**The Age Of Aquarius**



By [Jim Lauria](https://www.wateronline.com/author/jim-lauria)



The cast of *Hair* seemed to know the start date of the Age of Aquarius — "when the moon is in the seventh house and Jupiter aligns with Mars" — though astrologers have argued for centuries about when the sun would be lined up with the constellation of the water carrier and signal the start of an era of enlightenment. Even the constellation itself is surrounded by mystery and duality. "Aquarius" means "water carrier" in Latin, an air sign symbolized by a boy pouring water, a male figure associated with the spread of feminine wisdom into the world. Aquarius is about water. It's right there in the name.

**Mater And Matrix**

Hungarian biochemist Albert Szent-Györgyi defined water as "life's mater and matrix, mother and medium," adding, "there is no life without water."

Lao Tzu, founder of Taoism, pointed out, "Nothing in the world is as soft and yielding as water. Yet for dissolving the hard and inflexible, nothing can surpass it. The soft overcomes the hard; the gentle overcomes the rigid." Such characterization would have been familiar to Lao's early adherents. Wuxing, the "five elements" that have underpinned Chinese philosophy for millennia, places water as the last of the elements (which also include wood, fire, earth, and metal). Water, or *shui*, is the most yin of the elements, with an energy described as "stillness" and "conserving."

Lao Tzu's observation of the duality of water reflects the duality of strength and tenderness that women draw upon every day. And as with so many issues, we need to tap into the wisdom of women in water, whether it's drawn from their experiences at rural wells or from the halls of power, where we have had outstanding female leaders of the U.S. EPA and more.

**Everything We Hold Dear**

Valentine's Day falls in the month of Aquarius, further linking women and love with this masculine/feminine sign. Starting with [my first blog in 2011](https://jimlauria.com/blog/a-valentine-to-women-who-keep-the-water-flowing), I have used Valentine's Day as an opportunity to highlight the connections between women and water in odes, love notes, tributes, and more.

It's my way to connect water and everything we hold dear — the mothers, sisters, wives, daughters, friends, and other women in our lives who are linked to the element we can't live without.

[My early valentines to women in water](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/women-water-part-2-jim-lauria/) focused on a form of enslavement of millions of women and girls to water. About half a billion people rely on "foot supplied water" every day, and the feet that supply that heavy water tend to belong to women and girls. The result is a kind of enslavement to water, a servitude of actual water carriers that is holding back the Age of Aquarius. A 2012 UN Development Programme study found that women and girls in sub-Saharan Africa spent a total of 40 billion hours every year carrying water. That's 40 billion hours that could be spent in school, at work, or growing crops to sustain their families. And when they deliver those heavy buckets to their homes, the women must decide how to use that precious resource — for nourishment or sanitation. It is a real-life *Sophie's Choice*.

Here in America, most of us have much easier access to water, and the quality of our water tends to be higher. But when we faced the most severe water quality crisis in our nation's modern memory — the extreme lead levels in the City of Flint, Michigan's water supply — EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy took action and pushed Michigan's governor to act. EPA maintained its trajectory with the appointment of Radhika Fox, who had served as CEO of The U.S. Water Alliance, to the role of Assistant Administrator of the Agency's Office of Water. Her LinkedIn profile says it all: "My passion? A sustainable water future for all." We're in great hands.

**Industry Perspective**

The Flint water crisis spurred tech executive Megan Glover to look for a water test for her family's tap water. She found a massive gap in home testing technology when her local utility's best option was to point her to a lab that would run an analysis for $3,500. As a mother concerned about her family's health, a tech-savvy millennial, and a fiercely intelligent entrepreneur, Glover was appalled by the lack of options and driven to fill the gap.

The result is 120Water, which has evolved to provide municipalities with the tools they need to streamline sampling and ensure compliance with federal and state water quality regulations. As one of the industry's best-focused marketers, Glover emphasizes innovation and trust in equal measure

Another woman leading the way in water is Melissa Meeker, who has been working tirelessly to bring The Water Tower campus to life. The campus, which is due to open soon in Gwinnett County, Georgia, is a think tank, a skunk works, a place for innovators to conduct shakedown cruises for their technology, and a hub for dialogue and ideas. It also portends a bright future for the water industry, where students can, as Meeker describes it, "follow their STEM dreams and go work in water."

Stephanie Corso and Arianne Shipley, the H2Duo, are similarly committed to a bright future for water through innovation and collaboration. They launched the non-profit Rogue Water Lab, a sharing hub connected to their Rogue Water communications consultancy, and they share insights through their *Water in Real Life* podcast series.

Adam Tank and I have interviewed these water industry leaders on our [*Water We Talking About?* podcast](https://www.wateronline.com/solution/water-we-talking-about), where you can hear their insights. These are just a few of the inspiring women water professionals in our great industry — and if you want even more insight, [here is a collection of water quotes from women throughout history](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/water-quotes-from-women-jim-lauria/?trackingId=brn%2Fk3wQR461aupg2fg4BQ%3D%3D).

**Waiting For The Surge**

While there are no doubts that the experts I've cited in this article are at the top of the water industry, equality and respect are still lacking at many other levels of the conversation.

In the feminist French newspaper *La Fronde*, August Vandekerkhove wrote, "Aquarius is the house of the woman," and predicted that the age would see women gaining their equality with men. Vandekerkhove is credited as an early proponent of the idea of the Age of Aquarius, and the phrase itself. He placed the start of the age in 1890. Others promoted a "wave theory" of shifting ages, predicting that Aquarius will flow like a rising tide, incrementally pushing its message over us in a growing surge.

We'd better hurry and take heed of that message — and listen carefully to the women of water as we contemplate who, and what, we hold dear.