

I have been privileged to be touched by the lives of so many remarkable people, starting with my mother, and I depend so much on the love and prayers of all the many wonderful people who uphold me in their prayers.

What do you consider your spiritual roots?

I was blessed by the remarkable example and mentoring of the Community of the Resurrection, the monks who trained me for the priesthood. They showed, by example rather than by precept, the crucial centrality of the spiritual in an authentic Christian existence. —KB



Read interviews with more of our spiritual heroes at spiritualityhealth.com/spiritual-heroes.