



Unleash Your Brilliance Summit Interview

Carolyn Ellis

and

Melora Hardin



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Carolyn: Hello everyone. I'm delighted to welcome to the Unleash Your Brilliance Summit one of our expert panelists. We are going to be speaking with the multi-talented, Hollywood actress, director, singer, and dancer, Melora Hardin. Let me just welcome you and thank you so much for being part of our Unleash Your Brilliance Summit. Why don't I start by sharing with everybody a little bit about you?

Melora is probably most recognized for her portrayal of Jan Levinson who is Steve Carell's rigid former corporate boss and love interest on the hit NBC series, *The Office*. She is also known for playing Tony Shaloub's dead wife in the hit USA Network series, *Monk*. Her feature film credits are many and include *17 Again* with Zac Efron, *Hannah Montana The Movie* with Miley Cyrus and Billy Ray Cyrus, *27 Dresses* with Katherine Heigl, *Absolute Power* with Clint Eastwood and Gene Hackman, and the wonderful movie, *Thank You for Not Smoking...*and that's just a few of them.

Melora has been acting, singing and dancing since she was a wee girl and has appeared in many different hit shows ranging from *Friends* to *Little House on the Prairie* opposite many of Hollywood's top TV stars. Melora is also a fantastic singer. Earlier this year she starred on Broadway as Roxie Hart in *Chicago*. She's also released two CDs of her singing which include some of her own original songs.

Melora is truly living in her brilliance. She's recently taken up the director's mantle having just produced and directed a beautiful and moving film called, *You*. This is an independent film that was created by Melora and written by her husband, Gildart Jackson. They are really blazing a trail for others by how they're marketing their film which is largely through the internet and through grassroots screenings. It's an amazing movie and really unique and wonderful in an empowering way, I believe, to



get the movie out into the hands of people who want to watch deep, revealing, personal movies that you might not see at the regular big box kind of movie genres. What's really wonderful to experience with *You* and I watched it, it is very moving. It's a heartfelt revealing nature about love, about family, and the connections we have. I know for Melora, her husband was in it, her two daughters were in it, her family members were in it, and so it was a real labor of love. I know we will get to talk about that a bit in our discussion tonight.

When I was considering who I wanted to invite as guest experts for the Unleash Your Brilliance Summit, I was looking for women who sparked and resonate with their life's purpose to the extent that you can actually feel it. I had the pleasure of seeing Melora in person at a live event that I attended earlier this year. When I experienced her I thought, "This woman totally encapsulates that brilliance and that power of living in your authentic passion. She's just stepping right out there and giving her gift to the world." I already knew Melora was a talented actress and all that, but when I saw her at this event, just on the spot, impromptu, and was asked unaccompanied to sing one of her songs...that experience for me, listening to her singing was just magical. She totally blew me away. I knew that I wanted to ask her to be part of the Summit.

Melora, I am so honored and excited that you accepted this invitation and I look forward to speaking with you about your journey of brilliance and having you reveal the secrets of how you do this. How you stay the course even in those moments when maybe you're not feeling so inspired and brilliant at times. And sharing with our listeners here what you do that works for you so that we can all unleash our brilliance!

Melora, welcome!

Melora: Thank you!

Carolyn: It's great to have you here. Can you tell us a little bit about your own personal journey? I know you grew up in an acting family. Your parents are very involved in theatre and film. I think it's a tough business. What was it that really called you to



get up on that stage and command it in the way that you do? How did you start and how did you decide to continue in that because I know it's a grueling kind of business?

Melora: When I was about five or six I went with my father when he was dropping off new head shots with his commercial agent. They said, "Oh, aren't you cute. Don't you want to be an actress?" I said, "Yes." I think that was the first time I thought that I could do that, too. I just tugged on their sleeve until they finally sort of gave in. I think they both felt like, "Oh, we don't want her to have to deal with the rejection and the down side of being an actress, coming up against harsh judgments and so forth." So, they decided, "We'll just let her go on ten things and if she didn't get anything, we'll ease her out of it and she'll never know the difference."

Of course, I got the first thing I went on. Their plan was completely dead in the water there. I had such a fun time doing it. I remember my first thing was a Peek Toothpaste commercial. It's a toothpaste they don't even make anymore. I had to dance in front of a mirror with my doll. That's all I really had to do and smile and just sort of dance in the mirror with my doll. I just loved it so much.

I always thought of acting as my hobby. It was really fun and my parents kept it fun for me. They took care of my money and we never really talked about my money. Until I was eighteen, I didn't even what money I had. Luckily, I had a dad who dealt with it really well and took very good care of it for me. He said to me a lot that I had to be professional, to be on time, to know my lines, but also if it wasn't fun anymore I shouldn't do it.

I think in that regard I was very fortunate to have those kinds of parents who were not living vicariously through me. They were pursuing their own dreams and, at the same time, they were allowing me to have the fun of what I thought was through my hobby. If you'd asked me as a child what I was going to be, I was a very serious ballet dancer and I would have told you I was going to be a ballerina. I started going to ballet class about four times a week by the time I was nine years old. I was determined that was what I was going to do.



I've felt really fortunate to be a person who has always had passion for everything that I'm doing at all times. I do think that some of that is inherited in the sense that I think passion and a zest for life is something that can be very much taught.

Carolyn: What I'm picking up from you as well is how lucky and fortunate that you grew up in that environment where your parents got it. Like you say, they weren't vicariously living through you. They really supported you to have your own experience of it. I love what you're saying about keeping it fun and, yet, it also sounds like you're committed to a certain discipline around it...like the professionalism and ballet practice four times a week. I think a lot of times people feel that if it has discipline, it can't be fun. When it's passion and you bring both of them to bear, the fun and the discipline to live into that fun, that is when you really have some longevity like you've had.

Melora: Definitely. I've attribute my ballet for that. I'm a person who thrives on discipline and I really enjoy technique. I've been riding horses all my life but I decided when I went to college to be on my equestrian team so I learned how to ride English. I loved the technique of English riding. It's very subtle cues you give the horse and the horse gives back you. I really love that. That's something I thrive on. I really like the structure of having things that have a certain discipline to them. I still take jazz classes two or three times a week and I love that you can go to class and watch something change in the mirror. You can work hard correcting your line or getting better at a certain turn or move. If you continue to work on that, you have consistency, and you have tenacity that it does change. That's pretty cool.

Carolyn: Was there ever a point where you considered maybe turning away from this and sort of stepping off that path of performance? Was there one point where you said, "I don't even want to do this" and then how did you turn around and recommit to it?

Melora: I've had a lot of moments like that. There have been disappointments. I was cast in Back to the Future to play Michael J. Fox's girlfriend, which is a small part in the first one but then a bigger part in the second one played by Elizabeth Shue. It was a two picture deal and I was seventeen at the time. They had Eric Stoltz who was going to



be playing McFly. They shot about a week's worth of it and then they decided they didn't want to use him and they cast Michael J. Fox instead. I was too tall for Michael J. Fox so they had to let me go. That was a crushing phone call because I knew that it was Spielberg and I knew it was Bob Zemeckis and Bob Gail and it was going to be a big movie. So, there were a lot of tears and it was a huge disappointment.

Then, of course, with dancing I went to Joffrey on scholarship when I was thirteen years old and the next year they didn't accept me. Meredith Bailis, who was the artistic director at the time, said she had seen me as an actress on TV and she really thought that I should pursue that. She didn't think I should pursue being a ballerina. She thought I was a really wonderful dancer but she attributed it to my bow legs; I do have bow legs. I come from cowboy stock so I have bow legs. A lot of ballerinas have bow legs and actually if you have bow legs, you jump a lot higher. It really gives you a much bigger spring. I don't know why she said that because some of the prima ballerinas have bow legs. I was crushed and I mom says I walked around like an open wound for two weeks. I gave up dancing for two weeks and then we went to Texas to visit my grandparents and I didn't dance at all. When we got back a month later, I decided that I was going to start taking jazz because it was part of my soul. It was good for my soul and I didn't want to give it up completely. A whole other kind of movement was born for me...a passion for movement was born for me.

There have been some horrible times, of course. I went to Sarah Lawrence College. I went there thinking I'm going to go to college and I'm not going to study anything to do with acting. I'm going to study writing and poetry and all these other things and see if I'm doing this because I've been doing it all my life or I'm doing this because I really have passion for it. It was a really good thing to do.

The greatest thing about my education at Sarah Lawrence was that that school really makes you feel like you can do anything. I had fantasies of maybe becoming a kind of gypsy author traveling around the world and having sort of a traveling dance company, being a choreographer. I had lots of fantasies about different things that I could do and might do. I kept coming back to the fact that the lifestyle of what I can do, being an actor, and I can be all of those things. I can be a writer and a dancer and an actor and a singer and a director.... I can do all those things. I think that's what it really came down to for me that I have to always be searching for opportunities to



be creative. That's sort of my destiny on earth. I think I've always just known that innately.

I was able to get words for that working with a therapist. I went to him for some career coaching and I said, at the first session I had with him, "I don't want to be on the red train heading north leaning out the window saying that there's a pretty bright shiny yellow train heading south, maybe I should be on that train." He said it was pretty clear which train I was on. I said, "Really? What train am I on?" He was the one who said I was on the 'opportunity to be creative' train. That means that every choice you make has to be from that perspective. Is it an opportunity to be creative? If you make it from the money perspective or you make it from the fame perspective or you make it from a success perspective, it's never going to be the right choice. Those things can all hop on your train, but you can't make judgments from that train because that's not your train. That really made sense to me and I think it's helped me a lot kind of get clear about the decisions that I've made since then.

Carolyn: I think we all have those experiences where something really knocks you off or you get that rejection or the relationship tanks or the business tanks or whatever it is. It sounds like what you've done is like the river coming down the street and it finds a boulder and it doesn't say, "Okay, I must be in the wrong riverbed." You said you're going to find a way around this and it sounds like you've really embraced your creativity and how you want to express you in a very powerful way. I'm thinking very specifically of your decision to make this beautiful movie, *You*.

Melora: Thank you. It was definitely an exciting and a big step. I've made two CDs on my own independently and I'm now making a third with Richard Bandler who just directed Barbra Streisand's European Tour and her next record. He's an amazing force who's really made this record quite amazing. I can't wait to get it out there.

I feel like that making our movie was just one of those moments of "Wow, are we really going to make our dreams come true?" I think my husband and I both always wanted to work together and we wanted to make something together. I think we



always wanted to make movies. Making a movie is a little bit like making a baby and we made a couple babies...

Carolyn: And your babies were in the movie, right?

Melora: Yes, our babies were in the movie! We thought, let's make another baby but this time let's make it be a movie! That's what we did and it was just as overwhelming as it was to be a first time parent and try to figure out how to do that. We did it and I think we did it really successfully and now we're just trying to market it successfully which is a whole new endeavor and not something that I ever thought I would be doing. I have to find all the fun and creative things about that. It's definitely interesting.

Carolyn: I can relate to that. I wrote a book that came out two years ago called *The 7 Pitfalls of Single Parenting*. When I was writing it I thought, "Man, I've never written a book." I didn't know if I could do it. I got it out there and I said, "Yay, I wrote the book!" and then it was like "So now what? How do people find the book?" I didn't realize. I can relate to that thing about you deliver your baby and how you get other people to see and enjoy and love and you grow from your baby, too.

Melora: You probably felt this way about your book. As a filmmaker, you have all the same feelings you do about your child. You really want it to get wings, you want it to go to college, you want it to succeed, you want it to find love, and you want it to succeed in the world. That's really it. It's so heartening to me when people write us beautiful emails. We got an email from a couple the other day who said they were communicating better because of our film and that they love each other better because of our film. When people buy the film from our website www.youthefilm.com people buy the DVD and we send them what we call, a You Note. We ask people to write a You Note, basically a love letter to the people they love, and send it to them. We got an email from a couple where the husband and wife watched the movie together and then they sat down at the table and they both wrote each other a You Note and then they exchanged the cards. They said to us in the email "After having just wept with love and joy from our film, we now wept over the You notes." They framed it and hung it up on the wall.



Carolyn: That's so beautiful!

Melora: That kind of stuff is pretty heartening. I'm sure you must get some lovely feedback from writing a book about parenting.

Carolyn: Yes. I think the thing, too, is what you did was you hung in there on that 'opportunity to be creative' train, you stepped out and made your move. It was really from your love. It's not like you said, "How can we put something out there that's going to make people cry and deepen their relationships?" That's just a beautiful byproduct of when you really tapped into your heart power and your connection and to say, "You know what? We're just going to put it out there."

Melora: That's right. And also not making it from any kind of like "We hope this sells or we hope this will..." I wanted to tell the story as beautifully as I felt my husband told it in his screenplay. I want to tell it in a visual media which is very different than reading it. I felt like we really came together on that vision. I felt like if we could do that, then the film will be successful. I didn't mean successful in necessarily a worldly way, but now I'm looking at trying to make it successful in a worldly way. At that time, it was more like will it be creatively successful? Will I feel like I've achieved what I set out to achieve? I feel that I did, so that's nice.

Carolyn: I definitely want to encourage everyone listening to this to go and visit the website and get the movie. That's *You* the movie at www.youthefilm.com because it is really beautiful and you definitely have to have a few Kleenex's with you when you watch it. Heads up on that!

Let's talk a little bit about brilliance. The Unleash Your Brilliance Summit here is clearly about how do we reveal and share this magnificence that lies within each of. I think we've just been talking about that because you kind of reached into your heart, your soul's message that you had to share in the world and you put it out in this beautiful movie and you put it out in your songs and in the work that you do. For you, what would the word 'brilliance' mean to you if you were to define that? What are the qualities of that for you?



Melora: Definitely sparkly, big, bright, light, open, airy, receptive, and generous. I think those are probably the main things.

Carolyn: I'm loving all of them. So, sparkly, big, bright, light, open, airy, receptive and generous. Those are things for our listeners, especially the women entrepreneurs, when we're creating our businesses, running our businesses, wanting to grow our businesses and having more impact in the world and serving our clients in whatever ways we do that. Those are great markers. How am I feeling right now? Am I feeling that generous, light, open, sparkly quality or is it feeling like, "Oh my gosh, I can't do it." Use the clues of the body to go with that.

You have expressed yourself as an artist in many different ways...in your role as a performer. What kinds of challenges do you feel that women, in particular, might face as a leader in the business world? Do have any views on that?

Melora: I do think that certainly when I took the helm here with our film and decided I was going to direct it, I discovered that there are people in this world who wear no hats and then there are people who have possibility in their realm. I decided, through some pretty uncomfortable conversations with people who basically said, "Why aren't you making a short film first? Why are you making a feature film?"

One person even said to me, "Most people who try to make a movie intend to make a good movie, but most people don't." Just really trying hard to instill doubt in me. I felt that I was sort of battling against his intention to knock me down enough so that I wasn't going to be able to succeed. I basically kicked him out of my life. I decided that we were not going to be having those discussions anymore because it was so incredibly eroding.

It was already such a hard thing to be saying "I'm going to do this and I've never done this before. Yes, I'm making a feature film. Yes, we have a movie here that's bouncing around in time and spans 21 years. We're going to deal with this on an extremely low budget in 18 days, some very light age makeup and we're going to deal with location things, and costumes...yes, we're going to deal with all of that. And, yes, we're going to make it with our own money." Lots of things that are pretty



much a big fat no-no for most people. Yet, at the same time, I had lots of people...a female director, a couple male directors that I've worked with that are fantastic directors, who basically said "Do it, do it, do it." They were right there 100% giving me love and encouragement to go, go, go.

When you make a movie, it's a little bit like going to war. It's a little bit like saying to the troops, "We're going to march up this hill and we're going to turn left." You get there and then you say, "I'm sorry. Actually we're going to turn right." I find that people take that kind of direction from a man just naturally more than they do from a woman. I made the decision that I was, in fact, going to be the one who was going to be leading the ship. I did fine because it's real second nature for me to be on a set.

But, I have seen women struggle with that. I've seen women directors struggle with that. I've seen what women feel they have to do to kind of match a man's business sense or whatever. When I came up against it as a producer what women are more apt to say, "Oh, you think I'm wrong? Oh, maybe then I'm wrong." You say to a man, "You're wrong" and they say, "Really? No, I don't think I'm wrong. I think I'm right...see you later." I think women are much more apt to be like, "Really? You think I'm wrong, Let me think about that. Maybe I'm wrong."

When you're leading, you can't really stop and think about what everyone thinks you're doing is wrong. You have to go forward with your own intention. The same kind of thing you described earlier with going around the boulder and over the boulder instead of stopping in your tracks and saying, "Oh, well this boulder's here. That must mean I'm in the wrong river. I better find my way out and get to the next river three thousand miles away." You waste your time.

One of the things, too, is I always felt a little bit like I was raised to believe that you if you don't know how to build a boat, you have to read the 3,000 page manual and become an expert and learn how to build a boat. Someone once said to me, "Really? No, you're not a boat builder...just hire someone to build a boat." I thought, "Really? You can do that? You mean I don't have to become a boat builder? I can hire someone who's a boat builder to build me a boat?" To me, those are specific to the



female nature and maybe even the way females are raised to be nice and good and a little bit acquiesce to the male perspective of what's right and wrong and good and bad. Some women have the male perspective, by the way.

I think also that men are far better at supporting men than women are at supporting women. I think that men are really good at saying, "You got the job over me" and slapping them on the back and saying "Too bad buddy, let's keep going." Whereas women are like clawing. Something happened and I'm not sure when it happened, but just socially if you look way back, there was a time when the world was kind of run by women. Then it became run by men. I also love the idea in nature, the male peacock is the one with the big beautiful feathers. That's not because he's better, it's because he has to attract the attention of the female. He has to be the one that has to get her attention enough that she thinks he's the prettiest and the strongest and he's going to make the strongest and healthiest babies with her. You see that all over nature.

Except that humans have kind of somehow gotten very distorted and gone the absolutely opposite direction. Women feel like they have to have the pretty feathers. It's actually the other way around. Really when you look at it, women actually can get everything they want but women don't know that. Somewhere, women got warped in their head that they're the ones that are supposed to have the big peacock feathers but actually it's the other way around. The men are the ones that have to have the big peacock feathers. They're the ones who want to drive the red sports cars and want to make the big incomes and whatever because they're supposed to be doing the little mating dance. I feel like women are always clawing at other women because they think they're supposed to have the big peacock feathers. I just think that's not the case at all.

In cultures when women come together and when women really support each other and they really do that successfully as a group, women are hugely powerful. In our culture, for some reason, women don't know how to do that very well.

Carolyn: No, and I'm hoping that is going to be changing. I think that people, especially in this last year or so with what's been going on with the economy, some of those old business models such as dog-eat-dog and getting ahead by stepping on somebody else's face, are proving to be not what's going to take us through the next period of



time.

I think that women are very skilled at networking. We're really great at collaboration. I'm hoping that through things like Unleash Your Brilliance Summit that we can share wisdom of women like yourself and some of my other guests who inspire us to say, "What can we create together?" If 1+1 isn't 2...but it's 11, we can pull together. I think a lot of it has to do with women finding their place in the workforce in the last 20-30 years and our role models were often men. It's a very interesting challenge that we're hoping in the process of working our way through with some good dialogue and more openness...more collaboration and less competition. Look what you did with your movie. You called upon a whole community of people.

Melora: That's one of my favorite things about it and it's one of my greatest pleasures in life. I really thrive on collaboration. I just love it so much and that was the most highly collaborative thing I've ever done. That's what I loved about it so much.

Carolyn: That was great to hear your perspective on it. You've been a performer. You have so many different talents. You're used to being up in front of the camera or in front of a microphone. Being in that limelight and being in that scrutiny is very familiar to you as an actress, but do you still get those nervous butterflies at times? What do you do when you get those moments where you have those nerves or fears and you need to step into that moment with confidence and grace and the flow. I saw you on stage and I know that it's absolutely there. How do you do that? Can you share for all of us who just don't have all those years of training?

Melora: There are skills that you build, for sure. There are tools that can help you. Breathing is one of the main things. Literally taking deep breaths is really important. Anything that can get you back in the moment. Nerves and fear is usually about the future. It's usually about what's going to happen, not what's happening right now. When you're out there, and any performer knows that if you're nervous, the minute you step on stage your nerves go away or you get through your first song or even through the first bar of your first song, the nerves are gone. It's never about what's actually happening; it's about what you fear might happen. Anything that helps you get in



the moment is the thing that's going to help you. Jogging around the block or taking deep breaths. One that I really like is to tighten every muscle in my body that I can possibly think of...face and every little part; elbow, knee, and heel and shin and try to focus on every single face muscle...and then really relax every muscle. You do that like ten times and by the end of that you're totally not nervous.

Carolyn: I was just doing a little bit of that with just my face. It works. Those are great. I guess it's the physicality. Where we get hung up is where we spend too much time in our brain. Running around with some of those thoughts so the breathing and the physical activity breaks that.

Melora: Yes. I think getting too heady is always going to be a downfall for anyone. I think for a creative experience you have to be in your body.

Carolyn: What are some of the ways that you live your brilliance on a daily basis? If you were to follow along with Melora Hardin and a webcam, what would we see you doing to stay in this creativity train?

Melora: I think it's discipline of different things now that I'm a mom and a grown woman. I have to focus on not letting my mind wander into comparisons to other people. It's fine to compare with yourself but not good to compare to other people. It's not good to indulge doubt or indulge long conversations in your head with fear. For me, it's really a new discipline. It's a discipline away from just disciplining my mind more than anything towards what I want and where I want to be. I don't want to be the person that's constantly dissatisfied with everything. I want to be the person who's striving to have what I want. The only way to make that process go quickly to getting closer to what you want, is to stay focused on what you want and not stay focused on what you don't have or wish you had. I guess that's something that I strive to do every day and it is a struggle sometimes and sometimes more than other times.

Highly important and probably top of my list is being loving to my family and being a good mom and wife and family partner and collaborating on how that's going to go, and just staying present for all of them. Taking care of my body and eating right. It's just a huge commitment. It's like my therapist says, "The only good things in your life



come out of commitment. There's nothing in your life that you have that you're not committed to. The only things you have in your life you have because you're committed to them." So, I'm highly committed to living a creative life and doing the things that I think are best for living that which means going to dance class whenever I can get there, working on all my interpersonal stuff, getting our next movie going, being there to draw a picture with my kids, just all those things are all very interwoven. I'm very committed to those things. That doesn't mean that sometimes it's not hard to be committed to this or that because the other one's in the way but just finding the balance.

I love that word 'balance' because people are often saying to me, "How do you find a balance. How do you do that? You're a director, you're an actor, you sing and you dance, you're on Broadway, you're a mom and a wife and..." You know, the word balance is the key. It's a balancing act. When you hold a plate on your head, you're not standing still. You don't find the balance and stand still. You're always working to find the balance. When you watch Cirque de Soleil and people are doing those incredible feats of standing on each other's heads and hands and so forth, they're constantly moving. It's very subtle but their ankle is finding that balance. I don't think it's ever a stationary activity...finding balance.

Carolyn: That's a great image. It can just be those little tiny subtle adjustments in the moment. What's really working? Readjust, correct your course. The Cirque de Soleil is a great way to see it. I like to see things in pictures so it kind of grinds things in a little more for me. Do you find that people are still kind of looking for the magic pill? I went to this seminar to solve my relationship issues and I went to this marketing thing and I got all this... then back to our regularly scheduled life. It doesn't exactly pan out that way until integrate it and really work it every day. It sounds like you are very committed to that.

Melora: I agree. You have to work it every day. I think that's the truth of anything. As I said earlier, literally anything that's a success in my life is because I've worked my ass off...every single day. The reason that I can get up and star on Broadway and not be like absolutely frozen with fear is because I've been singing all my life. I've been dancing all my life. It felt like home to me. Everyone was saying, "This is your



Broadway debut. I don't understand...where have you been and how come you haven't... ." I said, "I've been acting on TV and film. That's part of where I've been." For me, it was absolutely just natural and right. I know actors who feel like if a role comes along with dancing they have to go for it. I haven't kept it up because I felt I should. I kept it up because it's who I am. I'm really thankful for that but something would come along and it just wouldn't be right for me. I think my therapist is a very wise man and he says that a lot of people spend most of their lives trying to be lawnmowers when they're refrigerators.

Carolyn: Another great image. Thank you!

Melora: I'm a refrigerator...I just want to be a refrigerator! I want to be the best refrigerator that I can possibly be instead of trying my whole life to be a lawnmower.

Carolyn: I think you're pointing out something that a lot of people forget about. When we see people who have success, we see people doing amazing things in the world and having success in their business, in their relationships or whatever, some of us are looking at that and say, "Well, they had it so easy" because it looks effortless. What we forget and what you're talking about which is that you had to work your ass off. You needed to get all those little subtleties and you needed the constant discipline of going to your classes and learning how to make those adjustments and adapt to how your body's change. There are all sorts of things. It's too glib for us to say, "It's easy for that person to do because it's just so easy for them."

Melora: It's kind of disrespectful, in a way, isn't it? It's a little bit like scoffing at what you don't know about what they've done and how they've gotten where they are. It's like the Dali Lama is like "Come on." Think about that kind of discipline and commitment. Think about the pain and the fear and the doubt. There's no way there wasn't a struggle in that to become who he is and what he's done and how he's affected the world. There's just no way. It's definitely a good point and a good thing for me to remember because sometimes I do that, too. We all do that. Like, "Oh well, she had that advantage or whatever..." It's just not like that. Everybody has their own path and it does take work and it takes discipline.



Carolyn: In those struggles that we get, if it doesn't kill us, it makes us stronger...if you're willing to work with it.

Melora: And, if you're on the right train. Some people are on the wrong train. They're busting their butt to do something that feels wrong. They're determined in their head that that's what they're supposed to be doing when somewhere deep inside they know it's not and they're never going to succeed there. They're going to fail every time. Even if they make a lot of money, they're still going to fail because it's just so unpleasant.

Carolyn: Absolutely. I think the other thing is just not taking anybody's journey or their success for granted. To look at that successful person and say, "Wow, how did they create that? Maybe there's something I can pull out of there." There's an opportunity for you to learn from everyone.

When you have those crunch moments when balance is really hard to find, how do you get yourself back on track? We talked earlier about the breathing to get in the present, dealing with the nerves, but do you ever have those days when you just wake up feeling completely 'shlumpy' and say, "I know I should go to dance class but I just don't feel like it."

Melora: I got lucky because I had a mom who came to me every month when I was a little kid, and they didn't have a lot of money then, and she said, "I'm going to pay for your dance class. Do you want me to pay for it?" Yes, yes, yes! She'd say, "If I pay for it, you have to go." I'd say, "I know, I know, I know, I want to go." So, she'd pay for it and there would come that day when I'd wake up and I'd be like "I don't want to go, mom." She'd remind me of what she told me at the beginning of the month that they would pay for dance and that meant I'd have to go. So, I went.

I'm so thankful for that because I still, to this day, will wake up and will often think "I don't want to drive all the way to Hollywood and go to that thing, take a shower, blow dry my hair, makeup..." I'd say, "Just shut up. Get in the freaking car and go." So, that's what I do. I get there and I'm thrilled that I went and I feel fantastic when I'm done. I got to have that experience very young. If you go and you do it, you're



always happy you did. Just ignore all the stupid chatter in your brain and just tell it to shut up and go on. That's what I do. I spend a lot of my day saying, "Oh, shut up. That's not me. That's my dad's voice. That's my mom's voice. That's society's voice. That's my agent's voice, whatever...just shut up, that's not me."

I've gotten good at recognizing what's my voice and what's something else. There are a lot of voices in our heads that are not our voice. We spend a lot of time giving them a whole lot of credit and giving them a whole lot of weight and paying a lot of attention to voices that aren't even our voice. I've gotten to point where I've gotten really good at disciplining myself and, again, I have days that are better than others. I have the "feeleable" experience of disciplining myself away from the voices that are not mine. I've been able to do it enough that I get to reap the benefits of that which is that your life gets to go forward rather than just being stuck in all these old beliefs that are not even yours. I just think that's what it really is.

It's a matter of saying, "Wait a second" or just slowing yourself down enough to go "Hold on a minute. Is that really me because that doesn't sound like me. I'm not a hopeless person and I'm not a depressed person. Is that me because I'm feeling really hopeless and depressed right now?" Then you can say, "Oh, I know who that is. That's not me. It's them and I'm not going to be them right now. I'm going to be me so I have to go do something that makes me." Usually, it's dance class or calling a good friend and hashing it through or hanging out with my kids or my husband or just the things that make me be me...write a song or whatever. Everyone has their own thing. For some people it's balancing their checkbook.

Carolyn: One of the teachers that I worked with says that you have to really notice all those different 'me's' inside. Who has the microphone right now. Once you become aware of that, you can choose to say "Actually, I don't think I'm going to give it to the part that feels shumpy and wants to hang out in the bed and eat a lot of candy. I'm going to hand this over to the one that loves to go to dance class or needs to make that phone call and get it done and support herself."

Melora: My point is that probably that person who wants to sit in the bed and eat candy and watch TV all day probably isn't even you anyway. I don't really believe that our



nature is to be self destructive. I believe when we were put here as cavemen and then we were evolving, there was no sitting in bed and eating candy and watching TV.

We were here to survive. That's our most primal instinct. Our most primal instinct is to survive in the greatest way that we can. We just happened to be very evolved to the point where we can have the luxury of being sloths but that's not who we are. I would venture to say that probably isn't even a 'me' voice. It's probably another voice.

Carolyn: Is there something, as you look back now, at the beginning of your expression as you as the artist, the actor, the director...are there any things that you know now that you wish you had known at the beginning of your journey? Are there a few things that you look back and say, "That would have saved me ten years."

Melora: As a younger person, I was worried about fame. I was worried that fame was going to be some kind of force that was not going to be controllable and that I was going to be swallowed up in it and not able to be who I am. I wished that I had less fear and more understanding of what that is and the fact that it's absolutely and completely controllable.

That wonderful quote from Marianne Williamson "we are supposed to be the brightest that we can because that's our way of channeling God into the world and that's how we inspire others to be the brightest that they can be" which is what your Summit is about, obviously. I think I was afraid to be as big and bright as I could be because it made people uncomfortable. I didn't know how to deal with their discomfort. I wish I had more tools to deal with their discomfort. Now, I can deal with people's discomfort but I also get the benefit now that I'm a celebrity and I get to see how me shining my brightest really does help people to shine their brightest. That is my reason for being. I used to say 'there I am in Chicago every night playing Roxie Hart, being sexy and funny. I probably sent some guy home who hadn't had sex with his wife for a while and he was going to have sex with her tonight.' I thought what a great job that someone's feeling all lit up because I've just brought my gifts and put them out there in a 100% way. I think that's the point really. Never



hold back, ever, ever, ever. Personally, there was a part of me that was holding back. I was afraid that you might see this or that. You might not like this or that. And, that I might get swallowed up in all of the hoopla. It doesn't really work like that. That's not really what happens.

Carolyn: I love that you brought that Marianne Williamson quote into this conversation because that is really almost like a theme for me within the Summit. It's really our light that brightens us the most. One of the reasons why I created this was to invite more people to say, "You know what, the time is now to really stop being in that place of not wanting to make people uncomfortable or that they might not like me. How much time DO we really think we have and things can change in a nanosecond." We're experiencing that. I'm all for this kind of a conversation where we can invite and you are doing it with what you're doing here to inspire people to say, "Hey, you know what, that was actually fun. Where can I turn up the dial for myself a little bit in life, too? We're just passing it forward to other people. It's beautiful.

Melora: That's what our film is about, too. I love that it makes people, after seeing the film, to call their husband or wife or friend or father or mother and tell them how much they love them. It is really a thing about appreciating what you have and appreciating family and the love that's in your life and friends and all that.

Carolyn: Absolutely. We're just wrapping up here and I would love for you to tell people how they can find out more about you and your movie. I know we mentioned it earlier, but please everyone check it out at www.youthefilm.com. Tell us a little more about how people can find out more about Melora Hardin. I'm so excited to hear that you have a CD coming out as well.

Melora: I do have a new CD coming out. www.youthefilm.com is a place to find out about the film. I also have a website at www.melora.com. That usually has the latest press and so forth. People can also follow me on Twitter @ MeloraHardin. They can follow me on Facebook and MySpace @ MeloraHardin. Keep up with me that way and write me little emails. I actually do read my Twitter a lot. I will answer people back. I also receive emails from the website and I will also look at those. It's a good way to have people interacting. Also on our film website.



Carolyn: There are some beautiful testimonials there. I think they're just very moving. I think you're starting a wave here.

Melora: I hope so. We figured out the other day that if 100 people told 3 people to buy the film and those 3 people bought the film and those 3 people told 3 people that would only take five times and we would be able to completely make our money back and be able to tell an investor that we'd done that so we could make another heart driven movie. That's really what we want to do. We just want to be able to prove to an investor, it's not even that we want to make a fortune on this film, we just want to make the money back enough to say to a business person, "Look, we did this and therefore can you invest in our film so that we can now make it with a little bit more money." We're committed to making heart driven films that somehow offer love and hope and we want to make a lot of those films.

I had the opportunity of working with Clint Eastwood. He really is a mentor to me in the sense that he really has this amazing library of films behind him. I think he's putting amazing messages in the world with those films and I just want to be able to say that when I'm his age. I want to look back and say, "Look, I have this library of films. These are ways that I've reached out with my heart and my creativity to say something to people and people, in kind, have responded back by purchasing the film or telling a friend. That would be my wish.

Carolyn: Everything that we've covered in our conversation has been really fascinating. If you had to boil it down to one single gem of wisdom that we could leave people with, what would be your sum up gem that you want people to take out of this conversation...what would that be?

Melora: There was so much. I said so many different things. I guess I would just say to be true to whoever you are. It is enough. Whatever you're giving to the world, whether it is just a beautiful organic vegetable garden or it is raising a happy, healthy child who is going to contribute in the world. If it's making carpets or however you're contributing in the way that is most close to your heart or close to your being or your soul, then I would say that is enough. It's not only enough, it is hugely and



highly valuable and just as valuable as any big corporate person who's making a gazillion dollars. I would just say that to value it, to be it, and to live it.

Carolyn: Thank you so much, Melora. I want to thank you again for taking the time out of your busy schedule to join us for the Unleash Your Brilliance Summit. I wish you all the best!

Melora: Thank you!