

## FROM THE WITCH TRIALS TO WICCA

### An Interview with Professor Helen A. Berger



**WRSP:** For those who might be unfamiliar with the topic, how would you define modern Paganism and Wicca?

**Prof Berger:** One of the problems with defining Paganism or Wicca is that there is no one organization or authority that sets the rules and definitions. This results in individual variation. Almost anything I say will prompt at least one person to say, "I'm a Pagan or a Wiccan and that is not true of my practice or lineage." Nonetheless, there are certain practices and beliefs that are basic and adhered to by the vast majority.

Contemporary Pagans of all stripes now most often refer to themselves as practitioners of an earth-based religion. When I began my research thirty-five years ago they were more often referred to as magical religions. Both remain true today. These are religions that base their practices on pre-Christian religious or spiritual practices that have been updated and changed to fit more modern sensibilities. Gaps in the historical or archaeological record are filled in with aspects of other religions, such as Theosophy, Hinduism, or other metaphysical religions and practices. Sometimes elements of science fiction or other more modern literature or movies become assimilated into individuals' practices. In all of these various forms the earth is normally viewed as sacred, something to be revered and celebrated. In many the earth is referred to as the Mother from whom one is born and to whom one returns in death. Rituals typically follow a yearly cycle that is connected to the turning of the year and the seasons.

It is also common for Pagans to practice some form or forms of divination and magic, that is, using non-scientific means to create a change they wish to see. Magic is an important element of the practice for most if not all Pagans as it is a way of interacting with the otherworld, whether that

other world is viewed as divinities, spirits, or forces of nature. In most forms of Paganism the focus tends to be on practice instead of belief, which makes rituals and direct contact with the spirit or otherworld central to the religions. Magic is more central to some practices than others, but I have yet to find a Pagan path where it is truly completely missing, even if it is referred to by another name.

Wicca is a particular form of Paganism and, at least in the US, the most popular specific form. It is an initiatory religion, which when I began my research required in most instances that someone join a coven and be trained by a High Priestess and High Priest. Even at the beginning of my research I met one Wiccan who told me she was initiated by the Goddess and had not been trained in a coven. Now it is more common for Wiccans in the United States to be solitary practitioners and to self-initiate. Wiccans typically have three levels of training. The High Priestess and High Priest would decide when the person moved up the ranks. As more people practice alone, they determine their own ranking or avoid it all together. I recently did a short piece on Wicca for *The Conversation* and include the link here:

<https://theconversation.com/what-is-wicca-an-expert-on-modern-witchcraft-explains-165939>

**WRSP:** During the 1980s, a key focus of yours was on the witch trials of the early modern period. Not only was your PhD thesis devoted to the witch trials of early modern England, but in 1986 you gave a series of talks on witchcraft in early modern New England for the Boston Public Library. You've written about how this latter experience led you to take an interest in living communities whose members self-identify as witches, especially Wiccans. Could you tell us more about how this new interest arose—and how it came to occupy such a huge part of your subsequent career?

**Prof. Berger:** My life was changed by that lecture series on witchcraft in New England that I did for the Boston Public library in October of 1986. I still have a poster on my study wall that the library created to publicize the lectures. The library had received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to have several lecture series open to the public on topics relevant to the Greater Boston area. For October they choose to have the series on witchcraft. At the time I jokingly referred to my lecture series as the Halloween special. Salem, Massachusetts or more correctly Salem village, now Danvers, is the site of the only large-scale witchcraft accusations in what was then the American colonies. There were scattered other accusations and hangings in other of the American colonies, but none involved more than single individuals or a couple of people. The actual trials took place in Salem, which refers to itself as "Witch City." The local high school football team is named "the Witches."

The library asked me to do five lectures starting with the first Thursday in October and continuing for each of the other Thursdays throughout the month. As I was thinking about topics that would be appropriate for a public audience I returned to New York City, where I grew up and where I received my PhD at New York University. I met an old friend, Paul Shapiro, at a local café in the East Village and was throwing around possible topics with him. He asked if there wasn't something current that I could end the series with to bring the topic into the present. I told him about an article I had read in the *Boston Globe* about the Witches' Anti-Defamation League led by Laurie Cabot that was protesting *The Witches of Eastwick* movie. The more we talked the more this seemed like an interesting end to the series. I had six months and thought I could easily do enough research to give a public talk. When I began researching in 1986, I found that there was very little research on

modern day Witches other than Margot Adler's book, *Drawing Down the Moon*, and one academic article.

I decided the only thing to do to fill in the gaps was to do my own research. But this was not easy as at that time most contemporary Pagans were secretive about their practice. I managed to put together a lecture using the scant published research augmented by my own very minimal research to create an hour-long lecture.

The audience for each of the lectures varied with some people who attended every week and others who came only for a particular lecture. One elderly woman with white hair always sat in the front row, listened intently, and asked interesting questions. I looked forward to seeing her there every week. At the final lecture, when I said what was then a surprising fact; Witches looked like everyone else. You could be living next door to, or working with, a Witch and not know it. She stopped me mid-lecture and asked, "are you saying there could be Witches in the room." As the average age of the participants had dropped significantly for this lecture, I offered that I thought there probably were Witches in the room. She stood up, turned around with her hands on her hips, and asked, "are there any Witches here?" I think it is because she looked like the quintessential grandmother that a number of people raised their hands.

Because this was my last lecture the library was serving refreshments to give participants a chance to chat with me. When I went to talk to the group who said they were Witches, they invited me to join as a researcher a coven that was just forming. Another man invited me to an EarthSpirit event for Samhain\* where I met Andras Corban (now Corban Arthen). I always say this subject came to find me, more than I it. I had become intrigued and just went for it.

I transformed myself from an historical sociologist to a sociologist of religion, updating my interview skills among other skills that were needed for this type of research. I never looked back. Thinking about it now, I marvel how readily those in the contemporary Pagan movement welcomed me in and how quickly I abandoned the research I had been doing for this unknown and, at the time, odd topic. It was the right thing for me to do. I helped to found a subfield and realized that working with living people is much more consistent with my personality and skills than historical research. Having a background in the history of the trials is nonetheless useful as it is a metaphor that keeps resurfacing within Pagan circles.

\*=[Samhain is a Wiccan and broader modern Pagan festival celebrated on October 31.]

**WRSP:** The relationship between "insider" and "outsider" perspectives has been long debated among scholars of modern Paganism, culminating in the concerns raised in the first half of the 2010s about the numerical dominance of practitioners within the field. How has your perspective as an "outsider" influenced your research, especially as you were conducting fieldwork among Pagans in the northeast U.S. states in the late 1980s and 1990s?

**Prof. Berger:** First, although my primary research was in the Northeast of the United States, I did do research in other parts of the country as well. I also interviewed Wiccans and other Pagans who travelled to New England to attend festivals and other events.

Turning back to your questions, being an outsider to the religion initially made me an outsider among contemporary Pagan researchers as well. Some kept me at arm's length. I think there was a concern that I would be taken more seriously than they just because I was an outsider. Their concerns had a basis, although I felt then and now that there should be both when studying any

religion or group. There were some things that only insiders were part of and could speak to, such as how it felt to be initiated or to feel the divine enter you as you draw down the moon.\* At least initially, some of those insiders were very protective of the community, seeing it as being under siege and therefore off limits for criticism. This of course has changed. As an outsider I started with a different mindset and set of questions about why people joined, how they could take magic seriously, why they continued in their practice of a religion that certainly at that time many needed to conceal due to employment and safety concerns. Starting from ignorance or presumed ignorance has its benefits as people felt the needed to tell me in detail about the correct way to practice etc. I think I therefore learned a lot about how people were conceiving their practice.

\*=[“Drawing Down the Moon” is a Wiccan ritual in which the Goddess is invoked to enter the body of the High Priestess.]

**WRSP:** Your first book, *A Community of Witches: Contemporary Neo-Paganism and Witchcraft in the United States*, came out in 1999, making it one of the earliest academic monographs to be published on the subject. Based largely on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the Boston area, it argued that Wicca and related forms of modern Paganism should be best understood in the context of late modernity. It came out at a key juncture for the field; not only was 1999 the same year that Ronald Hutton’s *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* appeared, but your book also foreshadowed a range of other ethnographically-based monographs on Wicca and related forms of Anglophone Paganism that were published over the next five years (by Susan Greenwood, Jone Salomonsen, Sabina Magliocco, Kathryn Rountree, Sarah M. Pike, etc). How did you set about conducting the research for this book and securing a publisher at a time when there was very little like it out there?

**Prof. Berger:** Yes, my book was one of the early ones, which argued that contemporary Paganism, or as I and others called it then “neo-Paganism,” was a religion of late modernity and that practitioners did form a type of community. The latter is still something that is debated. I think the definition used by many people of community is too narrow and that there are many different forms of community; some now are based on the Internet. Communities have always included more than just groups that meet regularly and face-to-face.

My research for that book began at the last lecture of the series I did for the Boston Library. As I noted in my answer to an earlier question, I met a group that was starting a coven that I was invited to join. I was also invited to an EarthSpirit Community open Samhain ritual at a church in Cambridge and introduced to Andras who then invited me to his classes and to attend other events. Each person I met introduced me to others, creating a snowball sample. Everyone I met was generous with their time and knowledge and open to introducing me to more people. There weren’t many people doing research at that time and I think that Witches and other Pagans wanted researchers to take them as seriously as other religions were taken. They very much wanted someone to research them, from the outside, as they had nothing they were embarrassed about.

Frederick Denny, the religion series editor for the University of South Carolina Press, came to one of the early papers I presented at the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and asked to chat with me after. He asked if I wanted to write a book on the topic. Fred became a friend who worked with me as I wrote my first book proposal. Fred regularly went to meetings looking for new authors, people doing something interesting in the field. He launched a number of us in our academic careers, encouraging each of us to publish our work as a book.

**WRSP:** With Andras Corban Arthen, you conducted the Pagan Census between 1993 and 1995, which at the time was the largest survey of modern Pagans ever completed. The findings of this project appeared in *Voices from the Pagan Census: A National Survey of Witches and Neo-Pagans in the United States* (University of South Carolina Press, 2003), co-written with Evan A. Leach and Leigh Shaffer. Since then, you have also engaged in the Pagan Census Revisited of 2009 to 2010 and the Pagan Census Revisited II in 2014 with James R. Lewis. How did these projects take shape?

**Prof. Berger:** The initial Pagan Census was Andras' idea. He wanted to do a census of all American Pagans to assess the numbers and to learn more about them. As I am a sociologist, he asked me to work with him on the project. We worked together on the questions. A colleague of mine suggested that we should include some questions from the General Social Survey (GSS), to permit comparisons between contemporary Pagans and the general American public. I searched through the GSS codebook and found the most appropriate questions I could and Andras and I chose from among those. These posed some problems as a Christian bias was evident in most of them. Andras understood the value of having a comparison with the general population, but we were both aware that it might make some in the Pagan community less comfortable. We came up with a solution of writing a note stating that some of the following questions were from the GSS and therefore were less geared directly to the Pagan community but were important for comparative reasons.

These questions were invaluable in the end as they permitted us to show both ways in which the Pagan community differed from, and were similar to, or the same as, other Americans. Some of those findings were no real surprise; for instance, more Pagans, at that time, self-identified as feminists than did members of the general population. What was surprising to me was how common paranormal experiences were in the general population as well as among Pagans. Other questions were targeted to Pagans and these too were very important. Our survey never did become a census but it was the largest survey of American Pagans in its time. Andras was able to gain the support of every major Pagan leader and organization, which was key to our getting so many responses

Initially we had visions of a random sample of people who belonged to a series of Pagan organizations. But that never happened. Pagans wanted to be counted and heard. They xeroxed the survey and shared it with others, paid their own postage, and sent it to me at my university. Someone put it on the Internet and it went viral. My initial response was to sit in my office with more returned surveys than Andras and I had sent out and cry. I had gotten some grant money for this and I thought I would have to return it. Leigh Shaffer, my colleague, the methods person in my department, and office neighbor, stopped in and said, "This is great." "You have a snowball sample and it is even better than the original plan." He then helped me rethink how to analyse the data from this perspective. We then involved another colleague, Evan Leach, to help crunch the numbers.

The survey is still online at the Murray Institute at Harvard University. They consider it the baseline for all subsequent surveys of contemporary Pagans. It served as the basis of the Pagan Census Revisited, which was a revised, updated, and somewhat changed survey that James ("Jim") Lewis invited me to do with him. That survey garnered even more responses than did the first and served as the basis for my most recent book *Solitary Pagans* as well as a number of publications by Jim.

**WRSP:** You were also responsible for editing the 2005 volume *Witchcraft and Magic in the New World: Contemporary North America* for the University of Pennsylvania Press. How did this book come about? Have you considered editing another volume since?

**Prof. Berger:** I was asked by the acquisitions editor of the University of Pennsylvania Press to do this edited volume. I agreed immediately and then found out quite how much work editing a volume is. Will I do it again? Maybe, but so far I haven't signed up for another. Nonetheless I am pleased with the volume and the essays in it. This, like all my books, still remains in print.

**WRSP:** The 1990s and early 2000s saw a growing number of teenagers identifying as witches and/or Wiccans, influenced both by literature aimed at that demographic and TV shows like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Charmed*. With the Australian sociologist Douglas Ezzy you embarked on a major study of this phenomenon, resulting in your co-written 2007 book *Teenage Witches: Magical Youth and the Search for the Self*. How did this research get off the ground?

**Prof. Berger:** Teenage Witches appeared to be everywhere in the 1990s and early 2000s, just as they are again now. It was intriguing. I was just beginning to do research on it when I ended up at a conference at the London School of Economics on new religious movements. I had not planned to attend this conference but an elderly and old friend of mine was very ill and I decided to come over to see him before he died. Michael York and his partner Richard invited me to stay at their flat in London. Michael was going to the conference and I just signed up for it at the last moment.

I would take a break in between hospital visits to listen to papers as a relief from the immediate sadness of my friend's illness and impending death. One of the papers I heard was by Doug Ezzy. I asked for a copy, suggested we talk and proposed we join forces doing the research. It was rather impetuous on both of our parts. I enjoyed working with Doug, most of it of course was done on the Internet. We were able to meet in person twice while researching teen Witches.

Initially we were going to do research only in the United States and Australia—two English speaking countries on opposite sides of the globe and the ones where each of us lived. I had a meeting scheduled with the acquisitions editor at Rutgers University Press at an upcoming academic meeting in the U.S. He was very interested in the project but wanted England included. I consulted with Doug and we decided to include England. We each then got grants to do the research in the United Kingdom and were lucky to meet up there.

As our interviews got transcribed we would share them and each read through them. We did twenty in each country; Doug and I each did ten in England. I got two small grants that made it possible for me to go to England to do the research. Because Americans and British drive on different sides of the road, I did not feel safe driving in the U.K. Instead, I got a British rail pass, which permitted me for a set fee to travel anywhere on the train, I think it was for two weeks. Michael and Richard very kindly and generously gave me their flat to use in London so that became home base for me. Michael was teaching at that time in Bath and Richard decided to join him while I was in residence.

I put a notice on the Internet site, *Witchvox*,\* stating that I was looking for teenage Witches to interview. I asked friends throughout England to put up notices at metaphysical bookshops, their universities, and anywhere else they could think of. And once I had one interview scheduled I asked the person if they knew anyone else who was a teen Witch and would be willing to speak to me.

I recall that two young women came with an older man to the metaphysical bookshop to check me out before we spoke. As a small-sized woman, I think I had an easier time of getting respondents than Doug. He did manage nonetheless to interview ten respondents.

Once we read through the transcripts we developed an outline for the book. Each of us took responsibility for a first draft of half the chapters, except for one that we divided in half because we both wanted first shot at it. After completing a rough draft of a chapter, we sent it to the other person for revisions, changes, and discussion. Each chapter went back and forth between us several times before we were both pleased with it. On the whole the process worked well, although there are some advantages to being able to meet in person more often. Today it would be easier as there is Zoom, although the huge time difference between Australia and the U.S. would still create some problems.

\*=[Witchvox, also known as The Witches' Voice, was probably the most popular website for Wiccans during the late 1990s and early 2000s. Its use was gradually supplanted by later forms of social media and it closed in 2019.]

**WRSP:** The majority of U.S. Wiccans now operate as solitary practitioners, rather than as members of a coven, and your research on this topic has culminated in your 2019 book *Solitary Pagans: Contemporary Witches, Wiccans and Others Who Practice Alone*. Can you tell us more about the research that went into this book and the nature of solitary Paganism itself?

**Prof. Berger:** My book, *Solitary Pagans*, grew out of the Pagan Census Revisited. I had initially wanted to do a book that focused on what had changed within Paganism between the two surveys, based on those questions that had been reused. But there wasn't much change to be found there. Possibly if different questions had been asked we would have found significant differences. However, one thing stood out; solitary practitioners were now the dominant group. That was the one overarching change and it was major.

My focus was two-fold: to see how similar and dissimilar those who practiced alone or in a group were, and to try to assess how isolated solitaires really are. On the one hand, I found that solitaires aren't really isolated. They join other Pagans on the Internet, phone, texts, go to open group rituals and some festivals or gatherings. On the other hand, there was a real difference both in political activity and the frequency of performing rituals and having metaphysical activities. In all areas those in groups did more. Interestingly, on many political activities solitary Pagans still did more than the typical American, but not as much as those Pagans in groups.

**WRSP:** How has your work been received, both within modern Pagan communities themselves and among scholars of religion and related topics?

**Prof. Berger:** On the whole, my work has been well received. My statistical data has been used by others in their own work. In the early days of my publishing, I felt that I was not completely trusted by those scholars of Paganism who were also practitioners. I no longer feel that way. I think that as their scholarship has gained more support, they no longer need to fear that mine will be taken more seriously because I am an outsider.

Within the larger discipline of new religious movements or sociology of religion my work has always been well received. I think to begin with some scholars of sociology of religion did not take Paganism seriously. They thought it would disappear—a youthful movement with no staying power. I recall a prediction being made that some aspects of the religion, like goddess worship, would be absorbed into more mainstream religions, but the religion itself would dissipate. At this point it is no longer a new religion. It has grown in the number of adherents and how open people are about practicing

Paganism. The youth of the 1960s are now grandparents and I no longer hear anyone predicting the religion will just disappear in a few years. Questions are still raised about its staying power over a longer haul of a hundred or two hundred years, but it certainly has proven not to be a flash in the pan. I think once you conceive of the religion as one of late modernity and start thinking about the implications of that for the religion, it appears to be more stable and to have a longer trajectory. There are now new forms of community, of spiritual practice, and of connection that are consistent with the changes in technology, communication, and lifestyle in the past half century.

**WRSP:** As someone who has observed the Wiccan and modern Pagan communities in the U.S. over a thirty-year period—a span of time that has of course seen the Internet exert a significant influence over most people’s lives—what do you think have been the most noticeable, or most important, changes within those communities? How do you think these new religious movements will adapt going forward?

**Prof. Berger:** Actually this past October I just celebrated the 35th year of studying contemporary Paganism. The most notable change I noticed is the growth of solitary practitioners. They have grown in number and in respectability within the religions. Thirty-five years ago, solitary practitioners were not taken very seriously. With the growth of solitary practitioners there has also been a growth in those who are eclectic practitioners; the two phenomena are related. The Internet has made it easier for people to learn about and practice Paganism, even in remote places. As more people are training outside of a coven, grove, or other group, more are taking the label “eclectic” as well. And this is more common for solitary practitioners than for those in groups.

I think the Internet has probably helped to fuel the current teen Witch craze. The young don’t need to involve their parents in their searches or choices.

At the same time there has been an increased interest in ethnic Paganism—such as Heathens, Hellenic, and Druids. Although most ethnic Pagans are not right-leaning, more are so than those who self-identify as Wiccans, Witches, or eclectics.

Those who entered the movement in the 1960s and 1970s are now old. Many of the Pagan umbrella organizations are being run by people in their seventies or older. These organizations have always played an important role in providing open rituals, newsletters, and festivals. They will in the next twenty years be in transition. Who will take over running them? Will organizations survive? If not, what will fill the role they have carved out? The religion is decentered, but it has had a number of different overlapping centers or organizations. I am thinking here of EarthSpirit, Circle Sanctuary, and others. I think that the next few decades will be a turning point for the religion in the U.S. I am interested to see where it leads.

**WRSP:** What areas of modern Paganism do you think could really do with scholarly research in future?

**Prof. Berger:** Contemporary Paganism is a rich area for research. There are so many topics that need more study. To name a few:

1. TikTok Witches and the new generation of teen Witches



2. What happened with the last influx of teenagers? How many stayed and are practicing Witchcraft or another form of Paganism? How many left? And of course what resulted in their either staying or leaving? For those that left did they keep any of the practices from Witchcraft?

3. More is needed on Pagans in the military. I just wrote an article for the online journal *The Conversation* that was reprinted in *The Washington Post* ([https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/wiccans-in-the-us-military-are-mourning-the-dead-in-afghanistan-this-year-as-they-mark-samhain-the-original-halloween/2021/10/20/edbc0868-31b6-11ec-8036-7db255bff176\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/wiccans-in-the-us-military-are-mourning-the-dead-in-afghanistan-this-year-as-they-mark-samhain-the-original-halloween/2021/10/20/edbc0868-31b6-11ec-8036-7db255bff176_story.html)). It was for Samhain. I was surprised how few people realized there were Pagans in the U.S. military.

4. Research on Paganisms in prison. Which forms of Paganism are popular in prisons? Why? And how do these shape the prison experience? What are the differences in men's and women's prisons.

5. Ethnographic work needs to be done on solitary practitioners to learn more about their form of practice and their links to other Pagans.

6. The influx of conspiracy theories and far right ideology among Pagans, particularly but not limited to folkish Heathens.\*

These are the issues most on my mind right now. But, there is so much more to look at as well.

\*=[Folkish Heathenry describes forms of Heathenry, the modern Pagan religion revolving around the pre-Christian deities of linguistically Germanic Europe, that emphasise links between the religion and a perceived Germanic racial identity.]

**WRSP:** Your work has focused heavily on modern Paganism, and Wicca in particular, but I wondered if you had a particular interest in any other religious movements? Have you also kept up an interest in the sociology of early modern witchcraft accusations?

**Prof. Berger:** I have not kept up with the scholarly research on the early modern witchcraft trials. I have left that mostly behind. I still do read some articles and an occasional book on the issue and will be going to the exhibition at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem on the witchcraft trials there, but the trials are no longer my area of research. I read about other religions as background to my interest in contemporary Paganism but there is no other religion that I study. I have focused completely on contemporary Paganism primarily within the United States. As there is still so much that grabs my interest in contemporary Paganism, I doubt I will move on to another religion.

**WRSP:** What value do you believe that sociology as a discipline brings to the study of modern Paganism and to new and alternative religions more broadly? What does it offer that disciplines like history and anthropology just can't?

**Prof. Berger:** The borders between sociology, history, and anthropology are porous. At one time it would have been easy to say history studies the past, anthropology other cultures, and sociology the present-day developed world, but that hasn't been true for decades. I am no longer sure what tools, if any, are used exclusively by one discipline. Both sociologists and anthropologists do ethnography and look to history for context and placement of phenomena. Sociologists traditionally are more likely to do largescale surveys, but anthropologists are now doing them as well. To some degree it is the perspective used in analysis, but even that is murky as we read each other's work and apply all

those useful texts and concepts. Sociologists have traditionally had a greater concern for issues of stratification—social class, gender, age, race—but historians and anthropologists are concerned with those as well. Anthropologists remind us about colonialism and its influence on religion as well as other aspects of society, but most sociologists are concerned about that as well.

**WRSP:** I'm given to understand that your current research explores Pagan relationships and responses to the far right. How is this progressing, and do you have any other projects on the horizon?

**Prof. Berger:** Yes, I am now looking at responses to the far right and more generally the degree to which those ideas are entering into contemporary Paganism. I feel as though I am still at the beginning of this project. I am excited about it. At this moment I do not have any other projects in the works but if I were to do anything it would be something about the new teen Witches. I am still fascinated by the young who join. If I were to do it again, I would really like to follow twenty young Witches from when they first started exploring the religion for a five-to-ten-year period. It would allow me to find out about those who dabble and those that stay. But that is only a fantasy at the moment. My actual work is on the growth of far-right ideas within contemporary Paganism. It has been most noted among folkish Heathens and is clearly the most pronounced there, but I am seeing some evidence that some of it might be seeping into corners of the larger Pagan community. I am still at the beginning of this research and am not sure where it will lead me.

**Professor Berger, thank you for participating in the WRSP Forum!**

**This interview is also being made available at the personal blog of the interviewer,**

**Dr Ethan Doyle White (<http://ethandoylewhite.blogspot.com/>)**

**Professor Berger** is Professor Emeritus at West Chester University in Pennsylvania and an Affiliated Scholar at the Women's Studies Research Center at Brandeis University in Massachusetts. A specialist in the study of Wicca and related forms of modern Paganism in the United States, she is the sole author of *A Community of Witches: Contemporary Neo-Paganism and Witchcraft in the United States* (University of South Carolina Press, 1999), and *Solitary Pagans: Contemporary Witches, Wiccans and Others Who Practice Alone* (University of South Carolina Press, 2019). With Evan A. Leach and Leigh Shaffer, she authored *Voices from the Pagan Census: A National Survey of Witches and Neo-Pagans in the United States* (University of South Carolina Press, 2003), and with Doug Ezzy, she wrote *Teenage Witches: Magical Youth and the Search for the Self* (Rutgers University Press, 2007). In addition, she edited *Witchcraft and Magic in the New World: Contemporary North America* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005). Professor Berger's present research explores the role of far-right politics in American Paganism.

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**WRSP Interviewer: Dr Ethan Doyle White**