

Theresa Gathers of Athena UNCHAINED to be Featured on Close Up Radio

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[/EINPresswire.com/](https://EINPresswire.com/) -- The military and vulnerability seem like oil and water, but together, they make stronger leaders, teams, and bonds. After serving for 17 years in the Air Force, both enlisted and as an officer, Theresa "Athena" Gathers has experienced the power of vulnerability. "Yes, there are reasons why the military, or any system, operates the way it does. But transformational leaders must expand their skillsets in order to be successful. People need more than rules and regulations. They want to be valued and cared for. Even in the military, I showed those I led every single day how much they meant to me," shares Theresa.

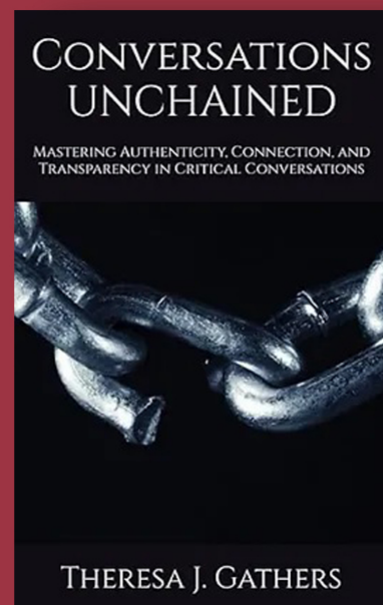


After reading Brené Brown's book, *Dare to Lead*, Theresa had to read all of Brené's books. "One day while in my General's office discussing strategic approaches to ground warfare in Iraq, I noticed a copy of *Daring Greatly* on his desk. I was very surprised, considering how he led, and asked why he had a copy of that book. He explained that Brené had done a training while he was a Base Commander in Arizona. He surprised me again by asking if I was interested in becoming one of her facilitators. Shortly after, he nominated me through her team. Now, I'm one of 500 facilitators internationally that were trained by Brené herself for the *Dare to Lead*™ program, which focuses on developing courage-building skills through workshops, trainings, and coaching sessions to help individuals, teams, and organizations move away from armored leadership towards daring leadership."

Theresa continues, "I was always a non-conformist leader, which is why I struggled throughout my military career. The military is very rigid. They train and institutionalize you to not have, and

to never show your emotions. Many leaders force their rank rather than build trust. By building trust first, I rarely had a problem with those that I led trusting me, especially in combat. This is why trust is the foundation of my leadership approach, along with always showing up with care, love, and consideration. I struggled significantly as a young leader, and discovered over time that I led best when my heart and mind were in congruence. In *Dare to Lead*, I learned that research shows that allowing yourself to be vulnerable, allowing yourself to care, love, and show empathy, is the most effective form of leadership,” shares Theresa.

“As I move forward with civilian life, feeling pride in my service is difficult considering some of the orders I had to follow competed with my values, especially in combat. This is what I’ve learned to call moral injury. I still have a lot to work through, and moving forward through my healing journey requires a balance of grief and gratitude. From my time in the military, I have several mentors with decades of service who struggle to have successful civilian careers due to their tethered bind to the institution. Some are struggling with suicidal ideations due to their loss of identity, community, and their diminished emotional capacity, not only for others but for themselves as well. One friend, very high ranking, recently shared after getting out, ‘I have nothing to offer this world.’ I told her my story, and shared that for every trauma and struggle I experienced, a gift or two emerged,” explains Theresa. “When I learned to embrace these gifts, I began to realize that I had to go through the challenges, struggles, and traumatic experiences that I did in order to be the person I am today.”



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“Through my research and experience, I am beginning to wonder if the military is creating sociopaths—there were moments where I was numb, where typically my empathy, remorse, and compassion would have shone through. When I joined the military, I was already feeling isolated and emotionally broken, and my time in service just fed into this even more. This grief is balanced by gratitude; if I hadn’t joined the military when I did, I would be either dead, in jail, or on the streets. Many young people join the military for similar reasons—a last chance at life. In that desperate state, the military stripped away large parts of my identity that I am still trying to build back after a year of being separated. The transition out was an incredibly difficult experience all on its own. When you finally stand up against the system or are ready to leave on your own terms, you are no longer of any importance to them. The minute you decide to exit, they begin to erase you. This is why I am growing my business to include holistic healing and rediscovery, and will be developing a retreat for veterans—to bring them back to their true, authentic selves after service is over,” explains Theresa.

For the last few years, Theresa has been building Athena UNCHAINED to provide people with a supportive space to connect with themselves on a

deeper level, uncover their intuition, and take control of their lives. Theresa guides her clients in understanding that everyone processes emotions in their own way, on their own time. “Just because someone is struggling doesn’t mean it’s the time for them to process it fully. On a daily basis, I struggle with wanting to pull people out of their suffering. The reality is, we are all on our



own journeys," shares Theresa. "The best thing I can do for my clients and the people who I care about is to honor their journey by showing up to offer support, resources, and tools—if they want them."

In May 2024, she published *Conversations UNCHAINED*. "I wish I had this book throughout my leadership journey. It came out of a workshop that I created in June 2023 for the Joint Women's Leadership Symposium, which is comprised of all six branches of the military. I received a lot of positive feedback from that workshop and decided to write it all down to serve as both a guide and a workbook for leaders at all levels, and for anyone looking to have more impactful conversations. The book centers around the concept of cultivating ACT – authenticity, connection, and transparency, and walks through developing an approach to five types of critical conversations: task-oriented, performance-based, personnel-related, climate/culture, and contentious. In addition to the book, I also offer a one-day workshop for small to medium businesses, both online and in person, that gives a deep dive into these concepts. As an ICF-PCC certified coach, my ideal client is in a space to grow and put in the work. I work with all professions and ages, ranging from teenagers to seniors. I never tell my clients what to do or give them advice; instead, I provide a space for them to openly rediscover themselves through coming back to their values and gaining a greater understanding of what is holding them back. This helps them determine what they want for their future, as opposed to others telling them what's best or what that should look like."

Close Up Radio will feature Theresa Gathers, Author of *Conversations UNCHAINED: Mastering Authenticity, Connection, and Transparency in Critical Conversations* and Founder of Athena UNCHAINED Coaching and Consulting LLC in a two-part interview with Jim Masters on Tuesday, July 2nd at 4 pm Eastern and with Doug Llewelyn on Tuesday, July 9th at 4 pm Eastern

Listen to the show on [BlogTalkRadio](#)

If you have any questions for our guest, please call (347) 996-3389

For more information about Theresa Gathers, please visit <https://www.athenaunchained.com>

Lou Ceparano

Close Up Television & Radio

+1 631-850-3314

[email us here](#)

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