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The Doctor Carl Sagan Warned Us About

Dr. Christiane Northrup, a medical doctor, uses her intuition to tell her fans that medicine is wrong and magic is real.



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Predictions made by psychics and astrologers tend to quickly fade from memory because of how wrong they often turn out to be, but one prediction made by Carl Sagan, an astrophysicist and famous science communicator, is so unfortunately on the money that it continues to outlive him. He spelled it out in the second chapter of his last book, *The Demon-Haunted World*: “I have a foreboding of an America in my children’s or grandchildren’s time—when the United States is a service and information economy; when nearly all the key manufacturing industries have slipped away to other countries; when awesome technological powers are in the hands of a very few, and no one representing the public interest can even grasp the issues; when the people have lost the ability to set their own agendas or knowledgeably question those in authority; when, clutching our crystals and nervously consulting our horoscopes, our critical faculties in decline, unable to distinguish between what feels good and what’s true, we slide, almost without noticing, back into superstition and darkness.”

Superstitions did not disappear in the modern age, but with the COVID-19 pandemic driving people to spend more and more time online, anxiously searching for and simultaneously being bombarded by anything that looks like information, this prophesied crystal-clutching and horoscope-consulting is all the more evident. And there are misenlightened gurus who epitomize Sagan's dire warning, chief among them Dr. Christiane Northrup.

An obstetrician-gynecologist by training, Northrup rose to fame as a *New York Times* bestselling author of books like *Women's Bodies*, *Women's Wisdom* and *The Wisdom of Menopause*. She was platformed by Oprah Winfrey on many occasions and was named by Reader's Digest in 2013 as one of the 100 most trusted people in America. Her online fanbase is considerable: 149,000 followers on Instagram and over half a million fans on her Facebook page. For a medical doctor's star to shine so brightly during a pandemic should be a boon, but Dr. Northrup is no ordinary doctor. Every night, she addresses tens of thousands of followers in ten-minute videos that deny the reality of the pandemic, promote every magical belief under the sun, and weave a grand *Dungeons-and-Dragons*-style narrative about the Age of Aquarius and Northrup's Warriors of the Radical Light.

As Carl Sagan wrote in *The Demon-Haunted World*, "sooner or later this combustible mixture of ignorance and power is going to blow up in our faces."

"Hello, warriors"

I watched a month-worth of her solo videos to better understand the world in which she lives. In this parallel universe, there are Indigo children

(https://www.facebook.com/DrChristianeNorthrup/posts/10164444887115029?_cft_%5B0%5D=AZWtTcwm2dQ9_5lkiyS6CWkXdoaOkPC-cQuqLIY5TXORdlp6l2XSNIwk10p2E5tDhVh38KnYejd3NO7WdJU3A8rbaB9_0DGOWefmrTDoG3N4kEXQSO9iqvE0g_LlnV9AfIBDT7pfB71R5MCbylqFv-XtI-hTu4mBxgcDtkrnXgx2Yw&_tn_%2CO%2CP-R), time travellers from the future

(https://www.facebook.com/DrChristianeNorthrup/posts/10164444887115029?_cft_%5B0%5D=AZWtTcwm2dQ9_5lkiyS6CWkXdoaOkPC-cQuqLIY5TXORdlp6l2XSNIwk10p2E5tDhVh38KnYejd3NO7WdJU3A8rbaB9_0DGOWefmrTDoG3N4kEXQSO9iqvE0g_LlnV9AfIBDT7pfB71R5MCbylqFv-XtI-hTu4mBxgcDtkrnXgx2Yw&_tn_%2CO%2CP-R), and geomancers (<https://alibrown.com/dr-christiane-northrup-womens-wellness-pioneer-glambition-radio-episode-231-with-ali-brown/>)

performing acupuncture on Mother Earth by moving rocks around. She constantly tells her viewers, whom she calls "sleeping lions" and "warriors," that they need to take action. That is when the supernatural forces of Providence will magically come in and take care of the rest, like the reinforcements who show up at the end of an action film just in the nick of time.

Her views on the COVID-19 pandemic, shaped by her mantra that "it doesn't make sense," are unscientific, reckless and asinine. Rarely have I witnessed such a smorgasbord of gobbledygook from someone who once had an active medical license. She does not believe vaccines are necessary if your body is healthy (<https://www.drnorthrup.com/should-you-get-the-flu-shot-this-year/>) and has spread unsubstantiated fears about safe vaccines throughout her career. She has claimed that the COVID-19 vaccines will target specific chromosomes

(https://www.facebook.com/DrChristianeNorthrup/posts/10164440284440029?_cft_%5B0%5D=AZXS0ZPk8szleqDtHvKQ4VgF1pDc49j8Fph_VsCqEVnaglOa7FtNi1qeAPsgvmKquC-EJnd38hev4vpvfE4nQ4by-LTmza-QIDJUwyPajRoNwbOsNnEpoocu-xlcOfaf0xZcMHgMFgyTaOdpGLZSiQ247jNDumhmCUsnDz-1f7Gzwx&_tn_%2CO%2CP-R) that act as the seat of our empathy, an utterly absurd and unscientific statement. She believes that artificial intelligence has somehow been incorporated into these vaccines

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[DwMsfr2p_bDYkQYSe00kXvAD6Bnjf2tiIs-jnV2WJ0-Wog&_tn_%2CO%2CP-R](https://www.facebook.com/DrChristianeNorthrup/posts/10164492358280029?_cft_%5B0%5D=AZV2cXEIFKy1rMUdPLInKwiR3nsCk5UgNmcSB949xTTM5MImwWequvqoh7qMI2jmt_HO2rs0q4UrNTGIKUuUlmZt2I4s3p9HG-QeUjxgl2jxuYexgzCkcRQBMIW3-Xf-zaK65aFuQJMb3VgZPfdQHC1GX1OrG0W1w6_0Y3cDwuHdw&_tn_%2CO%2CP-R). (complete nonsense) and that this A.I. will integrate itself into our DNA. She warns her viewers that the injection of patented vaccines inside our body (https://www.facebook.com/DrChristianeNorthrup/posts/10164492358280029?_cft_%5B0%5D=AZV2cXEIFKy1rMUdPLInKwiR3nsCk5UgNmcSB949xTTM5MImwWequvqoh7qMI2jmt_HO2rs0q4UrNTGIKUuUlmZt2I4s3p9HG-QeUjxgl2jxuYexgzCkcRQBMIW3-Xf-zaK65aFuQJMb3VgZPfdQHC1GX1OrG0W1w6_0Y3cDwuHdw&_tn_%2CO%2CP-R) will turn us into the property of the patent holders. Funny how I have not heard her say the same for artificial heart valves, pacemakers and insulin pumps. But before you call her an anti-vaxxer, know that she believes the term is meaningless and that it was coined by Big Pharma (https://www.facebook.com/DrChristianeNorthrup/posts/10164500909555029?_cft_%5B0%5D=AZV1E9xLJ6ycxAITCmqfzMD5wPZZBkIydGvMvVrt9vfYQXSjG0EQ4H2HpvSTYczAynHws15g520sNuO-SNeh3bBfzg5O3_e0g4oib053u93siBv2HI9SMs6w4lXX0zTC5k5Xz2KoUEhunRFY9K_0xgRPXCzDRj7-e5Lfz8VArjVfQ&_tn_%2CO%2CP-R). In the same breath, she declares that “conspiracy theorist” was a phrase invented by the CIA, which is apparently run out of China. She read about it, you see.

Northrup admits to having dozens of people over at her house during the pandemic for “peaceful protests” (https://www.facebook.com/DrChristianeNorthrup/posts/10164448649760029?_cft_%5B0%5D=AZX6DYTX7cscuhH4VkWX1ZE9jjwu2wP1Cy2AbBBSOXXFereWLozt53s_KkRMNgqDH2JfnlbPORUISzP7C_Wu8jvTEX95Z89ZDnbccVr9vZKYjZrz-mgYfaqKGEkOejjjYN0u4JhBjLKvhVQwVks6y5HCV9oEYIYg2ajBjrL2_e6MZQ&_tn_%2CO%2CP-R) that are linked to two organizations she participates in, Make America Free Again and Millions Against Medical Mandates. She frequently invites her viewers to disobey the rules during the pandemic to show everyone that it’s all a scam (https://www.facebook.com/DrChristianeNorthrup/posts/10164440284440029?_cft_%5B0%5D=AZXS0ZPk8szleqDtHvKQ4VgF1pDc49j8Fph_VsCqEVnaglOa7FtNilqeAPsgymKquCEJnd38hev4vpvfE4nQ4by-LTmza-QIDJUwyPajRoNwbOsNnFpooeu-xlcOfaf0xZcMHgMFgyTaOdpGLZSiQ247jNDumhmCUsnDz-1f7Gzxw&_tn_%2CO%2CP-R), and to stop watching mainstream media news because their broadcast contains a flicker meant to hypnotize you (https://www.facebook.com/DrChristianeNorthrup/posts/10164512995245029?_cft_%5B0%5D=AZWMv1l3MLEQ648BfaDIZ6uJCmockm4yWs7b7PEmX0BUpgYh1knNQ1RFSgQKkKPtM_bpUT4O9F0y7A1PIrGmIGlsfKyF3TzMZinBlyWoqJo9yGQ3XwpD8hC2PaZeGaMQpuyToVcE3E8-rmFIGNCgdygJDeqc_uQRBb5BAzPC94xfBQ&_tn_%2CO%2CP-R). She recommends pseudoscientists, health gurus, and discredited news sources like Joe Mercola, Andrew Wakefield, and InfoWars, all the while avoiding posting links to specific websites. As social media companies unevenly clamp down on misinformation, accessing contrarian sources online has been turned by Northrup into an Easter egg hunt that sets up a hero’s journey for her fan base. Her videos are not unlike the Q drops of the QAnon movement: filled with somewhat vague references that make viewers want to complete a quest to become part of the inner circle.

How did a medical doctor end up living in this fantasy universe?

Intuition-based medicine

Christiane Northrup discussed her journey into (and seemingly out of) medicine on a recent episode of the Glambition Radio podcast (<https://alibrown.com/dr-christiane-northrup-womens-wellness-pioneer-glambition-radio-episode-231-with-ali-brown/>). This rebellious stance against medical doctrine seems to have been born from early experiences her family had. When Northrup was five, her six-month-old sibling was put in a hospital and died. Later, her brother was born and would not eat; he was signed out against medical advice. Doctors told her mom her brother would not be mentally right, but her mom looked at him and “knew it wouldn’t be true,” a sign Northrup says of an “intact maternal intuition.” Years later, Northrup would pursue a medical degree because it sounded to her ears like a better degree

than a Ph.D. Around that time, her dad received a wrongful diagnosis and he too walked out of the hospital against medical advice. As Northrup recounts it, she was getting ready to go to medical school having been “fully radicalized” about the limits of modern medicine.

This leeriness toward medicine, combined with an interest in holistic and alternative ideas, led her to think that medicine was missing a piece: “that intuitive, feminine, right-brained piece.” I know many scientifically minded women who would be furious at the characterization of femininity as “intuitive” and separate from rigour and rationality (and also at the propagation of the “left brain, right brain” myth (<http://www.mcgill.ca/oss/article/health/learning-stop-teaching-learning-myths>)).

But medicine, in Northrup’s eyes, became this bad system that trapped good people. Her solution? Literally anything else.

A Scheherazade for the conspiratorial age

We can chuckle at her story that she used to live in Atlantis in a previous incarnation

(https://www.facebook.com/DrChristianeNorthrup/posts/10164467453530029?_cft_%5B0%5D=AZXIXHYITjxUDfUOfSqRi5jQG9xamQF-NvxSEyXF4deQI355LRMIuW80IEgdKHqiBj66vNTuSazMPqQNIhxgMvVENhYQBWN-UpF57-P9K4-GML1_MIPPyh7GOkqYRi6WVdAmCaa3m-xeQ0AN067cJyIFoCtYTtoz2c4Mc8TiDA5Hw&_tn_=%2CO%2CP-R) (“doing work to upgrade DNA”)

but Northrup’s spiritual storytelling combined with her belief in a grand COVID-19 conspiracy is a potent motivator for harm. She was the one who breathed life into the propaganda video Plandemic by posting it on her popular Facebook page

(<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/20/technology/plandemic-movie-youtube-facebook-coronavirus.html>), and her pandemic advice, if followed, will easily increase people’s risk of contracting the virus, getting sick (possibly with long-term consequences), and even dying.

Moreover, vaccines only work if people are willing to accept them. Vaccine hesitancy begins with anxieties surrounding a loss of control and a lack of information, but it can be exacerbated by misinformation of the sort that Northrup willingly spreads. Her words, made heavier by falsehoods, are particularly appealing because they form a clear story that can be spun, Scheherazade-like, to go on forever and resist the arresting force of reality.

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Before Christmas, Northrup was clear that December 21st would be the beginning of the Age of Aquarius

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delivering the world from evil and allowing us to evolve into a new species, Homo illuminus. But as the New Age deadline passed us by and the world did not dramatically change, the storyteller had to adapt, in the same way that the cult leaders who mark down the end of the world on a calendar have to think on their feet when the Earth keeps spinning. Northrup’s new narrative is about “holding the line”

(https://www.facebook.com/DrChristianeNorthrup/posts/10164539904785029?_cft_%5B0%5D=AZXdGKfOr6F64IVXO3obLttRjQZSnb6f4GqFXBymNphiOE7PcFASHyGEYnH_-4IDI45QutsntOEBXAPf3Jx7umeAn2GjVGhkErXh6xh_yrTC6rpR0Ea0bzA93MN1HKxOiiC2o4aFCx8n9RPIUDfqdddINJo-8FrizByGUexSWSt4Jg&_tn_=%2CO%2CP-R) because evil people are still, somehow, in the world and influencing it with their thoughts, but positive thoughts can win. And if this grand epic battle fails, Northrup is already encouraging her followers to simply play pretend with reality: imagine you are living in Heaven on Earth as if it’s really happening. If no one buys you cake on your birthday, simply close your eyes and eat the air in front of you.

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The real pervasive danger in all of this is exactly what Carl Sagan warned us against: trusting our intuition above all else. Northrup states it clearly during that podcast interview

(<http://www.mcgill.ca/oss/blank>). “The body,” she says wrongly, “is a tuning fork to truth. If you have maintained your own intuition, you have access to that barometer. This ping, it’s the first thing that

comes into your head, that's the right answer." What's bad, according to her, is when the more analytical part of your brain kicks in and asks for evidence. Trust your gut, Dr. Christiane Northrup says, always trust your gut.

This blind trust in instinctual intuition is our ticket back to the darkness Sagan mentioned. Invisible viruses are not intuitive. We had to devise technology to see them and read their genetic entrails. Vaccines carrying tiny instructions to make harmless parts of a virus are also not intuitive. What is intuitive (and wrong) is to look around us and not immediately see the nearly two million people dead from the coronavirus. It's to give in to our fear of things we cannot immediately understand. It's to want to return to a simpler time when we were at the mercy of nature, red in tooth and claw. It's to buy into magical thinking, mistake associations for causations, and open ourselves up to charlatany.

Carl Sagan knew what the candle was that would keep this darkness at bay: science and skepticism. It is easy to act like Northrup and to believe everything that feels good. What is rewarding is to learn a slower, more deliberate form of thinking; to accept that the universe is complex but can be understood if we are open to nuance and uncertainty; and that questioning everything is a recipe for disaster if we don't know how to find reliable information.

Science can serve as a candle in the dark but only if we are willing to use it.

Take-home message:

- Dr. Christiane Northrup is an OB-GYN and prominent figure in the anti-vaccination movement
- She endorses a confusing mess of New Age beliefs and falsehoods about COVID-19 in her daily videos watched by tens of thousands of people
- She wants her fans to trust their intuition above all else and reject what doesn't feel right, a terrible piece of advice for living in our complex world

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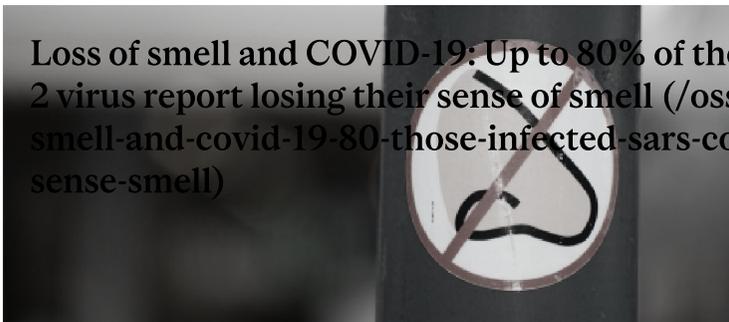
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