

ZULEIKHA - BIOGRAPHY

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Zuleikha is an international performer, wellness educator and teacher whose work inspires dynamic creativity and rejuvenation through movement. She is renowned for her “storydance” performances and is a recipient of the 2010 Images and Voices of Hope Media Award for outstanding work in the world promoting positive personal and social change. Zuleikha is the creator of Take a Minute for Your Life™, a simple, effective exercise program to increase vitality and resilience. She is the founder and executive director of The Storydancer Project, a non-profit organization that serves girls, women, children and families facing challenging life circumstances.

PERFORMANCE WORK: Zuleikha’s unique background encompasses years of intensive study with master teachers of healing and movement arts in both eastern and western traditions, including American avant-garde dance, Indian Kathak, classical music of Afghanistan, Balinese and Japanese dance, and therapeutic health exercise from the Taoist traditions of China. Edinburgh Guide describes Zuleikha as “a singular figure on the horizon of sacred theater and dance, a mistress of countless faces, who moves effortlessly through space.” Zuleikha uplifts audiences with her funny, soul-stirring solo performances. Her collaborative work with world musicians and poets has featured such luminaries as the late African drum master Baba Olatungi; jazz guitarist Bruce Dunlap; cellist David Darling; vocalist/instrumentalist Jai Uttal; world percussionists Glen Velez and Issa Maluf; world music composer/oud player Yuval Ron; composer/cellist Eugene Friesen; avant-garde composer/pianist Terry Riley, poet Robert Bly, and poet and renowned translator of Rumi, Coleman Barks.

WELLNESS EDUCATION WORK: Zuleikha is the 2005 recipient of the prestigious Humanitarian Award from Pediatric Nursing Journal for her global work with women and children. Working in Israel and Palestine, with civil war and tsunami orphans in Sri Lanka, with cancer patients, daughters of sex workers, and women under the burka in India, and with school children in the USA, Zuleikha created a set of simple, fun and effective exercises, called Take A Minute For Your Life™ (TAM). TAM has become the basis for her innovative palliative care training program, *Relaxation Therapeutic Health Exercises for Palliative Care*, developed in collaboration with CanSupport in Delhi, India. This curriculum is now being used in 25 nursing colleges, and with numerous palliative cancer patients, their families, and home care teams in Delhi. TAM Core Wellness Exercises are also integral to the Women’s Self-Care and Resiliency Program, a new Storydancer Project program for women in crisis in Santa Fe. Zuleikha’s international experience in wellness education for healthcare professionals includes:

Caregiver trainings at University of Virginia Hospital and Nursing School; Johns Hopkins School of Nursing and Seton Hospital-Austin; Aravind Eye Hospital, India; CanSupport Palliative Care Teams & CanSupport conferences for health care workers, India; the Hope Project Women’s Clinic & the Hope Project Mobile Health Unit, India.

Core Wellness Exercises and self-care for cancer patients at Santa Fe’s Christus/St.Vincent Cancer Center and at cancer centers and wellness clinics in India and Israel.

Performances for patients, families and staff at numerous venues, including: Johns Hopkins Children’s Center, Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, CanSupport, the Hope Project Women’s Clinic, Upaya Zen Center’s *Being with Dying* program, Global Health Summit Conference.

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION: In 2001, Zuleikha founded **The Storydancer Project (TSP)**, an international artistic health resource organization that serves girls, women, children and families facing challenging life circumstances by providing innovative *Core Wellness Exercise and Movement Arts* programs and trainings that foster and enliven greater health, self-esteem, resilience and leadership.

The Storydancer Project’s *Core Wellness Exercise and Movement Arts Model* incorporates exercise, movement, rhythm, music and story to develop a resilient and enlivened sense of self, strengthen participants’ connection to their bodies and establish a sound foundation for joy and health.

TSP offers direct service and trainings for teachers, social workers and health practitioners. Current and past partners include: New Light Center, Kolkata, India; Hope Project Charitable Trust, Delhi, India; CanSupport, Delhi; Pallikoodam School, Kerala, India; Sri Yasodara Orphanage, Sri Lanka; Shilpa Children’s Trust, Sri Lanka; Peacemaker Circle & Holy Land Trust, Israel (some of the programs in Tikvah & Bethlehem include: Schneider Children’s Hospital; Dar Al Kalima School, Children’s Defense Fund, St. Joseph’s School), Aravind Eye Hospital, Madurai, India; Esperanza Shelter for Battered Families, Santa Fe, NM; Solace Crisis Treatment Center, Santa Fe; Santa Fe Public Elementary Schools and northern Navajo Nation elementary schools, Utah.

HONORS & AWARDS: Zuleikha received the *2010 Images & Voices of Hope Media Award of Appreciation* for “infusing the art of dance with the gifts of healing, understanding and love of life,” through her outstanding work in the world promoting positive personal and social change. She is the recipient of the prestigious *Humanitarian Award from Pediatric Nursing Journal* for her global work with women and children suffering from the trauma of war, disease, poverty and loss of family. Zuleikha was given an honorary appointment to the *New Mexico Council on Physical Fitness and Health* for four years, during which time she created a “Come as You Are” movement program for New Mexico State employees.

TRAININGS & TEACHING: Zuleikha teaches all over the world, in such notable venues as: The Smithsonian Institution, Findhorn, California Institute for Integral Studies, Kripalu Center, John Hopkins Children’s Center, The International School, Fetzer Institute, Omega Institute, Pacifica Graduate Institute, Center for Education and Museum Studies, University of Nebraska and Midland Lutheran College, Lines Ballet, Leadership for a Caring World, Interdisciplinary Education Conference, World Council for Curriculum & Instruction, National Pediatrics Nurses Convention, Washington National Cathedral, The Global Health Summit Conference, Interfaith Council, Dare to Act Trauma Consortium, Zenith Institute and the International Herbal Symposium.