Sheros Unite in L.A.

Bestselling authors Elizabeth Gilbert and Cheryl Strayed come together for a sure-to-be powerful conversation event

By Chad Schubert
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heir radical self-salvation journeys turned blockbuster memoirs and hit Hollywood films inspired a global generation to face their hardest truths, confront their deepest fears, and rise up as the blazing hero of their own life-changing story. Now Elizabeth Gilbert, author of “Eat, Pray, Love,” and Cheryl Strayed, who penned “Wild,” are coming together to reignite that same self-saving fire with a live audience at CAP UCLA on December 2, 2018.

“I'm really, really excited,” Gilbert says of her reunion with Strayed at the winter function. “This is the really cool part: This will only be the third time [Cheryl] and I have ever met in person. We live on opposite sides of the country, so we were friends by email, phone, and letters for almost a decade before we ever met.”

In fact, the two only met face-to-face for the first time last year. Still, there's an obvious kindred spirit sisterhood that radiates from the pair, which I notice as they rave over one another like schoolgirl besties during separate phone interviews.

“When we first met, it was like ‘ahh, finally!’” Strayed shares a few days later, laughing over the way Gilbert would describe her as the “best friend she had never met.”

Seeing either of the refreshingly honest victresses speak live is like having a deep heart-to-heart with a wise best friend who has the cool, calm, collected answers to everything. After all they’ve been through—heartbreaking divorce, the soul-shattering loss of loved ones, risking everything to salvage broken parts of themselves—they’ve become North Stars to those of us on the journey to transforming grief into grace, loathing into love, and fear into freedom.

While there’s no telling what direction the candid chat event will take, we can count on topics from the authors’ top-selling titles—how to be “Brave Enough,” the “Big Magic” of “creative living beyond fear,” and advice on the “Tiny Beautiful Things” of life and love—to pave the way. The audience will also have a chance to engage in an open Q&A with Gilbert and Strayed, who are happy to discuss anything from relationships and dream paths to coping with the “turmoil brought about by the politics of the day,” which Strayed notes as a necessary point of discussion.

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I'm really interested in [talking about] the ways that creativity can make us resilient,” notes Gilbert, who’s currently writing a novel she says has served as a helpful outlet for coping with the recent death of her beloved partner Rayya Elias. “Who do you become after an event of loss like that?” Gilbert asks. “How do you take this horrible, unacceptable thing that has happened to you and create something from it that’s beautiful and true? How can we make something out of the broken pieces?”

The work Gilbert and Strayed have birthed from the broken pieces of their own lives is what led them—and millions of readers around the world—to become truer, fuller, better versions of themselves. When we get better, society gets better, as Strayed reminds us.

“T
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Elizabeth Gilbert & Cheryl Strayed in Conversation will be held on 12/2/18 at 3 p.m. at the Center for the Art of Performance (Royce Hall, 10745 Dickson Court, Los Angeles, CA).

For tickets ($29–$59), visit cap.ucla.edu.