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**Aretha Franklin – The Story Of The Queen Of Soul**

**By Jay Nault**

No matter who you are or where you've been, chances are that you've heard one or more of Aretha Franklin's songs. Chances are also that you've had one of those classics ringing pleasantly in your head for hours on end. The Queen of Soul has that effect on people everywhere, and she's heading out on the road again this summer to provide millions of her fans with another reason to cherish her work.

**Life Story**

Franklin was born in Memphis on March 25, 1942. After a bit of moving around, her family settled in Detroit when Aretha was seven. She was exposed to music at an early age, and began singing in her father's church. She was soon a very popular member of the choir, and she produced her first recording at the age of 14.

Subsequent to this first recording, Franklin entered "adulthood" almost immediately. She signed a recording contract with Columbia Records and became a mother when she was 15, having her first son, Clarence, Jr. Franklin had another son, Eddie, when she was 16.

At this point, Franklin had to make a choice – be a full-time mother or pursue her music career. She chose the latter, as her grandmother helped her care for her sons while she continued to record songs. Franklin married Ted White in 1962 and had another son, "Teddy" White, Jr. in 1969.

She stayed with Columbia Records until 1967, when she moved to Atlantic Records, and the results were almost immediate due to the expanded artistic freedom she had with her new label. Franklin dabbled in gospel, soul and blues themes with her music, and several of her songs from this time period became top hits.

**Blossoming Career**

However, it was her R&B work that earned her the nickname, "The Queen of Soul" in the 1960's. Franklin's work with Atlantic Records made her an international star, and several of her most famous

songs, including Respect were released during this period.

Franklin continued to not only tour but to record, and her career totals are astonishing. She has released a total of 52 albums, and has had 17 singles reach the Top Ten of the US Hot 100 Singles chart.

Franklin has also won 17 Grammy Awards in several categories, but that is far from her only entry into her list of accomplishments. Franklin became the first woman inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1987, and was the second woman to gain entry into the UK Music Hall of Fame in 2005.

The Queen of Soul has also been recognized by more than one President of the United States. In 1999, President Bill Clinton awarded Franklin with the National Medal of Arts, and President George W. Bush bestowed upon Franklin the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2005.

### What It All Means

All of these accomplishments should make it clear that Aretha Franklin is a national icon. She has appeared in movies like The Blues Brothers in 1980 and sang the national anthem in her adopted hometown of Detroit prior to Super Bowl XL.

Her songs are timeless, and the memories from her live shows live on in the minds of all who are lucky enough to be able to attend a concert. Franklin will be providing those same memories this summer.

Written by Jay Nault sponsored by

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## **Ch–Ch–Chain of Hearts: Cranking Up Compassion**

**By Maya Talisman Frost**

Can you hear your compassion? It's time to crank it up.

One of the most difficult challenges we face in our quest to be compassionate is dealing with conflict. Those we love most tend to be the ones most likely to engage us in sparring that cuts the deepest.

## Aretha Franklin – The Story Of The Queen Of Soul

Why do we allow ourselves to use our harshest words and most acid tone of voice with the people we love most?

Precisely because we love them most. We're counting on unconditional love. We know we are likely to be forgiven. We feel close enough to let our true ugliness shine.

Blindingly.

We wouldn't dream of lashing out at our colleagues at work in this way. That would be way too risky. Instead, we bottle our daily frustration and dump it all over our loved ones when we get home.

Many of my clients struggle with showing compassion for their partners, children and parents when they are feeling stressed. Instead of relaxing into affection, they respond to requests or confrontation with anger.

Most frustrating of all is the fact that, while they are lashing out, they recognize that they are alienating those with whom they most want to feel a connection and find comfort. It's as though they are watching themselves lob grenades but are powerless to stop.

One of the best—and easiest to remember—triggers for changing behavior is thinking of a particular song phrase. I teach clients to use the "ch–ch–chain" part of Aretha Franklin's "Chain of Fools" to kick off a remarkably simple visualization exercise that is very effective in diffusing escalating conflict. It's based on a traditional loving–kindness meditation, but it's a lot more fun!

Visualize a chain of hearts—an extended valentine, if you will—connecting your heart to theirs. Remember that you are linked by this shared affection.

In our best moments, we do whatever we can to protect our loved ones from pain. If this person had an injury or illness, you would be gentle, soothing and kind, right? You've probably spent hours caring for this individual with great tenderness.

Tap into that.

Look at the chain of hearts. Your sharp words slash through that chain like a machete. STOP. Let the words drop away as you focus on that connection. Feel your anger and frustration being replaced by compassion.

"Ch–ch–chay–ay–ay–ay–ain...." It's hard to stay cranky while mentally chanting the "ch–ch–chain" mantra and visualizing that valentine.

Can't feel the love? Try another Aretha Franklin song. Instead of focusing on that ch–ch–chain of hearts, dive into "R–E–S–P–E–C–T" and replace that poison in your words with civility.

Not into Aretha? Pick your own song. Let your mental radio play, and use it to crank up your compassion.

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[Bah–oomp] Makes me feel like A Natural Woman...

Maya Talisman Frost is a mind masseuse offering specialized mindfulness training in Portland, Oregon. Her work has inspired thinkers in over 90 countries. To subscribe to her free weekly ezine, the Friday Mind Massage, visit

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