

Oprah for president? She's already shared the power of validation

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Oprah Winfrey for president?

That possibility has caused a stir since last week's Golden Globe awards, but as viewers of Winfrey's show for spiritual seekers — "Super Soul Sunday" on her OWN network — know, Oprah will run *only* if she sets her intention to do so.

"Intention" is one of Oprah's top words.

"The No. 1 principle that rules my life is intention," Oprah writes in her new book, "The Wisdom of Sundays: Life-Changing Insights from Super Soul Conversations."

"Thought by thought, choice by choice, we are cocreating our lives based on the energy of our intention."

Years ago, she writes, she stopped people-pleasing and started asking herself "What is my truest intention?" before making major decisions.

Another of her most-used words: "validation."

Validation is the most important thing we can give to each other, Oprah says, and it's free.

"I've talked to nearly 30,000 people on this show, and all 30,000 had one thing in common: They all wanted validation," Oprah has said. "I would tell you that every single person you will ever meet shares that common desire."

Offering validation is the simple act, Oprah says, of letting people know: "I see you. I hear you. And what you say matters."

Oprah accepted the Cecil B. DeMille Award for lifetime achievement at the Golden Globes, and her moving speech roused the audience, prompting the "will she run for president?" talk.

She was speaking to a group of Hollywood's most powerful people. Everybody sees and hears Reese Witherspoon and Nicole Kidman.

Why, then, are we still talking about Oprah's speech?

Because Oprah said something unusual, something unexpected, something eye-opening.

Oprah's speech gave validation to the women we are *not* used to seeing or hearing.

"What I know for sure is that speaking your truth is the most powerful tool we all have," Oprah said. "And I'm especially proud and inspired by all the women who have felt strong enough and empowered enough to speak up and share their personal stories. Each of us in this room are celebrated because of the stories that we tell, and this year we became the story.

"But it's not just a story affecting the entertainment industry. It's one that transcends any culture, geography, race, religion, politics, or workplace. So I want tonight to express gratitude to all the women who have endured years of abuse and assault because they, like my mother, had children to feed and bills to pay and dreams to pursue. They're the women whose names we'll never know. They are domestic workers and farm workers. They are working in factories and they work in restaurants and they're in academia, engineering, medicine, and science. They're part of the world of tech and politics and business. They're our athletes in the Olympics and they're our soldiers in the military."

In saluting her mother and others like her, Oprah saw and heard all women who have been abused but could not or did not fight back — because they were trying to simply *survive*. She lifted their guilt. She included them in the #MeToo.

The more mature we are, the more we know that options mean freedom — and so many women feel they don't have any options. The more mature we are, the more we learn empathy — and to consider the context of a person's whole life before we judge them.

Oprah talked of Recy Taylor, a young mother who was raped and left blindfolded on the side of a road by six armed white men. This was Alabama, in 1944, and the men threatened to kill her, but a young NAACP worker named Rosa Parks became the lead investigator on Taylor's case and helped her seek justice. But there was no justice to be had for Taylor in the Jim Crow south, so her rapists were never charged. However, what was significant was that Taylor didn't remain silent as so many others had before her.

Parks later became famous because she refused to move to the back of the bus.

By matching her actions to her beliefs, Rosa Parks validated herself, says therapist Connie Ingram, who practices in Royal Palm Beach.

Parks had the bravery to sit in the front of the bus — but getting that bravery can be a lifetime endeavor for many of us.

“People often act on what they believe, not on what they know,” Ingram says. “For example, people may ‘know’ that drinking and driving can kill ... but when they drink and drive, the action shows that they don’t ‘believe’ it will kill them.

“Much of my work as a psychotherapist is helping people make their words and actions congruent ... Then they have a better chance of others seeing, hearing and validating them because of their consistency. This comes by the person believing in his or her own worth — and not have it depend on what others think.”

Validation is more than just being seen and heard, she says.

“What we all want is to be ‘known,’” Ingram says. “That includes seeing, hearing and validating our feelings and thoughts ... but more so, it’s knowing the heart and mind from which those opinions come.”

What’s in Oprah’s heart and mind?

Time will tell what her political intention is. But she’s already had one victory: The validation of the voiceless.