

## **Media Talk Points for Interviews with Carol Smaldino, Psychotherapist**

### ***The Human Climate: Facing the Divisions Within Us and Between Us***

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Book available on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) and through Ingram Content

1. Please talk briefly about your background, where you are located, and what lead you to the subject of this book, *The Human Climate: Facing the Divisions Within Us and Between Us*?

The things we avoid, sometimes lead us to the most important realizations. Growing up in Brooklyn in a tense family atmosphere, I went from being cranky to trying to fix things for my parents. Psychological understanding of conflicts seemed a way to feel above the fray. I wanted to make an impact also on social issues, how we treated poorer people, human rights and disarmament in particular.

As I moved into social work/therapy as a profession, I came face to face with some of my own darker emotions that were way less than kind. I had to find ways to be both honest and forgiving with myself, something that helped me experience more equality with clients.

Blogging for the Huffington Post, from 2009 thru 2017, I was inspired to connect the political and global arenas to emotions. I was moved to pursue these questions: Why did we have so much knowledge about how to deal with conflicts, about social injustice and inequality, about climate change, and still be at a standstill involving inequality, polarization and negativity? What was this? These questions and what I found became the focus of the inner journey and actual book, *The Human Climate*.

After more than 30 years of private practice in Port Washington, New York, I moved to Fort Collins, Colorado. Presently I live between Colorado and Lucca, Italy.

2. What is the The Human Climate? What is the essence of empathy that you talk about?

The human climate includes the culture, assumptions, rules, mood—the atmosphere of a given time and place. Without attending to the storms and divisions in the human climate, it is hard for us to think straight or cooperate much at all.

Empathy involves the capacity and willingness to put ourselves in the shoes of another, to understand deeply where that person is coming from. Our prejudices can sometimes melt as we listen carefully to other people's stories.

While it is not a substitute for setting limits, or solving complex problems, empathy humanizes all of us, so we don't have to feel compelled to demonize, or for that matter to minimize the worries of people we'd otherwise see as unimportant. Empathy towards the various parts within—including our own imperfections—is a necessary ingredient.

3. Christian Piccolini, author and co-founder of Life After Hate, writes "Carol Smaldino helps us recognize how a yearning to belong can tragically, when not recognized and fulfilled, turn into a desperate need that can even lead to extremism."

Please expand on this. What does he mean?

We have had the tendency in our own culture to place increasing value on independence and individuality. Since the need to belong is something crucial to our essence as people, when we skip over it to appear invulnerable, we become more susceptible. We become susceptible to being seduced to belonging in ways we might not even be aware of. In its extreme, we can become victims to predators in cults.

4. How can people use what you have to say?

\*They are kinder towards our own imperfections, then more curious about the imperfections of others.

\*They are less prone to insist blame and hate and fear, as they recognize the darker sides inside us.

\*They get in touch with the need to tell and be told the truth. As such, they dare to look at history, wanting to know and learn, rather than constructing odes to nostalgia and grandiosity.

\*They allow themselves to be confused, even ignorant about subjects. They can then seek out help and knowledge and offer their own creativity, aware that knowledge keeps evolving.

\*They see examples how developmental awareness can be translated into practical actions. As such they become more open to sensitivity to deeper motivations and reasons.

#### 5. What can the reader learn?

\*The reader can learn the importance of recognizing and integrating all kinds of emotions.

\*The reader can appreciate the messier parts of life and connection as valuable and as having dignity.

\*The reader can look at the positives of getting in touch with the negatives inside us, so he/she can afford to care, and not project the negative onto others.

#### 6. What have been some of the results of your work? Can you share an example?

In general people become more open and curious, both about what is inside and about others. As the work is mutually engaging, that happens to me as well.

I worked with a boy of 12, and his parents, in sessions all together. He had intense anxiety about their response. I didn't insist on creating a separate space since there was no inner separation on his part.

He cried at just about anything with any emotional tinge. At first I, like other therapists before, thought there was meaningful progress in those moments. But no—it was that he was afraid of anything that came with an emotion attached.

The parents had gone through a very stormy time, which had calmed down, but the aftermath included past experiences that Michael felt as real in the present.

The work was slow because it involved everyone becoming open to Michael's anger as well, and it was important not to overwhelm him with thoughts of his own aggression.

The work opened up all players to a deeper understanding, both of self and the other. The sessions had some play, some improvisation and role play, and timing was careful; if I went too far in exploring, I would ask and be willing to go back a bit, to create more safety.

In essence the energy of Michael and both parents became safer on the inside, and available to care about other things and people outside the sphere of self-absorbing preoccupation.

7. Please describe some practical uses of the book, who it is for.

\*It is for parents who want to know themselves and their kids better.

\*It is for parents who are frustrated by their own pressures to measure up and produce results.

\*It is for people who feel bullied because culture and relationships echo earlier wounds.

\*It is for people who are upset about the level of divisiveness in our culture and in the world, and crave alternative ways of thinking and acting about this.

\*It is for younger people who want to change things up but who have become pessimistic.

8. How has the work in *The Human Climate* changed your life? What did you learn?

I learned that in every chapter, every bit of information I gleaned about the outside world, I also found myself. This threw me, it was confusing, even upsetting, but humbling and freeing. The more I too know my darker sides, the less I have to feel superior, or inferior for that matter. It's all a work in progress, all a constant learning curve.

9. Why is emotional and shadow exploration in your work important?

There is so much demonizing, so much dividing up who is good and who is evil. And when I discovered Carl Jung's book *The Undiscovered Self*, it was all described so clearly that it seemed central. It is central to how we operate on global and institutional levels, in terms of cruelty to those we consider less than. And on intimate levels, it is pervasive in our tendencies to bicker and to blame and to keep on keeping it on. When our feelings

remain unknown, they become congested; they control us and keep us hostage.

10. What is the overriding thought you wish your readers to carry with them about the world today and their role in it?

Honesty and forgiveness inside can transform, for the better, how we judge our world and interact with it. One aspect in making things better, is to find ourselves in the problems of denial, prejudice, inequality, and nostalgia. Then we could grow into processing issues—talking out loud, listening, finding out more, becoming freer to choose our direction and decisions—rather than compulsively joining a groupthink or avoidance.

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