

*When I first began this journey over 15 years ago, I was looking for an enjoyable way to keep fit and manage stress. What I discovered was so much more. Call it Oriental, Middle Eastern or Belly, this dance has given me strength, grace, confidence and balance. It is both a celebration of feminine power and a beautiful mode of creative expression. A magical blend of sensuality and muscular control, bellydance heals and transforms.*

*Bellydancing was first introduced to America at the 1893 Chicago Worlds Fair by a Syrian woman named Farida Mazar Spyropolous...who was later known as Little Egypt. Audiences were amazed and transfixed, referring to this fascinating new style of dancing as danse du ventre, literally dance of the belly or womb. Sadly it was not long before the term danse du ventre was replaced by "Hootchie kootchie", which put a scandalous and sexualized slant on the art. Lest they show appreciation and reverence for feminine power and art, particularly in 1893, society belittled bellydance and attempted to attach a more pejorative name to it.*

*But that was then. Although we still must occasionally remind the uninformed that exotic dancing is quite different than bellydance, we are blessed to live in a time and culture that embraces the feminine spirit. We as women have magic within us. The belly is the seat of energy and creative fire. We as sisters in dance draw from the spiral energy that glows in our center, and share this light with those around us. Our musician brothers celebrate this energy as well, giving back in proportion, creating beauty and balance.*

*All of us have this creative fire, this magic within. This is my power; this is the house of Chi. Honor yourselves, honor this energy and claim your power! Transform your fear, your anger, your despair through dance. Love and honor all that makes you a woman. Embrace your imperfections; laugh at your jiggly parts. We are humans imbued with a divine spark. Celebrate who you are, and what you can become.*

*How do we begin this journey toward self-discovery, toward reclaiming this creative power? We begin to dance.*