



Marianne Williamson

Marianne Deborah Williamson (born July 8, 1952) is an American author and 2024 presidential candidate. Williamson attended Pomona College in California where she studied theatre and philosophy before dropping out in 1973. After going through experiences of depression, alcohol and drug abuse, and a nervous breakdown she was led to an interest in spirituality, metaphysics, and meditation. She then started her professional career as "Spiritual Leader" for the Church of Today, a Unity Church in Warren, Michigan. She became known as an author writing self-help books such as *A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of A Course in Miracles* in 1992, which became a New York Times Best Seller. She was launched into prominence by Oprah Winfrey, where she was a frequent guest on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and became known as Oprah's "spiritual advisor."^[1]

Williamson ran unsuccessfully as an independent for California's 33rd congressional district in the United States House of Representatives in 2014.^[2] She announced her first presidential candidacy in 2019 before suspending her campaign and endorsing Senator Bernie Sanders soon after in 2020.^{[3][4]} She was the first to announce her 2024 presidential campaign on March 4, 2023^[5] as a candidate for the Democratic Party, followed by Robert F. Kennedy Jr who announced April 19, 2023^[6] seeking to challenge sitting President Joe Biden, who announced April 25, 2023.^[7] She describes herself as a progressive Democrat with a platform which seeks to increase the federal minimum wage, pass reparations for racial injustice, address climate change, tackle student loan debt and create a U.S. Department of Peace.^[8]

Williams has been actively involved with charity work founding such organizations as Center for Living in 1987, Project Angel Food in 1989, and the Peace Alliance in 1998. She currently sits on the board for RESULTS, a nonprofit group which is dedicated to finding longterm solutions to poverty.

Early life and education

Marianne Williamson



Williamson in August 2019

Born	Marianne Deborah Williamson July 8, 1952 <u>Houston, Texas, U.S.</u>
Occupations	author · teacher · politician · activist
Political party	<u>Independent</u> (Before 2019) <u>Democratic</u> (2019–present)
Children	1

Signature

Williamson was born in Houston, Texas in 1952. She was the youngest of the three children of Samuel "Sam" Williamson, a World War II veteran and immigration lawyer, and Sophie Ann Kaplan, a homemaker and community volunteer.^{[9][10]}

Williamson was raised in an upper middle class family that practiced Conservative Judaism.^{[9][11]} Her family attended Congregation Beth Yeshurun.^[12] She learned about world religions and social justice at home and became interested in public advocacy when she saw her rabbi speak against the Vietnam War.^[12]

In 1965, after she came home from school in the seventh grade, she recounted to her parents that her teacher supported the Vietnam War, her father reacted by taking them to Vietnam to help show and explain to Marianne why he thought that the "war was wrong".^[13] She has said that through travel she "had an experience, at a young age, that people are the same everywhere."^[14]

Williamson attended Houston ISD's Bellaire High School.^[15] After graduating, she spent two years studying theater and philosophy at Pomona College in Claremont, California, where she was a roommate of eventual film producer Lynda Obst.^[10] In 1973, Williamson dropped out of college and lived "a nomadic existence" during what she calls "her wasted decade."^{[10][12][16]}

She moved to New Mexico, where she took classes at the University of New Mexico and lived in a geodesic dome with her boyfriend.^{[16][14]} The couple broke up a year later. Marianne then moved to Austin, Texas, where she took classes at the University of Texas.^[14]

After leaving Texas, she went to New York City, intending to pursue a career as a cabaret singer but got distracted by "bad boys and good dope."^{[10][17]} *Vanity Fair* wrote that Williamson "spent her twenties in a growing state of existential despair."^[18] In New York, Williamson suffered from deep depression following the end of a relationship.^[9] She has said that this experience gave rise to a desire to spend the rest of her life helping people.^[18]

A Course in Miracles

Although initially uninterested due to her religion, Williamson developed an interest in Helen Schucman's book *A Course in Miracles* in 1976.^{[12][19][20]} She also explored spirituality, metaphysics, and meditation as she began reading the *Course* "passionately."^[17] She also reconciled it with her Jewishness; in her view, "A conversion to Christ is not a conversion to Christianity. It is a conversion to a conviction of the heart."^[18]

Williamson said the book was her "path out of hell," as she had been "mired in a series of unhappy love affairs, alcohol and drug abuse, a nervous breakdown, and endless sessions with therapists."^{[21][22][23]}

The *Course* has often been described as a religion or pseudoreligion.^{[24][25]} Williamson disagrees, describing it as a "spiritual psychotherapy" instead of a religion.^[26]

Career

Teaching

In 1979, Williamson returned to Houston, where she ran a metaphysical bookstore coffee shop, sang Gershwin standards in a nightclub, got married and divorced "almost immediately," and underwent a "spiritual surrender."^{[10][17][27][16]}

In 1983, Williamson had what she has called a "flash" to close the coffeeshop and move to Los Angeles.^[17] She got an apartment in Hollywood, where her roommate was 17-year-old Laura Dern, who noted that Williamson "held prayer groups in our living room."^[20]

Williamson's teachings stemmed from an inspirational message: "Divine love is the core and essence of every human mind."^[28] She saw this message as a remedy to misinterpretations of the Bible that, through an emphasis on sin and guilt, could lead to harm (e.g. slavery, depression, self-loathing).^{[28][18]}

As word spread about "the young woman talking about a God who loves you, no matter what," she had to rent church space to accommodate the demand to hear her speak.^{[18][17]} Four years later, she began lecturing monthly in New York. Eventually, she was invited to speak throughout the U.S. and Europe. Williamson did not charge for her lectures but had a "suggested donation" of \$7 and a policy of not turning people away for lack of money.

Williamson's style has been described as a "trendy amalgam of Christianity, Buddhism, pop psychology and 12-step recovery wisdom."^{[10][17]}

Unity Church Pastor

Williamson became the "spiritual leader" for the Church of Today, a Unity Church in Warren, Michigan, where she had 2,300 congregants and 50,000 television viewers.^[19] Her position also included administrative leadership; her policies included booking Aerosmith's Steven Tyler, expanding the bookstore, increasing the congregation's racial and sexual orientation diversity. As a result, the Church grew rapidly.^{[28][17][29][30][31]}

She resigned from the Church Renaissance Unity Interfaith Spiritual Fellowship in 2003. For a time, she also lectured at Methodist, Episcopal and Unitarian churches.^[32]

Author

Williamson has written 13 books. Seven have been on the *New York Times* bestseller list, with four reaching number one.^[33]^{[34][35][36][37]} More than three million copies have been sold.^[38] Her most notable work is *A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of A Course in Miracles* (1992).

On *The New York Times* bestseller list for 39 weeks in the "Advice, How To and Miscellaneous" category,^[39] the book teaches that practicing love every day will bring more peace and fulfillment to one's life. Williamson wrote her most famous quote in this book, which is often misattributed to Nelson Mandela:^{[40][41]}



Williamson, 2019

37:56

Oprah's SuperSoul
Conversations Podcast:
Marianne Williamson - "A
Return to Love"

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we're liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

Oprah Winfrey said of the book, "I have never been more moved by a book than I am by this one."^[42] Winfrey bought 1,000 copies and encouraged her audience to purchase it, telling them that after reading it, she experienced 157 miracles.^[43] Williamson was a frequent guest on The Oprah Winfrey Show as well, and became known as Oprah's "spiritual advisor."^[1]

Political campaigns

2014 U.S. House of Representatives campaign

In 2014, Williamson ran as an Independent for California's 33rd congressional district in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Prominent elected and public officials endorsed her campaign, including Ben Cohen; former governors Jennifer Granholm and Jesse Ventura; former representatives Dennis Kucinich and Alan Grayson; and Van Jones.^{[44][45]} Alanis Morissette wrote and performed Williamson's campaign song, "Today."^[46]

Williamson campaigned on progressive issues such as campaign finance reform, women's reproductive rights and LGBTQ equality.^{[47][48][49]} She raised \$2.4 million, of which she personally contributed 25 percent.^{[44][50]}

Williamson finished fourth out of 18 candidates, with 14,335 votes or 13.2 percent of the vote. Republican Elan Carr finished first in the primary with 21.6 percent of the vote but went on to lose the general election to the Democrat Ted Lieu.^[51]

2020 presidential campaign

On November 15, 2018, Williamson announced the formation of a presidential exploratory committee.^[52]

On January 28, 2019, Williamson officially launched her presidential campaign in front of 2,000 people in Los Angeles. She appointed Maurice Daniel – who served alongside Donna Brazile in

MARIANNE FOR CONGRESS
US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES | CALIFORNIA DISTRICT 33

Williamson's 2014 congressional campaign logo



Williamson campaigning alongside Alanis Morissette

Dick Gephardt's campaign for the Democratic nomination in 1988 – as her national campaign manager.

Her campaign committee, "Marianne Williamson for President," officially filed on February 4.^{[53][54]}

On February 16, Williamson's campaign announced the appointment of former Congressman Paul Hodes, who represented New Hampshire's 2nd congressional district from 2007 to 2011, as New Hampshire state director and senior campaign advisor.^[55]

As of May 1, Williamson had a campaign staff of 20 and, a week later, announced she had received enough contributions from unique donors to enter the official primary debates. Her campaign had raised \$1.5 million in the first quarter of 2019, during which it received donations from 46,663 unique individuals.^{[50][56][57]} Williamson subsequently met the polling criteria, with three unique polls at 1 percent from qualifying pollsters, on May 23.^[58]

In June, Williamson confirmed she moved to Des Moines, Iowa, in advance of the 2020 caucuses.^[59] And in response to the Iowa Democratic Party's proposed creation of "virtual caucuses" in the 2020 race, Williamson's campaign announced it would appoint 99 "Virtual Iowa Caucus Captains" (each assigned to a single county) to turn out supporters in both the virtual and in-person caucuses.^[60]

Later that month, Williamson participated in the first primary debate. The *LA Times* wrote that Democratic voters were "confused" and "transfixed" by Williamson, who declared that her first act as president would be to call New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and say, "Girlfriend, you are so on," a reference to Ardern's emphasis on building a country that treats its children well.^{[61][62][63]}

On July 30, Williamson participated in the second primary debate. She was the most Googled candidate in 49 of 50 states and received the fourth-most attention on Twitter.^[64] The spike in searches was prompted by her reference to the Flint water crisis and her assertion that President Trump was harnessing a "dark psychic force of the collectivized hatred," which she later described as racism, bigotry, antisemitism, homophobia, Islamophobia, and xenophobia propelled by social media.^[65]

On the day of the third DNC debate, for which she did not qualify, Williamson did an interview with Eric Bolling and expressed further frustration with the media when she thought she was not being recorded. Among her unscripted comments was "what does it say that Fox News is nicer to me than the lefties are?"^[66]

On January 10, 2020, Williamson announced the end of her campaign and pledged to support the Democratic nominee.^[67]

Many pundits treated Williamson's brief campaign as comic relief.^[68] However, some came to acknowledge that her message was ultimately persuasive and influential. After the July 30, 2019, Democratic debate, *New York Times* columnist Jamelle Bouie wrote, "It feels insane to say this, but Williamson out-debated virtually everyone else on the stage. She gave a compelling answer on



Marianne 2020

reparations and returned again and again to the most important issue for Democratic voters, beating Trump."^[69]

2024 presidential campaign

Williamson began "working on putting a machine together" to run for president in 2024, visiting South Carolina and New Hampshire in early 2023.^[70] She said in a January 25 interview that she could run against Joe Biden in a presidential primary.^[71] On February 23, 2023, she confirmed that she would launch a run for president in the future.^[5] She started her 2024 campaign on March 4, 2023.^[72]



Marianne 2024

Political positions

Domestic issues

Disabled community

She supports the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act along with initiatives to guarantee voting rights and accessible polling to those with disabilities.^[73] She pledged to appoint disabled citizens to her cabinet.^[73] She also supported the Disability Integration Act requiring healthcare insurers to cover home healthcare. She pledged to try to get the Act passed in her first 100 days in office.^[73]

Williamson supports transition programs that move institutionalized people with disabilities to supported independent living. She also supports reforming Social Security Insurance to ensure that people with disabilities are not excluded from entitlement programs if they earn more than \$1,220 a month.^[73] In addition, she supports including disability policy, including disabled human rights, in U.S. trade deals.

Williamson supports sex education in the disabled community, including sexual abuse reporting initiatives, and sensitivity training for police in regard to interacting with those with disabilities and mental illnesses.^[73]

Education and families

Williamson supports free tuition at public colleges, community colleges, and trade schools. She also supports a reduction in college loan debt and total forgiveness of college loan debt "in some cases."^[74] She has expressed her support for treating student loans "like other debt," such that debtors could refinance at lower interest rates and those who declare bankruptcy could have their debt forgiven.^[74]

Williamson supports paid leave (family, medical, pregnancy, and vacation), pay equity, government support for childcare services, union rights, and a universal basic income.^[74]

Williamson supports portable retirement plans, the development of initiatives to protect homeowners from predatory lending, an increase in access to home loan modifications, SNAP coverage for low-income families, and initiatives to understand and decrease homelessness among veterans.^{[74][75]}

Williamson also supports the creation of a Department of Children and Youth – a new cabinet-level agency to create programs to reduce infant mortality, illness, food insecurity, homelessness, and undereducation.^[76]

Finance

Williamson supports corporations having a responsibility to stakeholders, not just to stockholders.^[77]

Williamson supports making middle-class tax cuts permanent and repealing the corporate tax cuts in the 2017 Tax Bill.^[74] She also supports the restoration and "modernization" of the Glass-Steagall Act, with the intent of separating commercial banks from investment banks in order to prevent banks from making risky investments.^[74]

Williamson supports preventing corporations from engaging in tax avoidance, including tax avoidance for carried interest and ETF income. She also supports enforcement of antitrust laws and the implementation of a federal fee for financial transactions, such as buying stocks or exchanging currency.^[74] Williamson also supports independent regulation of the pharmaceutical industry to prevent what she has called "predatory practices."^[78]

Guns

Williamson supports gun control, and has described the issue as one personal to her. On November 4, 2018, she gave a keynote address to several hundred Muslim and Jewish women at the Sisterhood of Salaam-Shalom conference in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, eight days after 11 Jews were murdered at Pittsburgh's Tree of Life synagogue. A Jewish woman, she argued against fear being used as a political force and advocated for love in its place.^[12]

Williamson supports eliminating the sale of assault rifles and semi-automatic weapons, banning bump stocks and high-capacity magazines, and eliminating the current limits on the Centers for Disease Control's ability to track and record gun ownership numbers.^[79] She also supports mandatory universal background checks and waiting periods for all gun dealers – including at gun shows and sporting retailers – child safety locks on all guns, and restrictions on the ability of the mentally ill to buy guns.^[79]

Williamson also supports Red Flag Laws and making the process of obtaining gun licenses similar to that of obtaining driver's licenses.^[79]

Health care

Williamson supports universal health care under a "Medicare for All type of plan."^[1] She has also stated that she supports extending health coverage – including coverage for home care – to currently uninsured Americans.^[80]

Williamson has expressed that she would like to develop a "health care" system opposed to what she says is a "disease management" system that the U.S. currently has. Inclusive of that, Williamson has expressed support for reimbursement of medical professionals for wellness and preventive care, longer doctor visits, nutrition and lifestyle education and limiting the marketing of hyper-processed and sugary foods.^[80] She has also expressed support for ending subsidies to the agricultural production of "unhealthy" food in favor of "healthy" food production.

Williamson supports expanding the role of the EPA and FDA to regulate toxin inclusion in the environment and food supplies, to make recommendations of how to lower societal stress, and to help develop healthy habits in local communities.^[80] She also supports limiting the profit motive in medicine as much as possible, being inclusive of seeking non-pharmacological ways to treat mental-health issues (where possible), and treating mental-health as important as physical health in order to normalize treatment.

Williamson expressed that she also supports treating drug addiction as a mental-health issue and de-criminalizing drugs.^[80]

Immigration

Williamson supports a full path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants with no "serious" criminal background. She also supports reducing the cost of naturalization and increasing resources to help immigrants navigate the process with more ease.^[81]

Whereas Williamson does not support open borders, she supports a more humane approach to border policy.^[82] In June 2019, Williamson ripped then-President Donald Trump on his immigration policies after reports of children being separated from their families and being put in a detainment center, calling them "state-sponsored crimes."^[83] After Trump's announcement that ICE would begin mass-deportations, she said it is "no different" than what Jewish people faced in Nazi Germany.^[84]

Williamson supports investing in "smart" border security, which she states, calls for better monitoring of airplanes, ships, trucks crossing the border, and submarines. She also supports overturning the three-year and ten-year re-entry bars.^[81]

Williamson also supports Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and expanding protections and naturalization to undocumented immigrants who were brought here as children, regardless of their current age.^[85]

LGBTQ community

Williamson supports The Equality Act. She also supports equality in health care, housing, employment, and services. She has also expressed support in protecting the LGBTQ community from marginalization due to Census questionnaire.^[86]

Minimum wage

Williamson supports an increase of the federal minimum wage to \$15 per hour.^[87] She also supports increasing the minimum wage for localities based on an amount determined to be a living

wage for a given geographical area, and then adjusting that wage for inflation as needed.^[74]

National security and service

Williamson supports "redesigning" the partnership between the Defense Department and the State Department that would elevate the need for peace, putting it on equal footing with the need for military preparedness.^[88] Williamson supports the creation of a United States Department of Peace to aid in her proposed redesign, which also includes a plan to establish a Peace Academy modeled after military academies.^[89] In her 2014 Congressional campaign, Williamson supported dismantling the National Security Agency (NSA).^[90]

In 2023, Williamson endorsed the Defend The Atlanta Forest and Stop Cop City movement in Atlanta, Georgia.^[91] Williamson supports decreasing the military budget and redirecting those funds toward peacebuilding and peace maintenance efforts e.g. mediation, diplomacy, humanitarian aid, post-conflict transitional justice, and "on-the-ground programs."^[88] She also supports maintaining a budget that would not impede military preparedness, while investing in a "sustainable society" inclusive of the development of clean energy and green manufacturing, retrofitting buildings and bridges, economically empowering women, and educating children.^[88]

Williamson supports military engagement when a NATO ally is threatened, when the United States is under threat of attack, or "when the humanitarian order of the world is at risk".^[65] Williamson supports the creation of a program where every citizen between 18 and 26 can perform one year of voluntary national service – helping schools, hospitals, infrastructure, sustainability, regenerative agricultural projects, the military, the Peace Corps – that can be remunerated for housing, "basic costs", or financial support for higher education.^[92]

Native American reconciliation

Williamson supports returning dominant control of the Black Hills to the Sioux Nation, halting construction of the Keystone Pipeline, recognizing tribal sovereignty over their territory. She also supports increasing funding to Native lands' justice systems, protecting tribal sovereignty and governance, and protecting Native religious freedom.^[93]

Williamson has expressed support for "rethinking treaties" and continuing annual tribal nations' summits in Washington D.C.^[93]

Black American reparations

Williamson supports the distribution of \$200-\$500 billion in reparations for slavery, spread across 20 years for "economic and education projects," to be disbursed based on the recommendation of a selected group of black leaders.^{[94][95][96]} In taking this position, Williamson became the only candidate to ever submit a detailed plan for reparations for black Americans.^{[97][98][99]}

Williamson, who first expressed her support of reparations in her 1993 book, *Illuminata* – advocating that the U.S. will not reconcile its racial and economic divide without them has said of the policy proposal – states that her policy on reparations is not part of "a black agenda."^[100]

Abortion rights

Williamson supports abortion access, services, and choice.^[101] She has spoken out against the Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*.^[102]

Religion

Williamson has called religion a map in which "the route isn't important. It's the destination that matters."^[103]

Williamson has expressed a deep belief in forgiveness based on the notion that nothing is real, or exists, but love: "If a person behaves unlovingly, then that means that, regardless if their negativity – anger or whatever – their behavior was derived from fear and doesn't actually exist. They're hallucinating. You forgive them, then, because there's nothing to forgive."^[104]

Williamson believes a peaceful life is attainable by thinking with God, while thinking without God creates pain. She has said, "Asking God for help doesn't seem very comforting if we think of Him as something outside of ourselves, or capricious, or judgmental. But God is love and He dwells within us. We were created in His image, or mind, which means that we are extensions of His love, or Sons of God."^[104]



New Hampshire, 2019

Health and vaccinations

A "both-and" approach (both prayer and medicine) to physical and mental health has been attributed to Williamson.^[105] This approach – the efficacy of prayer – accepts medical science as part of God's power to heal. For example, surgery may be seen as God answering prayers to heal. This logic invokes what Johns Hopkins Medicine has called the "strong link between 'positivity' and health," in which "positive attitude improves outcomes and life satisfaction across a spectrum of conditions."^{[106][107][108][109][110]}

Williamson, who believes that "the spirit is impervious to illness," confirmed this belief when she said, "People who are prayed for get out of the emergency room faster," and "people who have been diagnosed with a life-challenging illness, who attend spiritual support groups, live, on average, twice as long after diagnosis".^{[9][111][112]} She maintains that prayer is complementary to medicine, not a substitute for it.^[113]

Williamson has stated her support for the necessity and value of vaccinations and antidepressants,^{[114][115]} but has been criticized for her skepticism about the pharmaceutical industry's influence in setting guidelines for how they are administered, citing her belief that their profit motive could result in harm to patients.^{[116][117][118]}

She has also criticized overprescription of antidepressants,^{[78][119]} questioning whether antidepressants play a role in suicide, saying that the prescriptive definition between sadness and clinical depression is "artificial," and having called the process by which clinical depression is diagnosed "a scam."^{[120][115]}

During Williamson's presidential campaign, several excerpts of her past comments have conflated her skepticism of the pharmaceutical industry's trustworthiness with an embrace of anti-vaccination dogma. As a result, she has been accused of being "anti-medicine" and "anti-science." She denies such accusations, saying they "could not be further from the truth."^[121]

Williamson has expressed frustration that her skepticism of the pharmaceutical industry has been equated with skepticism of the science of vaccines.^{[78][105][65][114][115][122]} She has said, "Skeptical about vaccinations I have not expressed. Skeptical about Big Pharma in general I have expressed. And there is a big difference."^[65] She has also expressed frustration that this distinction is lost in public discourse.

International and foreign issues

Williamson deems climate change to be "the greatest moral challenge of our generation." She claimed support for the Green New Deal, immediate re-entry into the Paris Climate Accords, and has stated that she would be willing to support the Trans-Pacific Partnership if it included greater protections for workers and the environment.^{[123][124][125]}

Williamson also support the U.S. directing subsidies from fossil fuels, including coal, and re-investing them in the development of renewable energy, both in the U.S. and abroad, particularly in developing countries.^[123] Williamson has called for the establishment of a Department of Peace to expand global diplomacy, mediation, and educational and economic development.^[126] She supported the creation of such a department in 2005, backing efforts by Congressman Dennis Kucinich, to try to establish it.^[123]

Williamson supported safe withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Afghanistan as soon as possible and would consider the use of a peace-keeping force, such as the United Nations, to assist with the transition.^[123] Williamson, recognizing Africa as the continent with the fastest-growing population, supports engagement with the continent in order to thwart the growth of terrorist groups and health epidemics, which she believes threaten U.S. security, while capitalizing on opportunities in areas where corruption is being reversed, free elections are being held, and economies are growing.^[123] Williamson has said she supports the U.S. vigorously using its position, i.e., through CFIUS, to prevent China from buying strategically important companies, which she believes will help defend U.S. economic interests and human rights, as in the cases of the Uighurs and residents of Hong Kong.^[123] Williamson supports rejoining the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). She said that "US propaganda ... falsely claims the deal lets Iran get nuclear weapons within 10 years." Williamson also backs increased diplomacy, a change of relations to address human rights in Iran, sanctions relief and the purchasing of Airbus airplanes to support travel, entrepreneurship and normalization. According to Williamson, "Iran is a potential ally against Sunni extremism with many common interests to build upon."^[123] Williamson criticized the Trump administration for elevating tensions with Iran.^[127] Williamson supports a two-state solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, which secures both the legitimate security of Israel and the human rights, dignity and economic opportunities of the Palestinian people.^{[123][1]} She expressed support for using the power of the Presidency to exert pressure on Israel to restart talks on this solution.

I don't think the ultimate answer will be about settlements or checkpoints. The work of the genuine peace-builders must be on the level of the heart. Until the U.S. returns to

where it can be considered an honest broker by the Palestinians, as well as Israelis, it won't be able to play a constructive role.^[12]

Williamson supports rescinding President Trump's recognition of the Golan Heights as part of Israel, however Williamson has said the Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights is justified "only until there is a stable government in Syria with whom one can negotiate."^[123] She has also stated that settlements on the West Bank are illegal and does not support the Blockade of the Gaza Strip. Williamson supports creating conditions for effective dialogue between factions representing both Nicolás Maduro and Juan Guaidó that seek a peaceful transition.^[123] She has also expressed support for existing efforts to promote dialogue, in particular those being led by the Norwegian government. Williamson said she believes the best policy in Venezuela is to support efforts that allow its citizens to decide their political future, even if the U.S. does not agree with the outcome.

Public image

Williamson has been referred to as a "New Age guru."^[128] The label has been associated with her for years, but she has long rejected such terms, calling them "outrageous."^{[27][49][11]} She has stated that she prefers to be called an author.^{[49][128][129]}

In the context of her political campaigns, Williamson has been widely criticized as lacking professionalism or seriousness; she has been called "wacko," a "quack," "scary," "a joke," "hokey," "dangerous," "bananas," "bonkers," "Secretary of Crystals," and "wackadoodle."^{[130][131][132][133][134]}

She made headlines when she criticized *Vogue Magazine* for its "insidious influence" when it did not include her in an Annie Leibovitz photo shoot of the 2020 female presidential candidates.^{[135][136]} The magazine responded that it only wanted "to highlight the five female lawmakers who bring a collective 40 years of political experience to this race."^[137]

Williamson subsequently posted a fan-made picture of the *Vogue* photo with herself edited in.^[138]^{[139][137][140][141]}

Personal life and family

Williamson's older brother, Peter, became an immigration attorney like his father. Her late sister, Elizabeth "Jane," was a teacher.^{[10][142]} Her father, and maternal grandparents, were Russian Jewish immigrants.^[14] Her grandfather changed his surname from Vishnevetsky to Williamson after seeing "Alan Williamson Ltd" on a train.^[18] Williamson described herself as a "Jewish woman" in a 2022 interview.^[11]

She was briefly married in 1979 to a Houston businessman. She said the marriage lasted "for a minute and a half."^[9]

In 1990, she gave birth to a daughter, India Emmaline.^{[10][143]}



Williamson in February 2019

In 2006, a *Newsweek* poll named her one of the 50 most influential baby boomers.^[144]

In 2013, Williamson reported having assets estimated to be valued between \$1 million and \$5 million (not including personal residences).^[44]

Charity work

In the 1980s, Williamson began operating charities based on the principles of the *Course*.^[20]

Centers for Living

In 1987, inspired by a friend's struggle with breast cancer, Williamson launched the Center for Living,^[18] after a \$50,000 donation from David Geffen. Williamson co-founded the organization with Louise Hay—a minister of the New Thought Church of Religious Science—who claimed to have healed herself of cancer.

The Center primarily began assisting people afflicted with the rapidly-spreading (and then-unknown) epidemic of HIV/AIDS, particularly gay men, who were openly welcomed when shunned and refused help by other organizations.^[17] The Center provided services such as housework, daily chores, meditation, massage, psychological counseling, and emotional support throughout the city and county of Los Angeles.^[10]

In 1989, having received another advance of \$50,000 from Geffen, Williamson opened a second Center for Living, this time in New York City,^[18] this location was hampered by conflict between staff and the board regarding Williamson's management style, which an anonymous former associate described as "very controlling."^[9]

Unlike in Los Angeles, the more secular New York had requested for Williamson not to pray, fueling a further disconnect.^{[145][18][9]}

A few months later, after two of Williamson's board members told *Vanity Fair* that she wanted "to be famous," Williamson felt that she was being treated as "expendable." This notion would lead to the expulsion of several of her board members, including the then-head of the New York Center, as well as of film director Mike Nichols.^[9]

Williamson stepped down from her role at the Centers in the summer of 1992. The New York Center was able to remain open, following a donation from Cher.^[145] Williamson gave the organization an extra \$50,000 check and left,^[17] but remained an advisor to the organization. The Los Angeles Times reported that Williamson was "losing trust" in several board members and "preemptively" fired them before her own potential downfall. She disputed this, claiming that she intended to "step down as President," wishing to provide her successor with a "clean slate."^[146]



Williamson, 2014

Project Angel Food

In 1989, with the Centers' success, Williamson launched Project Angel Food (a program operated by The Centers for Living) to support HIV/AIDS patients.^[147] By 1992, it had raised over \$1.5 million and was delivering nearly 400 hot meals a day to homebound AIDS patients in Los Angeles.^[10]

Williamson resigned from Project Angel Food in March of 1992 amid infighting, two months after the board had fired executive director and gay activist Steve Schulte. Schulte had been the third executive director in five years, due to conflict to the approach taken in running the organization.

Employees demanded the resignation of Williamson, his reinstatement and a replacement of the board, threatening unionization if Williamson did not resign.^{[9][147]} Stephen Bennett, a consultant hired to assess the situation, determined that there were more paid staff on hand than needed, but with a union vote pending, Bennett refused to lay employees off. The best option was for Williamson to resign.^[147]

Project Angel Food employees did not unionize and the organization was able to remain operational after Williamson's departure, restructuring six months after her resignation. The organization briefly struggled as Williamson was the primary fundraiser.^[147] By 1998 it had over 1,500 volunteers and nearly 1,000 clients.^[148] As of 2018, with expanded food, nutrition and counseling services, it delivered 12,000 meals weekly throughout Los Angeles and had 55 employees, over 3,000 volunteers, nearly 1,500 clients, and revenue of nearly \$4 million.^[149]

In 30 years, Project Angel Food has provided and delivered 12 million meals.^{[150][151]} Williamson remains a trustee of the organization.^[44]

AIDS work

Williamson helped gay men who she said "were told that they weren't loved by their family and friends, employers, politicians, hospitals."^[152] She has officiated at funerals, drove men to their doctors, and paid for patients' AIDS medication.^{[39][105]}

During her 2020 presidential campaign, Williamson was accused of telling gay men not to take medication for AIDS, of implying that they were "not positive enough" to counter the disease, of telling them that they "deserved" the disease, and of telling them to "pray the AIDS away."^[105] She has repeatedly denied these accusations.^{[105][115]} Most of the accusations appeared to stem from excerpts or paraphrases of her 1992 book A Return to Love.^{[153][154]}

The Peace Alliance

In 1998, Williamson co-founded the non-profit Global Renaissance Alliance (GSA) with Conversations with God author Neale Donald Walsch.^[28] The organization established a network of "citizen salons" to pray for national growth, peace and liberal causes. According to Williamson, the GSA sat in small groups, "Peace Circles" of fewer than 12 people, every other week, and prayed together.^[155]

The Peace Alliance

In 2004, the GSA's name was changed to The Peace Alliance, and it was given a new mandate focused on grassroots education and advocacy organization. The intended purpose was to increase

U.S. government support for peace-building approaches to domestic and international conflicts. The Peace Alliance advocated for lobbying congressional representatives directly.^[156]

The Alliance has raised over \$100 million in funding for international peace-building. It has also helped get provisions of the Youth PROMISE Act, embedded in the Every Student Succeeds Act, passed into law.^[157]

"Sister Giant" conferences

In 2010, Williamson launched "Sister Giant", a series of conferences to "start a new conversation about transformational politics" and encourage more women to run for office:^{[20][158]} Williamson saw herself as a "cheerleader," supporting women who had never been politically involved in their new careers.^[159]

In 2012, Yale University's Women's Campaign School – an independent, nonpartisan, issue-neutral political campaign training and leadership program hosted at Yale Law School – partnered with the series, which focused on how to better address many social issues, including child poverty, campaign finance reform, and high incarceration rates.^[160]

RESULTS

For several years until 2017, Williamson was a board member of Results Educational Fund (RESULTS), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charity dedicated to finding long-term solutions to poverty by focusing on its root causes, and its sister organization, Results Inc., a 501(c)(4) "social welfare" organization that encourages "grassroots advocates to lobby their elected officials" and works "directly with Congress and other U.S. policymakers to shape and advance" anti-poverty policies. The organization has 100 local chapters in the U.S. and is active in six other countries.^{[161][162][163]}

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External links

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- [Marianne Williamson, article and shows \(https://web.archive.org/web/20111231194811/http://www.oprah.com/contributor/marianne-williamson\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20111231194811/http://www.oprah.com/contributor/marianne-williamson) at Oprah.com
- [Marianne Williamson \(http://www.ora.tv/politicking/-0_a2cyueh9\)](http://www.ora.tv/politicking/-0_a2cyueh9) on *Politicking with Larry King*
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