

**Marianne Schnall:** Hello?

**Jill Stein:** Hi, Marianne. Jill here.

**MS:** Hi. So wonderful to talk to you. Thank you so much for taking the time.

**JS:** Likewise. Thank you so much for including me.

**MS:** Very, very grateful for you sharing your perspective with us. As you know, we're hoping to capture the voices of this small, very esteemed group of women who can share their first-hand experience about running for president. And of course now you have recently announced you are running for president again. So to even start there: do you think the political climate has changed for women since you ran for president the first time, four years ago?

**JS:** Absolutely, in good ways and bad ways. I think we are still in a very difficult economic environment, though we're told we're in a recovery. For many people out there, but especially women and women's families, we're still in an emergency. And there's no relief in sight. Large numbers of women are in poverty. In fact, we're at historic highs, going on 15 percent of women who are actually in poverty now. Women are still paid 78 cents on the dollar for what their male counterparts are paid. For families that are headed by women, there are very high poverty rates, particularly for African-American women and Latino women.

So the numbers suggest that women are in difficult circumstances. While jobs have come back, 75 percent of the jobs that have been created since the economic meltdown in 2008 have been low wage, part time and temporary jobs. And these are especially difficult for women because their schedules are very erratic and hard to plan around.

So the difference between now and four years ago is that the hardships on women's families are unrelenting. And I think people grow weary of the struggle. At the same time I think women are becoming more assertive and more empowered. We see this, for example, in equal marriage- that women are standing up for their rights, regardless of gender identity. Young women, I think, are particularly empowered and assertive and ready to take on the challenge to their generation. And that includes standing up on their reproductive rights and their economic rights

and their right to education and to get out of debt and to have a climate future.

So I think we're seeing many disadvantaged groups- and I would include women among them- saying that this has gone on long enough and things have gotten bad enough. And we're not looking to the status quo to bail us out anymore because they haven't done the job for decades and things keep getting worse.

So I think increasingly people are taking their future into their own hands. And in that sense I think the political climate is very good for women, for African-Americans, for Latinos and for young people. People are breaking out of a dysfunctional relationship- and I would say it's a dysfunctional political relationship, an abusive political relationship- and saying that we need to stand up on our own terms and really forge our way forward for the kind of future and security that we deserve.

**MS:** There's obviously still much in equity in terms of women in politics. Would you consider it a measure of progress to now have three women currently running for president?

**JS:** I definitely do consider that an important sign. And over the last ten or fifteen years, certainly over the course of my political life, we've seen women running for office kind of wax and wane, and we haven't particularly made progress. But I think women's intention and perhaps confidence to begin standing up is moving forward. And maybe we are seeing that in three women running in the Democratic, Republican and Green Party, [which is] the major, non-corporate, national party.

It's a really good sign that women are represented. In my last race I actually had the distinction of winning the most votes of any female presidential candidate who actually ran in the general election.

I think the political system has not been particularly friendly to women, like it hasn't been friendly to disadvantaged groups. That is, we've had a political system very much domineered by money, by big money. And in many ways that money is bigger than ever. The kinds of special interests that are asserting their weight here, lobbyists and [those acting] through campaign contributions, we know where this comes from—through powerful, corporate entities.

And because women tend to have more of a public interest agenda, I think it's harder to buy women off. It's harder to get women off of our responsibility and our vision, which is about communities and families. It's harder to buy us off. And the economic forces that dominate American elections are less interested in what women bring to the fore.

So I think the extremes that moneyed politics has come to is really encouraging new avenues of political expression and political exploration that my campaign really represents. And I think we're at a historic moment. And it will be very exciting to see where this goes.

**MS:** I agree with that. For you, on a personal level, what event in your life first sparked you, personally, to get involved in politics?

**JS:** I was dragged, kicking and screaming, very late in the game here. And I find this is true, actually, of people in the Green Party in general, that we are not, sort of, cut from the mold of politicians who are extremely gregarious, who love to get into the back rooms and be a part of wheeling and dealing. I think women, in general, don't tend to that. And that's particularly true in the Green Party. It was true for me.

I got into this really as a mother and a medical doctor at age 50, having become convinced that nothing else worked, and as a mother, in medicine. And I've been in the clinical practice of medicine for decades. Now I say I practice political medicine, a new specialty because it's the mother of all illnesses. And we have to fix this one if we're going to get to the things that are literally killing us.

And that speaks to what got me involved as a mother and medical doctor, seeing this epidemic of public health problems, particularly in kids, from asthma to cancer to learning disabilities and then obesity and diabetes. I

said to myself, this isn't in our genes because our genes don't change that quickly. These diseases did not exist when my generation was growing up. And the public health data will verify that there are things going on around us that are driving these diseases. And I then began working with a variety of non-profits, including Physicians for Social Responsibility and others.

And the long and the short was, it was clear that there were ways to fix this, like shutting down our coal plants and opening up renewable energy facilities, and shutting down our polluting incinerators and creating

recycling programs. And these kinds of solutions not only solved the environmental issues, they solved the health issues and they created jobs and were really good for the economy. And, you know, you go into the business of advocacy and you very quickly learn that what makes for an effective advocate is someone who's got lobbying and campaign contributions in their pocket. This is the real driver in politics.

What sealed the deal for me was then becoming part of a big coalition in my home state of Massachusetts, where we passed campaign finance reform and got money out of politics through a voter referendum. And then the Democratic Party turned around and repealed it in the legislature, which was dominated by Democrats 85 percent. They repealed it so as to discourage competition from everyday people and to continue the stranglehold of big money on the political process.

And at that point I basically realized that I needed to go outside of the political establishment in order to truly move forward and create the deep kind of system reform that we need. So in a nutshell, that was where I got recruited in the year 2001, in advance of the 2002 election. I was

recruited for governor, and I must say I was rather tricked into it, thinking that I could continue with my work as a health advocate and an environmental advocate. And, of course, it turned out to be much different.

But I discovered that there is a wonderful, public conversation going on in the realm of electoral politics. And whether you are going through a traditional route—actually, I have no idea what that would be like because I've never done it. But I'll say, going through a non-traditional route where money doesn't decide who you talk to, it's a very exciting and invigorating, encouraging route that really gave me the sense that there is enormous agreement out there based on everyday American values, human rights values, the values of justice, the values of families and communities. There is a really shared vision here and a shared discontent about what's being delivered through the traditional, political system. And it's a vision that I think is very resonant with women and really lifts up our needs and our ability to lead the way forward.

**MS:** How would you describe your own personal leadership style?

**JS:** I would say that I am a medical doctor and a mother. And I bring those things to politics. And I describe the politics that I do now as political medicine because I really do believe that we need to heal our

political process in order to heal our communities. So I am, I guess, best described as a practitioner of political medicine that is really looking to lift up the voices and the visions of everyday people who are fundamentally the driver of our political process.

And I really look to help people discover their ability to engage at the level of the community and in the political process, so that we as women, we as ordinary citizens of our country and of the planet, can bring a basic humanity into the process that it seems to have lost.

**MS:** Are there unique qualities that women bring to politics or positions of leadership?

**JS:** Certainly. I think women are less, shall we say, absorbed with the ego side and the power and the control, which tends to be the dominant mode of politicians. And I think women bring essential qualities of respect, dignity, a sense of community and a sense of shared values. And I think it's a wonderful antidote to the excesses of the current, male-dominated, money-dominated, power hungry, political system.

**MS:** Are there unique challenges that women candidates face when they run?

**JS:** Certainly. And my first race, the first article that the *Boston Globe* ran about me, they sent a reporter to follow me to the hairdressers. Because this was like the main thing- how does a woman candidate do her hair, and how does she take care of it. There's always that element that, you know, it is a fight to be taken seriously because they will use all the tools in the book to circle the wagons and keep everyday people out. And I say everyday people because women are generally not being funded by the big money and the deepest pockets.

There are, of course, exceptions to that as we well know. But women as a whole tend to be running closer to community and closer to everyday people. So they do try to keep us out. But I think their days are counted.

**MS:** And, you know, politics can seem right now like a very dysfunctional system from the outside. What words of motivation or encouragement would you offer about pursuing a career in public service?

**JS:** What I would say is that our lives depend on it. It's not really a choice that we engage the political process in our democracy because it is seriously on the wrong track in a way that threatens not only our

economy. Our jobs are being sent overseas by NAFTA, now by the Trans Pacific Partnership, which both parties are colluding on. [It's] a secret deal, that is essentially NAFTA on steroids, under which we have lost millions of jobs. We cannot afford to sit on the back bench.

Likewise the banks are bigger than ever. And there are solutions. It is not rocket science to bring back the Glass-Steagall Act and separate them. Furthermore, we can break up the big banks and establish public banks. You know, healthcare costs continue to spiral out of control. Forty million students and graduates, millennials basically, are in debt with little prospect to repay that debt because 75 percent of jobs being created now are low wage, part time, temporary jobs. I don't think we have the option to not engage. And I think people can engage at various levels and make a world of difference. And I think many people engage at the level of fighting on an issue, like fighting for affordable healthcare or fighting for housing. And that's very important.

But if we only fight on the issues, and we only fight in our own communities, we will continue to be divided and conquered. But the minute we get together on a broader agenda for people, planet, and peace and they come together so that we're working not only for women to have not only equal wages but living wage. There are so many things that are available to us that address the desperation of the moment. Students who are in debt—by the way, we absolved banks of their debt—we could do the same for students. We could forgive that debt. It would be a much smaller burden that what we have given away to bail out the banks. And then we would be liberating an entire generation to actually be the economic engine that we need them to be. We could have free, public higher education. We know that it pays for itself from the GI Bill where every dollar that Congress spent was repaid seven times over by the public benefits and the revenues accruing from that educated generation that came back from the Second World War.

So there are solutions here but they are not going to come from, you know, politics as usual. We everyday people are told we are powerless and we don't count. But when you add up the numbers, we have more than enough to actually win the day. So, the bottom line, what I would say to everyday people here and women in particular, is that we need to reject their propaganda of powerlessness. In the words of Alice Walker, the wonderful poet and novelist, the biggest way people give up power is by not knowing we have it to start with. And that particularly applies to women because we are told from the get-go that we don't have the power and we should not have confidence, and as a result we don't.

But actually, when we get down to work we discover we do have the power and we cannot only do it but we can do it every bit as good and in a way that is more engaging to everyday people because we're not coming on with sort of the same airs of self-importance. We're approaching this as members of the community, as equals, as participants looking to empower the rest of our community.

So I would say for women who are considering this, I'd say go for it. And don't be held back by the misinformation and the disinformation that's very afraid that we are going to find our power and remake the world in a way that works for all of us.

**MS:** And did you have any important mentors or supporters that helped guide you or shaped your outlook?

**JS:** Well, you know, I can't say I had personal mentors. I sort of backed in, almost by accident into this world, that is, the world of political action. I considered myself really an advocate for our health and for a safe environment. In that world there are certainly outstanding women: Vandana Shiva, for example, who is one of the major proponents of food security internationally; Lois Gibbs who was the young mother, actually, in Love Canal who began to look around and saw that there were stillbirths and severely impaired babies that were being born, severely deformed and [with] genetic conditions. There was a terrible epidemic in her community.

She began raising questions. There was this foul-smelling water coming up from underground. And they basically discovered that they were sitting on a toxic waste site. And she led the movement, led by housewives. This was in the—I think it was like the early seventies—they led the movement that actually got them declared a toxic waste site, where these families and young children were running around and got them all moved out of Love Canal.

And that was an incredibly groundbreaking event for people to realize that what we do to environment comes back and actually injures our health, and that we as everyday people can stand up. We have the courage; we have the leadership to change the system and to challenge it.

I would say those are the kind of people who really inspired me, who discovered their power to act on behalf of their community in a principled way that winds up totally transforming our future.

**MS:** And I know this time around you formed an exploratory committee. Did the committee help identify any agenda issues? Is that something that is consciously, sort of, factored in?

**JS:** Absolutely. Yes. And now we, in fact, transitioned from an exploratory to a full-fledged campaign. And women's issues are very much at the forefront of our agenda and our vision. And it's very exciting because women, especially younger women now, have a real sense, I think, of destiny, because they are facing climate catastrophe if we don't fundamentally change our way forward. And because young women are facing a very tough economy and are carrying around student debt and have fought their way towards equal marriage, which is a very important gender issue for many people—I think there is a new sense of power out there among women, and especially among young women.

And that's very much carried by our campaign. And I very much appreciate being able to help empower these young women and see in them the pathway that I forged myself, feeling like we were in really difficult circumstances that were not being addressed by the status quo. And we had to undertake major system change. And I think that vision of needing an overhaul in our political process—it resonates. It has enormous resonance with young women in particular.

**MS:** Are conditions more favorable for women candidates than they were when you first ran in 2012?

**JS:** I do think so largely because women are demanding it. And young women, in particular, are not going to take a back seat here and are not going to be told that our issues are less important. And especially with women candidates running in the other parties, we kind of have critical mass. I think it would be really exciting to have a forum or a debate that involved the women candidates from across the several parties.

I think it would be so exciting and so empowering to women to see our diverse perspectives, our diverse background. And all of the women that are running right now have very different backgrounds. And everybody has, I think, had a real, remarkable pathway. And it would be very wonderful, I think, to have an exchange in the way that women can exchange with particular civility and in an exemplary way.

**MS:** Is America ready to elect a female president and what do you think it would mean for women politics in our culture?

**JS:** America is long past ready. You know, women have been leading our families and leading our communities since time began. And we've sort of had a setback in recent western civilization. But I think we are digging our way out. And I think women are at the forefront of so many efforts now, saving our schools, saving public education. Women have always been the teachers at the head of the class and the principals.

You know, healthcare is now—we are at more than parity. When I was in medical school we were just barely making half the class. And it was such a remarkable achievement. And we are sort of there in our numbers but we are not there yet in our political power. So, in the words of Frederick Douglas, "Power concedes nothing without a demand." It never has and it never will. I think women are taking a lesson from that now and standing up. We fought these battles as part of, you know, women's suffrage. And we haven't been able to really make further progress for the last several decades.

We are long overdue for women's leadership. I think America is long past ready. And we'll see if we can do some catching up in the year and a half to come.

**MS:** Sounds great. Last question, since I'm speaking to some of the past presidential candidates and just getting their experience and their memories. Is there a particular moment of your 2012 campaign that is most vivid for you?

**JS:** So I'd have to say one moment that was particularly exciting for me was speaking to a group of community college students in California where suddenly the students seemed to recognize that this was their agenda. It was both the enthusiasm of the event, but then it was their engaging and deciding that this was their place in politics. This was their place to sort of be at the cutting edge, at the real leading edge of a new economy, a new society, a clean energy system, a political system that rejects the power of big money.

There was just this moment of realization that then began to kick off a whole series of college events and appearances and engagement that felt like that ball got rolling and it hasn't stopped since. So that was especially exciting.

There was another moment where actually I participated in civil disobedience with two families who were being evicted unjustly from their homes by Fannie Mae. Actually, this was in Philadelphia. And the bank—

well, Fannie Mae actually, had refused to negotiate with the families. And I sat in with them to protest their eviction. And we were basically arrested together. We were then discharged the next day. We went to trial together and we were exonerated. The charges were dropped. But it felt like a real coming together across the barriers of black and white, and poor and not poor, and across cultural barriers.

There was a community effort that was incredibly exciting. And it felt like that was a kind of bonding that was going to be there for the long haul. And, in fact, that has continued. That was a moment that was especially exhilarating.

And there was one other where we were excluded from the televised debates by the Commission on Presidential Debates. The Leagues of Women Voters used to run the debates. And when they ran it they had a very even handed policy. Doesn't it figure, this is how women would do it. Their criteria was that if you did the work to be on the ballot for the majority of voters, then voters deserved to know about you and you should be in the debate.

But the League of Women Voters was kicked out by the Democratic and Republican Parties that took over the debates and the Commission of Presidential Debates. So they only allow Democrats and Republicans. We are actually taking them to court now. We have a court case, which has just been filed. So we'll see how this plays out.

But in lieu of those debates there were various debates of the independent candidates that were organized. And that started out as five various, independent parties that were across the political spectrum, right to left. That was then narrowed down after, I think, one or possibly two debates it was narrowed down. And it was very exciting to be in the twosome to which it was narrowed down, with was the Libertarian candidate and myself. And then that was narrowed down. This was all based on Internet polling.

And when the final polling was done after the two-person debate that I was voted as winning the debate. Which to me was so exhilarating to see that our vision, as a woman candidate, and I was the only woman in this group- even when it was five people I was the only woman, and when it was two I was the only woman-that my vision as a woman, as a mother...I felt like my vision, articulating the Green vision, which is very much a women's vision, it had enormous resonance that it won the day, even among this multi-party, broad spectrum of voters.

**MS:** And you're in the unique position of being a past presidential candidate who is currently running.

**JS:** And also, having sort of the unique perspective of actually running through the full, general election, because most women get weeded out when you hit the primary. There aren't very many women who had enough institutional support to run in the general election. And it's very exciting to do that, I must say. And it feels like a real privilege to have been able to run all the way through.

**MS:** Absolutely. And you did have the distinction of getting the most votes. And that's very impressive. And as I said, I mean, I feel like this is such an opportunity, having three women running and just being able to talk about, not just that but all the intersecting issues that that feeds into, as a lens into what's happening. I think there are a lot of changing paradigms in our culture, and it is definitely an exciting time to talk to people like you, for sure. And I have a lot of respect for what you are doing.

**JS:** Well, thank you so much. And I have a lot of respect for you incredible insight and timeliness to have been right on this before it was breaking. You definitely have got your finger on the pulse here.

**MS:** Well, thank you so much. This has been such an informative and inspiring interview. And thank you for your leadership, thank you for your vision, and thank you for sharing your really important perspective with me today. It's a very exciting time, and you symbolize a lot of that hope. So really appreciate it. You are an inspiring figure to many people. And, you know, I'm very, very grateful for your courage and all the great work that you're doing.

**JS:** Thank you. And right back at you, really appreciate your including me and this wonderful project. And I look forward to following it as it continues to evolve. All the best to you.

**MS:** Thank you so much. Okay, sending you love.

**JS:** Wonderful talking to you.

**MS:** Nice talking to you, too. Okay. Bye. Bye.

**JS:** Bye. Bye.  
END OF INTERVIEW