

Artist Biography – Angelita “Angy” Nixon

Raised in the small city of Wabash in north-central Indiana (born in nearby Marion on October 25, 1967), I was the eldest of three daughters with a broad curiosity for the natural world – animals, plants, minerals, fire, water, and air. I always knew I wanted to be some kind of healer (perhaps a veterinarian). My upbringing included an appreciation for physical and intellectual hard work, with the heritage of a family-owned berry farm on my mother’s side and a family business in newspaper publishing on my father’s side.

In my teens I developed a love of travel and a fascination with foreign cultures, so in my 20s I took a Scandinavian urban studies term in Norway during my junior year abroad through Macalester College in St. Paul, MN. While in Minnesota I was inspired by the confluence of preventive health, patient education, counseling, crisis intervention, activism, self-care, and medicine, which I observed during my internship at a local family planning clinic that was bombed in the 1970s for providing abortion care; it was on the same street where I lived just a few blocks down from my apartment.

Upon finishing my undergraduate degree in psychology with a pre-med concentration, I seriously envisioned myself pursuing a career in women’s health. The only career pathway I knew was medicine, but finally it came to me: the discovery that midwifery was a modern-day health science profession – one which fit my passions, skills and ambitions perfectly. I found my calling, and spent four more years in graduate school at CWRU in Cleveland, OH, earning my master’s degree in nursing in 1998 and becoming a certified nurse-midwife (CNM).

I moved to WV in 1999 and spent my first five years in full-scope practice while attending most births (90%) in one of two hospitals, and about 10% at a freestanding birth center. In 2003 I started my own full-scope midwifery practice and began attending home births so that I could work with a smaller number of clients. I now live in Scott Depot, WV.

Description of the Art Form/Tradition

My midwifery education took place in a heavily medicalized setting, which I enjoyed for the most part. We had over a dozen students in my midwifery class, about half of whom were experienced labor and delivery nurses (from the nursing tradition), and the other half were sometimes referred to as the “crunchy” group – we held more to the midwifery traditions. The term certified nurse-midwife (CNM) itself is hyphenated because it is a combination of two distinct and separate professions (nursing and midwifery), in both of which CNMs are trained.

The CNM credential originated in 1925 and the first training programs were located in Appalachia. Today we have an analogous credential, the Certified Midwife (CM), not requiring prerequisites in nursing. Other midwifery credentials such as the Certified Professional Midwife (CPM) have emerged, with a narrower scope compared to CNM/CMs. However, the essence of midwifery has existed practically throughout the entirety of human history, around the globe, and even across animal species (dolphins, whales, primates, bats, and domestic dogs and cats are often accompanied by and use midwifery behaviors during birth). Many professions have been invented and become regulated in the US, say over the last 100-200 years, and the scientific basis of each continues to improve. All professions undergo these continuous quality improvements over time, and I can only imagine that quality improvements began from the very start of

midwifery way back in the times of the ancients, and will continue on forever.

For more details, please visit <https://www.midwife.org/Our-Philosophy-of-care>

Artist Statement

The majority of the *science* of midwifery was taught to me in school, the purpose of which is to prepare newly credentialed CNM/CMs (or CPMs) for entry-level full-scope practice. I had an awareness of the *art* of midwifery, but to reach a sense of mastery took me about three solid years (sometimes in 80-hour work weeks), and by five years I felt confident enough to begin practicing independently.

There are a lot of aspects of midwifery that to me represent the *art* of midwifery, and this side of it sometimes even appears to be on somewhat of a spiritual plane. This is where the relationship matters, where the learning edge and curiosity remain fresh, where knowledge turns to wisdom that can be passed along, where the work moves from effort to second-nature, where we learn to trust our intuition, where our ultimate accountability is with the families in our care, and where accountability to our colleagues is more like a code of honor. In this context our duty is very personal, to serve the client rather than an employer or some system or hierarchy.

In midwifery the art and the science are almost inseparable. Both the art and the science are accessible to clients, usually through a combination of modeling, teaching basic preventive health and wellness concepts, and storytelling.

Exploring the world in my travels and studies abroad prepared me well for coming to Appalachia to accept my first midwifery position with a group of seasoned CNMs and an obstetrician-gynecologist in 1999. I came to WV to grow roots, and I look forward to working with families over multiple generations. Over the 20+ years since, I have built strong collaborative networks in the communities around me, on a foundation of quality and service. I know I thrive best under conditions of deep connection with people and places. This apprenticeship helps ensure that the knowledge and skills, the art and the science, remain under continuous quality improvement, and carry forward with the next generation of future midwives.

For more details on Core Competencies, please visit

https://www.midwife.org/acnm/files/acnmlibrarydata/uploadfilename/00000000050/ACNMCoreCompetenciesMar2020_final.pdf