



# Thirty Million Angels

by Atara Schimmel

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My name is Atara Schimmel. Atara is a crown or a tiara in Hebrew. Since childhood I have envisioned my Atara as a wreath of fragrant flowers. In the Zohar, one of the Jewish mystical texts of the Kabbalah, Atara is the divine feminine.

I am a creative and expressive arts therapist, an artist and a healer. I believe wholeheartedly in the healing power inherent in creative expression and creative exploration.

My battle with chronic pelvic pain has opened within me an understanding of pain and suffering that few of us (thank goddess/god) will ever know. I have expressed these worlds and realms of suffering in a body of work that I call "The Faces of Pudendal Neuralgia" (see below for link). In their own devastating way the faces are beautiful.

How can the depiction of terror be beautiful? True beauty is perceived with the heart. It is our hearts that guide us to healing and to each other.

*When we shed and share our pain we make room for growth and for understanding. This very shedding and sharing in and of itself is beautiful.*

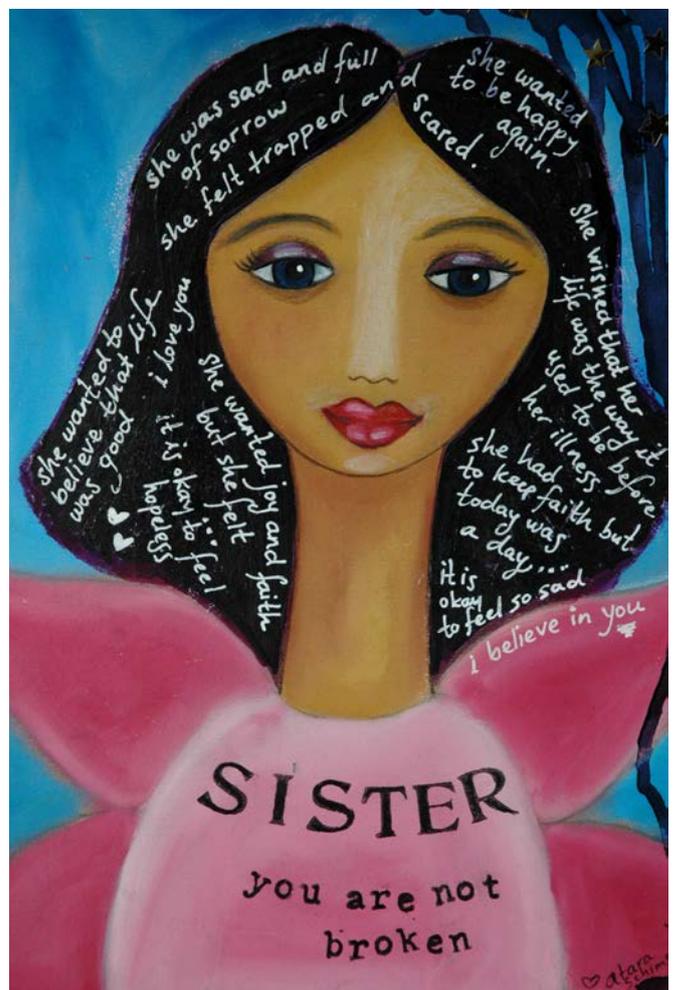
The healing that has come from being open and candid about my suffering has been life-saving.

By releasing the truth of my suffering and pain, I created a bridge between my experience and the 'normal' experience. I now can walk over this bridge freely. I can advocate for fellow pain warriors and I can reach the hearts of those who have felt desperately alone and voiceless in their suffering.

Through my art I am creating a life full of meaning and connection. This was something that I had feared I would never be able to do again. I am learning that the expansiveness of my creative spirit is not bound by time or disability. My creative spirit has remained unharmed by trauma and loss.

It was in the depths of my own despair and hopelessness that my vision and my true strengths crystallised. Today I see beauty and grace everywhere. Right now I am sitting on a rock by a pond. A beautiful frog is sitting in the water right in front of me. He has been sitting here with me for a while now. My tears are streaming in gratitude. His little presence beside me is precious to my heart.

For a long time I could not access beauty at all. Nerve pain can sever our ability to experience beauty. Today every communion with Spirit is a healing. I am healing every day and my heart is full of gratitude.



This winter I was blessed with discovering and being deeply inspired by the artist Kelly Rae Roberts. Her angel-ladies helped me lift my spirit beyond the fibromyalgia pain and fatigue that left me bed-ridden often. Her angel-ladies reminded me to choose hope, to keep faith and to honour my self with all of my limitations. I studied Kelly's artwork and I began to paint my own healing angels. I wanted to bring my community of pain warriors the hope that Kelly's angel-ladies brought me. With this desire along with my passion to raise awareness about the prevalence of chronic pelvic pain, **Project Angel** was conceived.



I painted 30 angels, each angel representing one million of the 30 million American women and the significant but undocumented number of men, who suffer from chronic pelvic/genital/sexual pain. While painting the angels I reached out to my facebook support group friends and invited them to send me a photograph of themselves. I thought that having real faces behind these conditions would inspire viewers to take a closer look.



Our mission is to raise awareness about conditions that cause pelvic and genital pain such as pudendal neuralgia, persistent genital arousal disorder, vulvodynia, interstitial cystitis, endometriosis, lichen planus, lichen sclerosus, vestibulitis and pelvic floor dysfunction. We want to raise awareness within the medical community and in the general public.

*Doctors including gynecologists are graduating from medical school without ever having heard the names of these conditions.*



Millions of women are being told that the excruciating pain that is crippling their lives is 'in their head.' We have to share our stories and we have to campaign to get chronic pelvic pain in all of its forms into the medical school curriculum. Early diagnosis and treatment can prevent a life-time of pain and suffering.

The angels have helped me and continue to help me raise awareness and connect with beautiful souls that are on their own journey towards healing and empowerment. Their soft

and compassionate presence is a gift and a blessing that I am grateful for. They have filled my life with beauty, healing and ever-evolving inspiration.

May you be surrounded and protected by compassionate and beautiful angels. May you access beauty with ease and with gratitude. The angels love you. They can see how beautiful you truly are. Thank you for joining me on my healing journey.

Atara Schimmel is a creative and expressive arts therapist, an artist, a healer and a passionate vegan.

She was born and raised in Boston, Mass. At the age of seventeen she moved to Israel and a year later she enlisted in the Israeli army and served for two years.

She traveled for three years through South America, Africa and India, exploring the arts and the healing practices that were native to the countries that she visited. In South America she volunteered in orphanages. In Africa she traveled with a group of African actors and musicians who performed educational plays in remote villages. In India she lived with and taught English to Tibetan monks and practiced Vipassana.

During and upon completing her studies of psychology and drama therapy she worked with men and women who suffered from severe mental illness and with children that came from abusive families. She started her own puppet theatre and began incorporating puppets into her therapy sessions.

Today, after six years of suffering and of being disabled by pelvic/genital nerve pain (due to an aerobic exercise injury), Atara is healing. She is an advocate for sufferers of chronic pelvic pain and is committed to raising awareness of this debilitating condition.

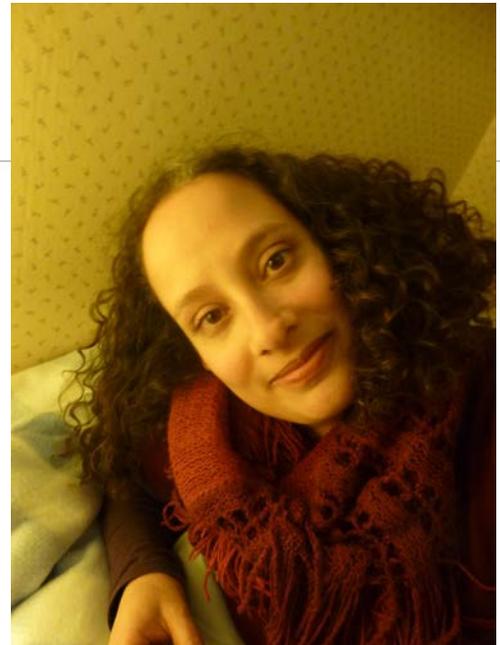
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On 20 July Atara won this year's City of Boston Americans with Disabilities Act poster contest with the painting titled "We Will Be Heard". Her piece was selected through an online polling process, according to the Mayor's Commission for Persons with Disabilities. and answers the question "What does the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) mean to you?"

A BIG congratulations from all of us to Atara.....xx