Journalism for People Building a Better World

yes!

No. 87
Fall
2018

THE **MENTAL HEALTH** ISSUE

The Economics of a Society Designed for Well-Being

Barbershop Therapy

Healed by Trees *(And Even a Houseplant)*

**7** Strategies to Turn Trauma Into Strength

\+

NEW MAPS REVEAL WAYS TO **STOP THE SPREAD OF HATE GROUPS**

*5* REASONS **YOUR MIDTERM VOTE** IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN TRUMP

HOW TO FIX OUR

# LOST CONNECTIONS

***The power of community to heal***

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"A society that erodes communities and isolates people, which this society does in major ways, that itself is going to create insanity. That is insanity."

*Gabor Maté, page 18*

PHOTO BY THOMAS BARWICK/GETTY IMAGES

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

# Chances for Healing in Every Moment

Christine Hanna

My beautiful older sister, Bess—a smart, passionate, popular soccer star—killed herself when she was 17. She took my parents' gun, drove to a park, and shot herself in the head. The effect on my family was profound. Though I'm generally a warm person, for the next 15 years, I avoided people with big emotions, or people who seemed fragile. For me, they were dangerous, unpredictable, unhelpable. I didn't want to get too close, for fear of being responsible for them in some way. I limited my range of empathy because I was sure if I went too far, I'd be swallowed whole.

One day, 15 years later, my friend and colleague Karen came to work, shaken by something. I simply asked what was wrong, and she told me her partner had tried to end her life. We talked for a long time. She shared, I shared. We both healed each other a little that day.

There was another conversation with a stranger at a party a couple of years later. A young woman a lot like my sister, on the precipice. I asked, she shared, I shared. More healing.

Over the years, these and many other connections have helped me understand that I can go down into the depths of empathy and not be weakened or incapacitated by it, not swallowed whole. In fact, I've become more whole because of them. I'm touched more deeply by beauty, humor, and suffering. I can feel more of everything—from joy to outrage—and for me, it makes for a more complete life.

Bess, left, and Christine

Depression comes in so many forms, and for so many reasons. Dealing with it—my own and others'—is still hard for me, especially when it touches loved ones whom I care for and rely on the most. But with every act of acknowledgment, each gesture of empathy, each conversation, it gets easier. And in those moments when I have the courage to empathize deeply, I find when I come back up, the air's a little sweeter.

Being human is hard, but there are chances for healing in every moment. Whether you suffer from depression, anxiety, or stress, or you know people who do, I hope this issue of YES! can give you the courage to connect, to peel away a layer or two, and let healing begin.

Christine

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Research and development of this issue's In Depth section was led by editors **Shannan Lenke Stoll, Erin Sagen,** and **Tracy Matsue Loeffelholz.**

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## CULTURE SHIFT



**COVER IMAGE**
*Illustration by Kasia Bogdanska*



PHOTO BY PREAPPY/GETTY IMAGES

## Dani Burlison

*Page 30*

Dani Burlison awoke to the sound of sirens, text messages, exploding electrical transformers, the smell of smoke, and wind gusting through her bedroom window in the wee hours of Oct. 9, 2017. The three weeks of fires spared her Santa Rosa, California, rental home, where she's lived with her two children for 14 years. But many of her loved ones weren't so lucky. Nearly a year later, her evacuation bag is still packed. Dani is now studying trauma-informed yoga to better support her community.

## Tabita Green

*Page 46*

Tabita Green is the author of *Her Lost Year: A Story of Hope and a Vision for Optimizing Children's Mental Health*, which tells the story of her teenage daughter's traumatic experience with modern psychiatry and challenges the medical model of mental health. It also highlights socioeconomic factors that affect well-being. Green views mental health as a social justice issue and advocates for the transition to a new economy that prioritizes human well-being and planetary health.

## Mary Annette Pember

*Page 54*

Mary Annette Pember began her writing career at age 4. Writing on the underside of the kitchen table, she found her life's purpose: storytelling. As a teenager, Pember dropped out of school and lived on the streets of western cities before returning to her home state, Wisconsin. She earned a GED and graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Journalism. She worked as a photojournalist for daily newspapers before embarking on a freelance career as both writer and photographer.

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## What Psychologists Know About Helping People Change Racist Behavior

Dear editors,

It took decades for psychologists to begin to convince environmental activists that the "blame and shame" method of attempting behavioral and attitude change is ineffective and even counterproductive—even if the charge is accurate. Sadly, during those precious decades, climate disruption and species loss radically accelerated.

I fear that some of the same psychologically unsophisticated methods are now being tried by the anti-racism movement, a hugely important endeavor. While it may be factual and emotionally satisfying to label individual white students at diversity trainings racist or "White fragile," this often creates initial resistance among those so labeled, just as being labeled a heartless planet destroyer or animal killer has unfortunately stiffened many people's resistance against the pro-environmental message.

Those who have been truly traumatized by racism may find it difficult to understand how merely being called a racist may affect an individual student at a training. And, of course, this pain is tiny compared to what people of color have endured for centuries and continue to endure. But such labeling can be just painful enough to make some white students or employees resistant to any change. People who feel criticized or attacked don't tend to change or learn; they just go into defensive mode and resist whatever message is being conveyed.

If changing hearts and minds is the goal, here are a few behavior change tips that psychologists, doctors, teachers, and environmental activists have learned:

**1. Prepare the patient for the pain.** Doctors and nurses have learned that simply saying, "This may sting for a minute," combined with support, is an effective method for softening resistance to any painful procedure and lessening trauma. This allows the healing to happen more effectively. Alerting those in anti-racism groups (especially those who didn't choose to participate but were required to attend by their organization) about the challenging nature of the material and promising help and encouragement in processing it is psychologically more effective than blindsiding or name-calling, which merely shuts down learning.

**2. Spread the blame.** We all live in a racist (and ecocidal) system, and white people have experienced their privilege as "normal" from birth. It's easier to fess up to being racist if you understand that most white people are educated into their racism yet now have the opportunity to be educated out of it, however difficult the process may feel. It helps to reassure the student that this is about a horrible system, not about their worth as an individual human being.

**3. Provide ongoing support.** Those recovering from racism will need ongoing help in this process just as addicts need ongoing help to recover from self-destructive behavior. The aim of anti-racist groups led by anti-racist white people can be to create change by providing this support, answering awkward questions, offering guidance, and giving encouragement. Those on the receiving end of racism may balk at this sort of "coddling" of recovering white racists, but the goal here is surely to lessen the number of racists on the streets and in workplaces that people of color have to deal with and grow the number of anti-racist allies. Psychology and experience would indicate that for many white racists, recovery from racism probably won't be any shorter or easier a process than recovering from any other addictive or destructive or criminal behavior.

**4. Share encouraging stories.** Just as addicts can be helped to recover by sharing and hearing stories of experience, strength, and hope as well as confessing to slip-ups, tales of white people who have overcome at least some of their racism may be helpful. We need guidance and role models to give us hope that we all can become healthier, kinder people, and better allies. Racism doesn't have to be a lifelong pattern of behavior.

With help we can achieve at least some level of recovery, just as we can learn to become better Earth citizens, but only if we use smart psychological methods.

*Linda Buzzell, LMFT, Santa Barbara, California*
*Co-editor of* Ecotherapy: Healing With Nature in Mind *(Sierra Club Books, 2009)*

**Send your updates and responses to Bailey Williams, audience relations coordinator: bwilliams@yesmagazine.org.**

# SOLUTIONS WE LOVE




YES! ILLUSTRATION. STOCK FROM AKINDO/GETTY

*Chris Winters*
*Illustration by Enkhbayar Munkh-Erdene*

# YOUR MIDTERM VOTE MATTERS BECAUSE YOU CAN SUPPORT:

## 1

## THE PINK WAVE

Forget talk of "blue waves" or "red waves" sweeping aside the political opposition. Truth is, most congressional districts are so gerrymandered that the chances of swinging them are minuscule.

What is undeniable, however, is the record number of women running for office in state and federal elections. Some might say this is backlash against President Trump and partly inspired by the #MeToo movement. But this pink wave has been a long time coming. The first "Year of the Woman," in 1992, saw the election of four female senators and 24 female representatives to Congress, a record at the time. As of July 2, according to the Center for American Women and Politics, 52 women have filed to run for U.S. Senate, and 468 for the House of Representatives—more than one for each open seat, and a new record number. At the state level, 62 women are candidates for governor, 54 for lieutenant governor, 101 for other statewide elected offices, and 1,801 for state legislatures.

Midterm elections often get "nationalized," becoming a comment on the party in power rather than a vote for representation. But in 2018, there's more at stake than a vote against President Trump.

## 2

## THE SHIFT IN FLORIDA

Florida has been the largest swing state since the 1960s. George W. Bush won the state by 5 percent in 2004, Barack Obama by 2.8 percent in 2008 and by 0.9 percent in 2012, and Donald Trump won the state by 1.2 percent of the vote in 2016. It's always close.

Then came Hurricane Maria, which devastated Puerto Rico when it made landfall on Sept. 20, 2017, cutting off power to all 3.4 million residents and knocking out 95 percent of cell networks. A painfully slow and neglectful recovery has followed under the Trump administration.

Now, an estimated 300,000 climate change-impacted refugees from the island territory live in Florida. The inclusion of that many refugee voters could well turn the Sunshine State blue permanently. These people are citizens, and so they can't be deported and will remember who abandoned them in a time of need.

Law professor Ian Haney López of the University of California, Berkeley, author of *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class*, says the diaspora may spill over into other states, such as Georgia and North Carolina, with similar political results. "I wouldn't be surprised if a significant Puerto Rican bloc in those states could tilt those states from red to blue," Haney López says.

## 3

## RACIAL UNITY

Cell phone cameras show police shooting unarmed Black men with impunity. Conservative states from Arizona to Kansas to North Carolina are still trying to keep people of color from voting. A predominantly White-male Congress has undermined health care and other social programs that help low-income and minority groups.

One response from Black America has been to step into the policymaking fray. As of July 2, the database Black Women in Politics has been tracking more than 375 Black women running for office in 2018. Stacey Abrams' victory in the Democratic primary for governor of Georgia was sparked by a surge in Black voters.

Research from Haney López shows that people are broadly supportive of racial unity, ending violence against communities of color, and taking government back from the rich. Those messages transcend traditional political boundaries. "It does better with not only progressives and racial justice advocates—it does better with the roughly 60 percent of the population in the middle, including many Whites and many Republicans," he says.

4

## EMPOWERED NATIVE AMERICANS

Perhaps it was the extended demonstrations at the Standing Rock Sioux reservation in 2016 that lifted Native American voices. Maybe it's the growing awareness of catastrophic climate changes. But Native Americans are showing up in government.

Mark Trahant, the editor of Indian Country Today, is tracking more than 100 Native candidates for public office across the country, half of whom are women. That includes Debra Haaland, a member of the Pueblo of Laguna tribe who is running for a New Mexico House of Representatives seat. After winning her primary for the urban Democratic-leaning seat, she's poised to become the first Native American woman elected to Congress.

Many candidates are running on platforms embracing a list of largely (but not entirely) progressive causes that appeal to constituencies even beyond the Native community. Paulette Jordan of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe of Indians is running for governor as a Democrat in deep-red Idaho. "What got her through the primary was her talking about her rural values as a native Idahoan," Trahant says.

The presence of so many Native women running for office also is having a profound effect on how young Native girls see themselves and their lives. "Wherever Paulette Jordan goes, you see flocks of young girls following her," Trahant says.

5

## DEMOCRACY

For all of the attempts to disenfranchise voters in some states, other states are taking steps to safeguard elections and voting rights. Seven states have implemented automatic voter registration in advance of the 2018 elections, says Max Feldman, counsel in the democracy program of the Brennan Center for Justice.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo issued an executive order restoring voting rights to 24,000 people with criminal convictions, and a similar measure will be on the ballot as a voters' initiative in Florida. "Bottom line is we're seeing a lot of energy around pro-voter reforms," Feldman says.

The technology of democracy remains a challenge. In 2016, 44 states used voting machines that were at least a decade old, and most of those machines are no longer manufactured.

Congress this year approved $380 million to help states upgrade and secure their voting systems.

"That represents a significant investment, but that's very late in the game for states to upgrade their voting systems in 2018," Feldman says.

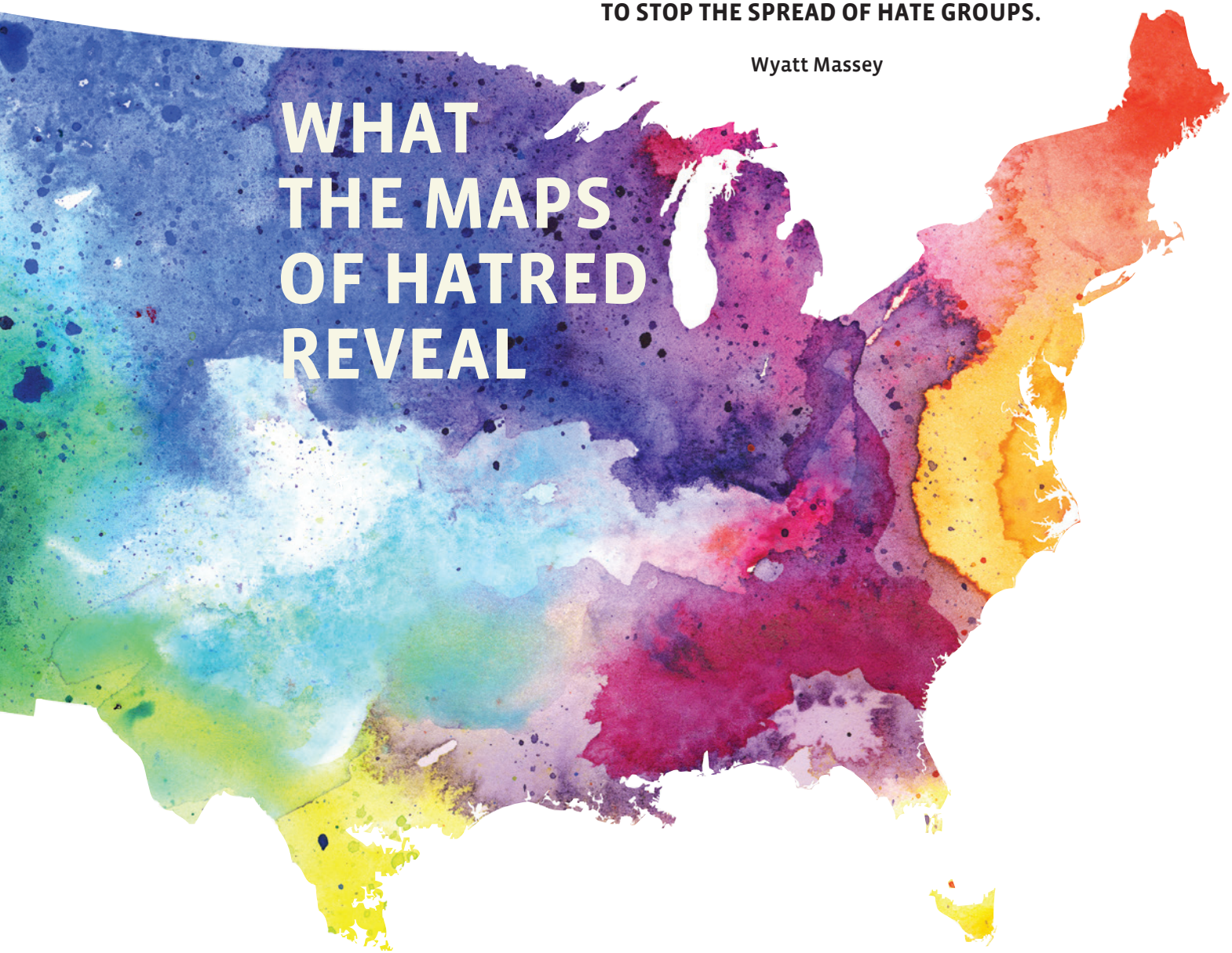
Nonetheless, it can be done. In 2017, Virginia upgraded all of its voting machines and systems only two months before the gubernatorial elections. The election drew the highest turnout in 16 years for a gubernatorial race, and it all went off without any major issues.

Chris Winters is a YES! senior editor covering economic justice and politics.
Twitter: @TheChrisWinters

**NEW SCIENCE OFFERS CLUES TO STOP THE SPREAD OF HATE GROUPS.**

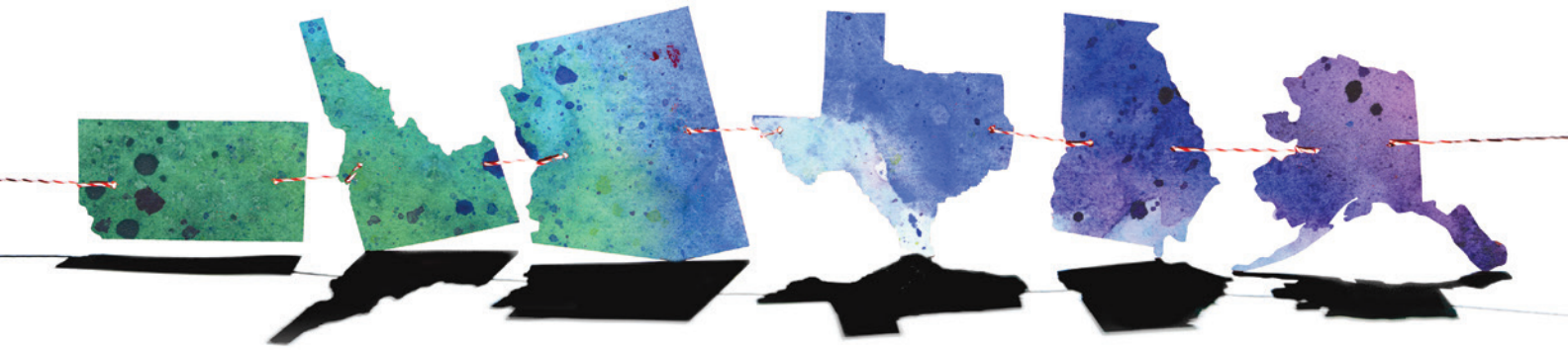
Wyatt Massey

# WHAT THE MAPS OF HATRED REVEAL



Organized hate groups span all geographic areas of the United States, from White nationalists in Washington state to neo-Nazis in Alabama to radical traditionalist Catholics in New Hampshire. While persecution of classes of people happens everywhere, the drivers that push people to join hate groups are unique to specific places. In this way, hatred can be a study in geography as much as anything else.

ILLUSTRATION BY ANDREA HILL/ GETTY IMAGES



In the central United States, economic factors—such as poverty and employment levels—are most likely to push people into hate groups. Immigration is less of a factor.

A new model tracking organized hate groups upends a long-held, simplistic view of the issue, one that placed a generalized blame on education or immigration, for example, positing that a person's education level could be a sole indicator of whether they would join a hate group.

New research from the University of Utah provides a much more nuanced picture of what gives rise to organized hate groups that can better serve those working to dismantle them. In the Midwest, economics is a more influential factor than immigration. On the East Coast, more religious areas correlate with more per capita hate groups, while education has little influence.

Richard Medina, University of Utah assistant professor of geography and lead author of the research, said public perceptions of hate and its motivating factors are often oversimplified. "Drivers of hate are dependent on regions and cultures and all the things we see and study in geography," he said. "It can be really complicated. People don't just hate for one reason."

Medina's group had been working on the research before the White supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August 2017, where a woman was killed in the violence. Emily Nicolosi, University of Utah graduate student and co-author of the paper, said what happened in Charlottesville started national conversations she believes the research can support.

"The motivators and drivers of hate look very different in different places," Nicolosi said. "If you look at the maps, you can see that these sort of regions emerge where the [different] variables are playing the same role."

The research used census data to track specific socioeconomic variables, such as population changes over a five-year period, poverty, and education levels. Researchers mapped population percentage of White non-Latinos because places changing from strong racial and ethnic similarity are more likely to experience a negative reaction to change. Poverty is a driver of hate because extremist groups promise the impoverished a way out of financial difficulty or provide a group to blame. The group also measured conservative religious and political ideology.

The maps of these socioeconomic factors were then compared to a 2014 map of 784 organized hate groups across the country created by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

The hate groups were mapped down to the county level in each state. The states with the most hate groups per million people in population were Montana, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Vermont. Comparing the socioeconomic map with the hate group map showed which factors were the strongest indicators in different regions of the country.

### WHAT DRIVES HATE?

In general, the research reveals that less diversity, more poverty, less population change, and less education



YES! ILLUSTRATION. STOCK FROM TOOGA AND ANDREA HILL/GETTY IMAGES

all correlate with more hate groups. But how influential those factors are depends on where you live.

On the West Coast, high poverty and a large concentration of White people in an area are the most influential factors driving hate groups. While the region generally has racial diversity, non-White people moving in and changing a demographic quickly can become targets, Medina said. In the southern parts of California and Arizona, lower education levels and higher poverty levels are the most important indicators.

In the central United States, economic factors—such as poverty and employment levels—are most likely to push people into hate groups. Immigration is less of a factor because fewer people are moving into the region compared to the coasts.

Population shift is the most telling factor on the East Coast. Areas that have more people leaving than coming have more hate groups. This trend is also present throughout the country, Medina said, but is most prominent in the East. Rates of education, poverty, and diversity have less influence there.

The measurements of ideology—by concentrations of religious people and Republicans—created somewhat different regional maps. Counties with strong religious communities have fewer hate groups on the West Coast and parts of the Midwest and Southeast. Yet, the majority of the Midwest and East Coast see more hate groups as counties grow more religious. Similar geographic trends are seen when tracking hate groups and Republicanism.

This mapping reveals what fuels different biases, Nicolosi said. Movement organizers working for social justice must recognize the most important factors in their own communities to create positive change.

Politicians can better understand their constituents and the cultures influencing them, Medina said.

## HOW TO CHANGE MINDS

Citing research such as this, Medina said creating interactions with people from different races, religions, and places is one of the most effective strategies to combat organized hatred.

And that is what Peace Catalyst International does, creating opportunities for interaction and relationships between Christians and Muslims in both the United States and Indonesia. City by city, the group brings together people from different religions, organizing meals and group discussions. The dynamics of each city or region play out differently, so it is incumbent on the local organizers to respond accordingly.

Rebecca Brown, grants manager for Peace Catalyst International, said Christian communities often struggle to overcome misconceptions and fears about Muslims they have internalized from American culture. Islam is often portrayed as a violent religion in American media. According to the Pew Research Center, non-Muslim Americans are more likely to have positive feelings about Islam if they know a Muslim. But studies show non-Muslim Americans are more likely to know someone who is atheist, Jewish, or Mormon than someone who is Muslim.

People can be transformed by one relationship, Brown said. "The xenophobic, anti-Muslim threat is a very real threat and a growing threat in our community," she said. Her organization wants to "provide viable theological and ideological ways for [people] to cling to peace rather than ... moving toward fear."

Similar to the work Peace Catalyst International does, Life After Hate helps create relationships across ideological divides. The organization is run by Christian Picciolini with a mission of researching extremism and helping radicalized people disengage from hate movements.

In his 2017 TEDx Talk, Picciolini describes how feelings of abandonment and anger toward people he saw as different led him to join the neo-Nazis at age 14.

The birth of his son and interactions Picciolini had with customers in his record shop pushed him away from the hate movement. "A gay couple came in with their son, and it was undeniable to me that they loved their son in the same profound ways that I loved mine," Picciolini said in his talk. "Suddenly, I couldn't rationalize or justify the prejudice that I had in my head."

Picciolini underscores the importance of the research findings. The most effective way to change a radicalized person's view is to understand what is driving their prejudice, Picciolini said in an interview with the Southern Poverty Law Center. "It's about changing their perspective just a little bit," he said. "Because often when you change their perspective just a little bit, it allows them to see the cracks in the foundation of the ideology that they believe in."

Both extremism research and the rush to understand and combat organized hate groups are happening at a time when technology is helping to target potential recruits. Hate groups use similar strategies as ISIS or Al-Qaeda, focusing on individuals who feel victimized or isolated. Hate groups tap into beliefs that racial or religious groups are attacking Whites, as seen in a Ku Klux Klan recruitment flier distributed at a North Carolina high school in 2017. An appeal to religious conservatism is an effective tactic in North Carolina, Medina said, though playing off a fear of losing one's culture is used across the country.

The research begins to offer a measurable picture of where in the country different types of messaging will attract members. And Medina would like to investigate further, for instance, into the roles that specific religions play; the current study groups all religions together. He also plans to work with researchers who will do qualitative studies to learn about motivations directly from citizens.

"[Hate] is not uniform. But people treat it like it's a uniform phenomenon across the country. It just doesn't work that way."

Wyatt Massey is a journalist covering social justice and religion. Twitter: @News4Mass

*Shaima Shamdeen*

# MUSLIM LGBTQ+ ACTIVISTS

A global movement is challenging stereotypes and redefining what it means to live at the complex intersection of Islam, sexuality, and gender. Despite the struggles of isolation and Islamophobia, LGBTQ+ Muslims are determined to fight for their right to worship and love freely without sacrificing one identity at the expense of the other.


**Taylor Amari Little presents her talk "Complicating Narratives: Unveiling and (Re)creating" at the Fellowship of Reconciliation Conference in Seabeck, Washington. Here, Little highlights the principles and commitments of the Islamic Healing Space of A2 & Ypsi.**

PHOTO BY KOMALPREET SAHOTA

## AMIR ASHOUR

*IraQueer*

**SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS** between adults technically have been legal in Iraq since the 2003 U.S. invasion to oust Saddam Hussein. In practice, however, LGBTQ+ Iraqis are subject to discrimination, family and community shunning, and murder by militia members.

In 2015, Amir Ashour fled his home in Sulaymaniyah in Iraqi Kurdistan after receiving death threats for his activism in the country. After obtaining asylum in Sweden, he launched IraQueer, the first civil rights organization for the LGBTQ+ community in Iraq.

"The response from the government has been violent. That's why I can never go back to Iraq," Ashour says. "None of the work that we do is 100 percent safe. Not for our colleagues, contributors, or organizations working with us. But it's a cause that is affecting our lives."

IraQueer is an anonymous network of 600 people who do advocacy work and write essays, security guides, sexual health and education guides, and a review of LGBTQ+ human rights violations in Iraq. They publish in Arabic, Kurdish, and English.

"The fear of spending the rest of our lives hiding our identity and not living our truth was so much bigger than facing the consequences of starting IraQueer," Ashour says.

## MAHDIA LYNN

*Masjid al-Rabia*

**MAHDIA LYNN DISCOVERED** her Muslim community condemned LGBTQ+ people in 2015, during Caitlyn Jenner's highly publicized gender transition, and she knew that the acceptance she felt in the community was conditional.

As a bisexual, transgender Shi'a Muslim, Lynn needed a place to practice her faith without discrimination, and she knew she wasn't the only one.

In 2016, Lynn established Masjid al-Rabia in order to provide that safe space. Masjid al-Rabia is a women-centered, LGBTQ+ inclusive, sect-diverse mosque in Chicago, and one of the few mosques where women lead prayer.

"The idea that there are people who can't have access to that just by merit of being who they are, and by merit of being within a society that is unaccepting, is a cruelty that I couldn't stand," Lynn says. "It's a moral prerogative to do whatever we can to make our spaces accessible for everyone."

In two years, Masjid al-Rabia has expanded into education advocacy, digital programming, outreach for LGBTQ+ youth during Ramadan, and a program reaching out to incarcerated queer and trans Muslims in 39 states.

"Our mission is spiritual support for marginalized Muslims, and we strive to foster a community that doesn't leave anybody behind," Lynn says.

## TAYLOR AMARI LITTLE

*Queer Ummah*

**DESPITE BEING WARNED** by close friends to "be careful" with her LGBTQ+ Muslim activism, Taylor Amari Little is using social media to her advantage—creating an international community of support for those living at the intersection of both identities.

Queer Ummah: A Visibility Project highlights the experiences of LGBTQ+ Muslims—creating a digital space to tell personal and traumatic stories of marginalization. Many of the photos featured in the project are abstract, hiding the storyteller's face in order to protect the identities of those who aren't safe enough to be public about their sexuality. The project was featured in 2017 as part of the "Perpetual Revolution" exhibition at the International Center of Photography in New York.

"We wanted to hold space for folks who have endured trauma, whether personal or collective," says Little, who lives in the Detroit area. "My goal is to make sure that people are able to safely explore their relationship with themselves and with everything outside of themselves."

Little also serves as an organizer for the Islamic Healing Space of A2 & Ypsi—a safe space that moves among various community halls in Detroit for LGBTQ+ Muslims to gather and heal their trauma together.

## THE PAGE THAT COUNTS

*Miles Schneiderman*

Liters of water it takes to make one cotton shirt: **2,700** [1]
Greenhouse gases released in 2015 from the production of polyester for textiles: **706 billion kilograms** [2]
Percentage increase in number of garments purchased by the average global consumer, from 2000 to 2014: **60** [3]
Percentage decrease in time the average global consumer keeps a garment before throwing it away, from 2000 to 2014: **50**
Tons of clothing Americans throw away each year: **14 million** [4]
Percentage of clothes in the U.S. that wound up in landfills or incinerators, as opposed to being recycled, in 2012: **84**

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Base salary made by Philadelphia Eagles player Chris Long during the 2017 NFL season: **$1 million** [5]
Percentage of 2017 base salary donated by Long to educational charities: **100**
Money raised for educational charities during the 2017 NFL season via
Long's Pledge 10 for Tomorrow campaign: **$1.33 million** [6]
Sales of "Underdog" T-shirt created by a clothing line owned by the Eagles' Lane Johnson: **$100,000** [7]
Percentage of "Underdog" T-shirt sales donated by Johnson to Philadelphia schools: **100**
Percentage of sales of the NFL's own "Underdog" T-shirt the league agreed to donate to Philadelphia schools after being pressured by Long and Johnson: **100**
Presidential salary donated to the Department of Education by President Trump in 2017: **$100,000** [8]
Money Trump proposed to cut from the Department of Education in 2017: **$9 billion** [9]

---

Percentage of corporate executives in December 2017 who said that business objectives and environmental goals are more aligned now than they were five years ago: **72** [10]
Percentage of top executives who said that new environmentally innovative technology can help their bottom lines as well as their environmental impact: **91**
Percentage of people willing to pay more for products and services from companies committed to positive social and environmental impact: **66** [11]
Number of states (including Washington, D.C.) that have more jobs in clean energy than fossil fuels: **42**
Ratio by which clean energy jobs outnumber coal and gas jobs: **5-1** [12]
Percentage of Americans who said protecting the environment should take priority over economic growth: **57** [13]

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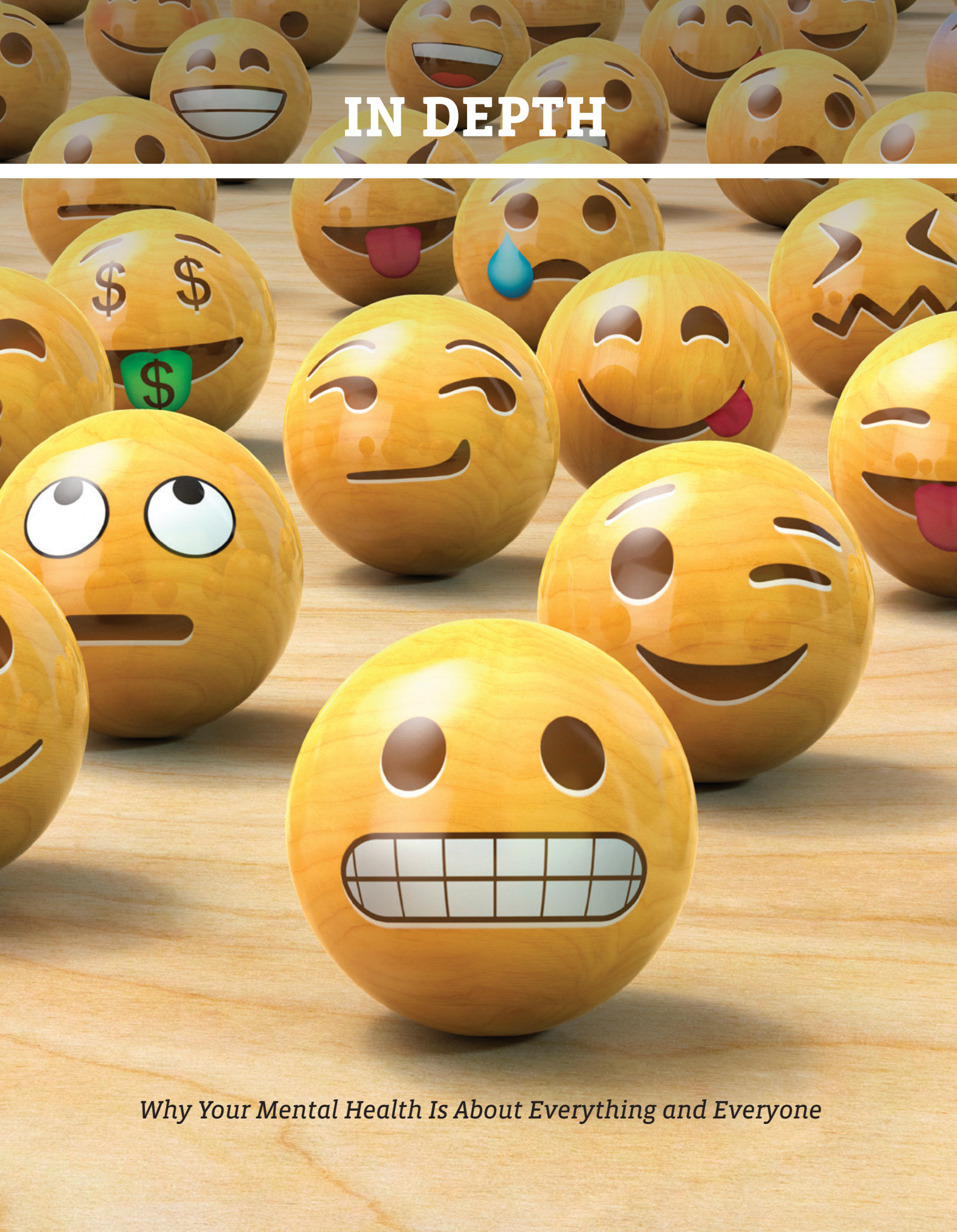
Percentage of Americans able to name at least one right guaranteed by the First Amendment: **63** [14]
Percentage of Americans who know what a podcast is: **64** [15]
Percentage who know that undocumented immigrants have rights under the Constitution: **47** [14]
Percentage who have listened to a podcast: **44** [15]
Percentage who were able to name all three branches of government: **26** [14]
Percentage who listen to podcasts each month: **26** [15]
Percentage over the age of 12 who listen to broadcast radio in a given week: **91** [16]
Percentage of political talk radio programming that leans conservative on 257 commercial radio stations owned by the five largest station owners: **91** [17]

Sources: 1. World Wildlife Fund. 2. Massachusetts Institute of Technology 3. McKinsey & Co. 4. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 5. Chris Long Foundation 6. Pledge 10 For Tomorrow 7. WPVI-TV Philadelphia 8. The White House 9. U.S. Department of Education 10. Environmental Defense Fund, Business and the Fourth Wave of Environmentalism 11. The Nielsen Co. 12. Sierra Club/U.S. Department of Energy 13. Gallup Inc. 14. Annenberg Constitution Day Civics Survey 15. Edison Research, 2018 Infinite Dial Study 16. Nielsen Media Research, via Radio Advertising Bureau 17. Center for American Progress, The Structural Imbalance of Political Talk Radio

# IN DEPTH



*Why Your Mental Health Is About Everything and Everyone*

# HOW TO FIX OUR LOST CONNECTIONS

## THE POWER OF COMMUNITY TO HEAL OUR MINDS

**Travis Lupick**

**Johann Hari's experience with depression is something of a lightning rod within mental health circles. There are those who cheer his nuanced views of the disorder, grateful for a take on mental health that emphasizes the impacts of environment and experience. Others argue that the British journalist is too dismissive of medication. "Is everything Johann Hari knows about depression wrong?" reads a headline that ran in a U.K. newspaper.**

The extreme reactions to the bestselling author of *Lost Connections: Uncovering the Real Causes of Depression—and the Unexpected Solutions* also speak to the binary way people tend to view mental illness and mental health. You either have it or you don't.

Nearly 50 percent of the U.S. population will experience a mental health disorder at some point in their lifetime. Every single person, every day, is passing through the continuum that is mental health, from building resilience to dealing with challenges like anxiety and depression to recovering from trauma to living with severe disorders needing constant medical care.

When Hari was a teenager in the 1990s, he felt a debilitating sadness that he couldn't explain or even understand. "My doctor told me a story that was entirely biological. He said, 'We know why people feel this way. There's a chemical called serotonin in people's brains. Some people lack it, you're one of them, and all we need to do is drug you and you'll be fine.'"

Paxil, a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor, or SSRI, corrected the serotonin imbalance in his brain that was causing him to feel sad. Hari says his mood improved. But, he learned a few months later, it only worked for a while. Then the sadness returned. His dose was increased, feelings of melancholy receded, but again only for a time. A pattern set in and continued for years.

It wasn't until he was researching *Lost Connections* that Hari says he began to understand the roots of his depression and discovered lasting solutions to the mental health challenges with which he had struggled for so many years.

Social stress. Lack of community. Childhood trauma. "It was a combination of social factors," he says. "Growing up in a culture where you're taught that what matters most is money and status. Growing up in a place with no community. ... And I'd gone through childhood trauma, and childhood trauma can lead to adult depression." With a fuller picture of his mental health, Hari realized he focused too much on himself and self-promotion. He began making a conscious effort to spend time helping others "and to just be present with the people I love," he adds.

"Really, it was a radical transformation."

The personal story Hari recounts in *Lost Connections* reveals emotional well-being as significantly more complicated than a binary system that oscillates between resilience and illness.

"There are three different kinds of causes of depression, and we've been focusing way too much on the biological ones and not anywhere near enough on the social and psychological ones," Hari says.

This broader understanding of mental health—as a continuum, and one that is deeply and continually affected by environment, circumstance, and experience—is further revealed in the many statistics repeated after the suicides in June of celebrities Anthony Bourdain and Kate Spade. A June report by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that from 1999 to 2016, suicide rates have steadily increased in nearly every state to make for a national rise of 30 percent. "In 2016, nearly 45,000 Americans age 10 or older died by suicide," it reads. "Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death and is one of just three leading causes that are on the rise."

What has happened to Americans over those decades? It's unreasonable to think biological chemistry alone has undergone significant changes. Our environments have changed. Our food. Our stress. Our relationships—our "lost connections," as Hari puts it.

According to the Cooperative Institutional Research Program's annual Freshman Survey, in 1985, 18 percent of first-year college students said they "felt overwhelmed." In 2000, that number was 28 percent. In 2016, it was 41 percent.

The portion of American children ages 6 to 17 who experience a lifetime diagnosis of anxiety or depression was 5.4 percent in 2003 and 8.4 percent by 2011–2012, according to an April paper published in the Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics. "Youth mental health is worsening," reads a blunt assessment by Mental Health America. According to the nonprofit, the rate of youth with "severe depression" increased from 5.9 percent in 2012 to 8.2 percent in 2015.

As troubling as these numbers are, there is a small positive. If mental health challenges are so common, if we are all at various stops on the continuum of resilience to illness, no one should feel ashamed for experiencing one.

## "A NORMAL RESPONSE TO ABNORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES"

There's another takeaway, too. If we are all in this mental health thing together, then there's a large role for each of us, and the wider community, in prevention and healing.

In 2008, Dr. Gabor Maté published *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters With Addiction*, a seminal book on the subject that explains problematic drug use as a common response to childhood trauma. Or,

PHOTO BY DIMITRI OTIS/GETTY IMAGES

**"There are three different kinds of causes of depression, and we've been focusing way too much on the biological ones and not anywhere near enough on the social and psychological ones," author Johann Hari says.**

as he explained addiction in a recent interview, "a normal response to abnormal circumstances."

"Just about every mental affliction is actually an adaptive response that then becomes a source of problems later on," Maté says. "People push down their feelings in childhood when the environment of their childhood cannot receive those feelings. In order to stay acceptable to the nurturing environment, the child pushes down their feelings. Thirty years later, they are diagnosed with depression."

Maté is working on a book that's tentatively titled *The Myth of Normal: Pathways to Health in an Insane Culture*. "A society that erodes communities and isolates people, which this society does in major ways, that itself is going to create insanity," Maté says. "That is insanity."

To explain, he takes a step back in time: "We evolved as communal creatures," Maté says. "We could not have survived on our own [in prehistoric times]. No human being could have survived."

Imagine a small tribe of indigenous people living in Central America some 2,000 years ago. Positive feelings of community kept humans in groups large enough to foster collective security. Now think of the ways so many of us live today: in 30-story apartment towers where it's become a social oddity to introduce yourself to your neighbors, and in gated communities where massive parcels of personal property keep families in geographic isolation from those living nearby.

Maté's reference to premodern humans is reminiscent of the work of John Cacioppo, a social neuroscientist at the University of Chicago who dedicated his life to the study of loneliness. He established that "negative" emotions such as loneliness were actually necessary to our success.

"Meaningful social connection, and the pain we feel without it, are defining characteristics of our species," Cacioppo wrote in his 2008 book, *Loneliness: Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection*. "In the same way that physical pain serves as a prompt to change behavior—the pain of burning skin tells you to pull your finger away from the frying pan—loneliness developed as a stimulus to get humans to pay more attention to their social connections, and to reach out toward others, to renew frayed or broken bonds."

In Central America 2,000 years ago, a solo hunter with pangs of loneliness would return to his tribe, to relative physical safety, and to a comforting feeling of belonging in his community. Today, in a society that encourages isolation, it's as if we're forgetting that sort of solution is still available to us.

## "DEPRESSION IS POLITICAL"

Of course, it's not that simple. The relationship between community and an individual's mental health is a complicated one. And political. Sometimes you're White and feel capitalism is isolating and making you depressed. Sometimes you're Black and afraid for your teenage son to leave the house wearing a hoodie.

"I am here sitting in my bed fighting my depression, trying not to bask in somberness for too long, pondering how I'm going to shatter ceilings with three generations on my back," wrote Bobby London, a writer and journalist who often covers social movements including Black Lives Matter, in a 2015 essay, "Depression Is Political." "Depression is, at least for me, something that is structurally created," she continues. "I am depressed because I live in a White-supremacist, patriarchal, capitalist world. I am depressed because people that look like me are constantly being murdered."

The politics of depression and anxiety at the community level looks like this:

According to a June study published in the Lancet, police killings of unarmed Black people harm the mental health of the victims' entire communities. And researchers noted that the mental health impacts were not observed among White people and resulted only from police killings of unarmed Black Americans, not unarmed White Americans or armed Black Americans.

For several years, Ashley Yates has candidly shared her experiences with depression and anxiety on social media under the handle @brownblaze. She's also become an advocate for self-care and for dialogue around the mental health challenges that are especially pronounced in communities of color, from violence to invisibility.

"The ways in which we are treated when we access social services is completely different from other races. The ways in which we are treated in our health care system is completely different from other races," Yates says. "It is really stressful. It creates depression ... when you know that you are going to have to fight doubly or triply hard



PHOTO BY DAVID LEVENSON/GETTY IMAGES

just to get normal care, just to get your necessities, just to be seen."

In August 2014, 18-year-old Michael Brown was shot and killed by a White police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. It was one of several fatal police shootings that collectively gave rise to Black Lives Matter and a re-energized movement for civil rights. In Ferguson, Yates participated in protests for police accountability for several months. She recounts how she became a part of something in which she found strength but which paradoxically presented simultaneous challenges for her mental health.

"Dealing with that sort of repression, dealing with that sort of violence—the only thing that I can think to compare it to is active warfare. You are having war waged against you by your government," she says.

Yates remembers that she first scoffed at the idea she would experience post-traumatic stress disorder. "I don't know if it was cognitive dissonance or just ignorance on my part, but I had no clue that it would impact us so deeply. But every single person that spent significant time in Ferguson absolutely suffers from PTSD."

Yates didn't always speak so openly about mental health. "At first, it was definitely like, 'Will I be stigmatized?' And there was stigmatization," she says.

Then a comrade killed himself.

In February 2016, MarShawn McCarrel, 23, a prominent member of the Black Lives Matter movement, shot himself on the steps of the Ohio statehouse. "It told me that it was time to speak out no matter the cost," Yates says.

At the same time, Yates began a conscious effort to take better care of herself, which she says was not easy. "There are a lot of barriers when it comes to access to therapy or mental health services for Black people," Yates explains. "Coming from a Southern Baptist religion, there is not a lot of space for me to do something other than to take it to Jesus. And so that was a huge barrier that I had to overcome. Another one was cost and insurance and all of the things it takes to find a therapist who understands racism and structural inequity."

> "Depression is, at least for me, something that is structurally created," she continues. "I am depressed because I live in a White-supremacist, patriarchal, capitalist world. I am depressed because people that look like me are constantly being murdered."

Yates began with small steps she describes as "accessible" and "affordable."

"Finding my joys in life was a huge thing," she says. "Something that happens a lot in activism is that people forget we have lives outside of it. We forget to do pleasurable things. So for me, it was getting back to writing, getting back to drawing, getting back to reading, getting back to just seeing a movie sometime, and remembering that we live full, well-rounded lives. Those were some of my very first steps."

Yates also reconceptualized her mental health as more nuanced than either "unhealed" or "healed."

Because she had so much trauma, she says, a state of "healed" seemed impossible. "But when I remembered that healing is a process ... it became a more tangible reality, and something that is a lot more feasible than flipping a switch."

### "SOMETIMES PEOPLE GET STUCK"

Recovery from an oppressive situation takes time, according to Dr. Bessel van der Kolk, author of *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. He is a clinician and researcher who specializes in post-traumatic stress and is founder of the Trauma Center in Boston. Van der Kolk says that for a child living in an abusive household, for example, or a person of color who has repeatedly experienced unjustified interactions with police, healing will be a process, and often a long one.

"People adapt to very bad situations," he explains. "The response to trauma is the mind's way of coping with whatever is going on, to help you to survive. But sometimes people get stuck."

At the Trauma Center, van der Kolk and his team make less-traditional treatments available alongside mainstream therapies. A child can play a video game that promotes neural feedback, for example, where they interact

with a visual representation of their own brainwaves to relieve anxiety and promote a better mood. There's trauma-sensitive yoga that promotes self-awareness of the relationship between body and mind.

Van der Kolk also emphasizes the powerful role of community both to harm and to heal.

"Trauma is, in many cases, about a breakdown of community," he explains. "If the very source of protection becomes a source of danger, that is really, very bad for people. The community is protective, but if the community turns against you, we become very vulnerable."

He recounts how the significance of community healing became clear to him during work for South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was convened in 1995 to help address the wounds of apartheid.

"After a collective trauma has happened, people tend to sing and move and dance and eat," he says. "None of that is incorporated into [North American] mental health systems, but most of us who have worked with other cultures, or who have worked with refugees, see how much comfort people get from singing, moving, and dancing. ... Songs and communal sounds that we make let us feel at one with the people around us and are very powerful, very comforting ways of re-establishing connections with human beings."

## A LIFE-SAVING CONNECTION IN COMMUNITY

In an impoverished neighborhood of Vancouver, British Columbia, called the Downtown Eastside, the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users is a sort of union that advocates for drug policy reform, operates harm reduction programs such as needle exchanges, and gives drug users a voice in Canadian politics.

Hugh Lampkin is a board member, former president of the organization, and a prominent community activist who's taken a lead role through VANDU in Canada's response to North America's epidemic of drug overdose deaths. For Lampkin, a drug user himself, the road to helping others has been a journey, one that began with childhood trauma. "I grew up in Toronto," Lampkin begins. "I always had issues, being a person of color. I used to get beaten up a lot and chased around by other kids who were White."

A number of incidents of abuse led him to self-medicate with heroin and other drugs. "It allowed me to shut myself off, to not feel anything," he says.

"I didn't feel I had any sort of connection with anybody," he remembers.

After nearly three decades lost to drugs, Lampkin traveled across the country to Vancouver. "I didn't want to be around my family and friends, because I understood that I was going to make them hurt. So I decided to come out here [to Vancouver] to kick off ... to off myself."

Lampkin describes one evening in 2006 or 2007, when he prepared his last meal.

"I went and bought a bottle of 12-year-old Scotch," he recounts. "It was $180 for the bottle. And a bottle of wine that was $200 or $300. I had prime rib and lobster—surf and turf—with scalloped potatoes. And some dope. And dessert, tiramisu." Lampkin ate, drank, and then injected the heroin—enough to kill himself, he was sure.

"And then I remember hearing birds chirping," he continues. It was 13 or 14 hours later, and Lampkin was lying on his apartment floor, exactly where he had fallen the night before. "OK, I'm still here," he remembers thinking. "It was a relief."

Shortly after, Lampkin was walking through downtown Vancouver and bumped into a small group of people


**Hugh Lampkin volunteers with the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users, leading training sessions for overdose response, holding meetings on political developments that affect drug users, and generally keeping the headquarters running. He says that here he feels valued and useful.**

PHOTO BY JACKIE DIVES


who were smoking cigarettes outside what looked like a cross between a community center and homeless shelter. "They looked like the sort of people I could hang around with," he says. "I felt comfortable. I felt at ease." Lampkin had found VANDU.

"And I've been here ever since, with our little clubhouse of losers," he adds with a smile.

At a subsequent VANDU meeting, Lampkin shared some of what had happened to him as a child. "And there was more support than I had been given my entire life," he says. "I saw people with tears in their eyes, and there was an acknowledgement. What had happened to me had happened to them."

Today, nearly 10 years later, Lampkin practically lives at VANDU. He volunteers countless hours, leading training sessions for overdose response, holding meetings on political developments that affect drug users, and generally keeping VANDU's headquarters running. It's a supportive, nonjudgmental atmosphere of organized chaos.

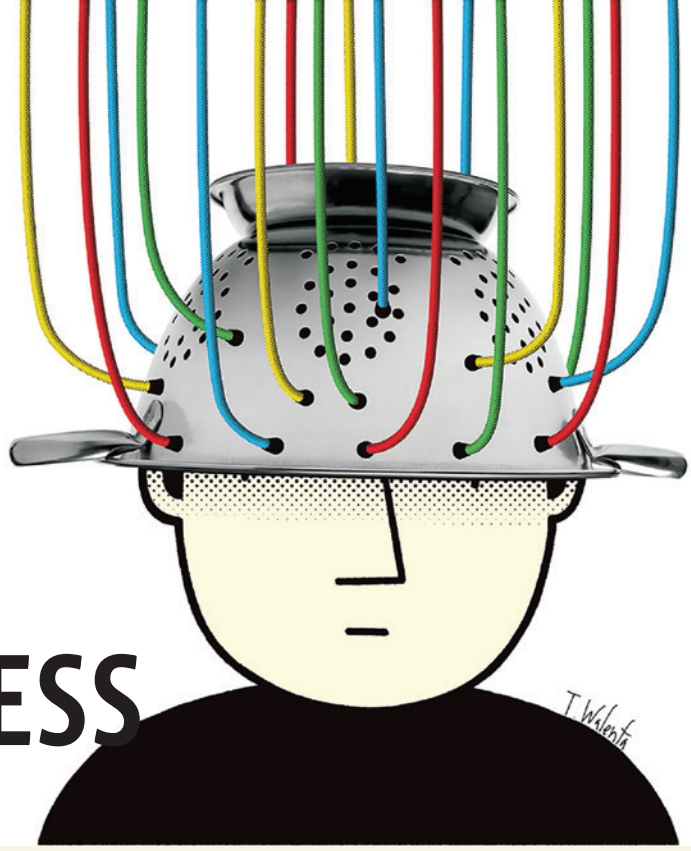
What's kept him there? Lampkin says that in the drug users community he found a home, one where he feels valued and useful.

"I wanted people—somebody, even if only one person—to feel what I felt that day," he explains. "To give a person someone to talk to without wanting anything from them. To just listen. Because for a lot of people, that's all they want. For a lot of people, that's life-saving."

Travis Lupick is a journalist based in Vancouver, British Columbia. He is the author of *Fighting for Space: How a Group of Drug Users Transformed One City's Struggle With Addiction.* Twitter: @tlupick

JUST THE FACTS

*Tracy Matsue Loeffelholz*
*Erin Sagen*




# 5 FAKE FACTS THAT FUEL MENTAL ILLNESS STIGMA

In a culture that stigmatizes mental illness, there are harmful consequences for the **1 in 5** adults dealing with it at any given time. Only **44%** receive needed treatment. And internalized stigma is associated with increased suicidal thoughts and low self-esteem. Stigma worsens the effects of mental illness and not only delays treatment, but complicates it: People feeling stigma take a less active role in their own treatment. Worse, they might not reach out for help at all.

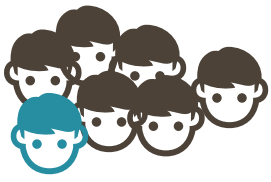
**How to reduce stigma in society? For starters, make sure everyone has their facts straight.**

## 1

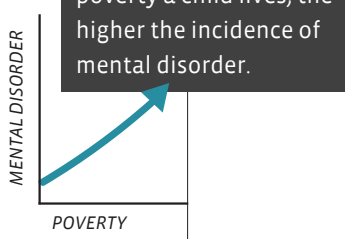
### "Children are resilient. They don't get mental illness."

**50%** of all mental illnesses have begun by age 14.

**1 in 7**
U.S. children aged 2 to 8 years are diagnosed with a mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder.

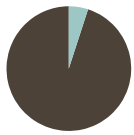


Most likely:
- Boys
- White
- From households with income difficulty




## 2

### "The mentally ill are violent."



Only **3%–5%** of violent crimes can be attributed to people with serious mental illness.

People with severe mental illness are more than

**10x**

likelier than the average person to be victims of violent crime.



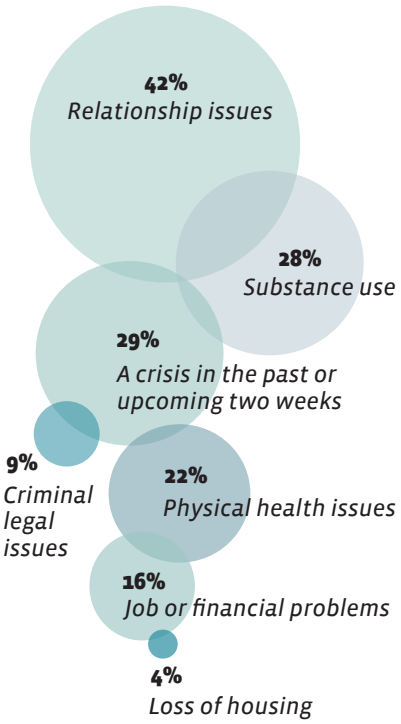
ILLUSTRATION BY TOMASZ WALENTA/MARLENA AGENCY

3

## "People who kill themselves are clinically depressed."

**54%** of people who died by suicide did not have a known mental health condition.

***Desperation factors** that contribute to suicides by people with and without mental health conditions:*




4

## "Mental illness is a permanent condition."

Mental disorders are common and treatable.

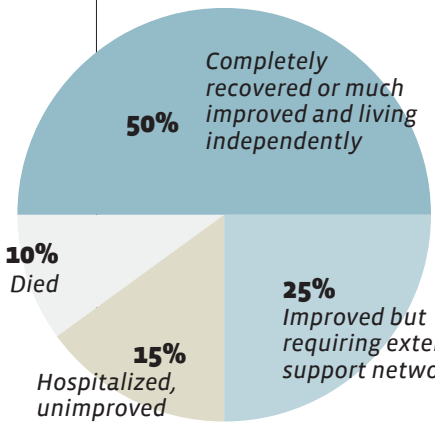
**1 in 10** U.S. adults say they are in recovery from an alcohol or drug abuse issue.

**80%** who seek treatment for major depression show improvement within 4 to 6 weeks of beginning treatment.

**80%** treatment success rate for bipolar disorder.

**2 million** in the U.S. have schizophrenia.

***After 10 years of treatment:***



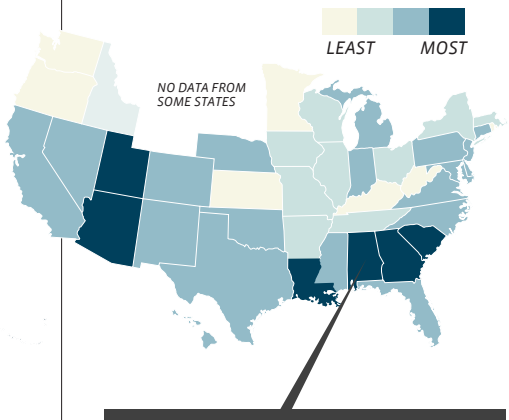

5

## "White people are most resilient."

Black people are less likely than White people to have anxiety disorders and to commit suicide.

**7 in 10** suicides: White men.

***Map of optimism/low stress** levels among ethnic minorities:*




Highest among poorest ethnic minority groups, particularly those in the South with strong cultural and community ties.

And wealth doesn't help cure major depression.

**DOES NOT** predict the likelihood of recovery:

- Socioeconomic status
- Age
- Sex
- Marital status


SOURCES

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1 NIH. Kessler et al., 2005. CDC, Bitsko et al., 2016.

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3 CDC's National Violent Death Reporting System, data from 27 states in 2015.

4 New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services. Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance. *Surviving Schizophrenia* (5th Edition), Torrey, 2006. NIMH, 2008.

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# Barbershop Therapy

*In the South, barbers are training to be counselors.*


Lorenzo Lewis, founder of The Confess Project, holds a barbershop talk in Columbia, South Carolina. His demonstrations show barbers and their clients how men hold in their pain—and how to break through.

PHOTO BY SANTANNA HAYES

Celeste Hamilton Dennis

**Amid the sound of television and hair clippers buzzing around him at Goodfellas Barbershop in Little Rock, Arkansas, Lorenzo Lewis was trying to get a man wearing a mask to talk about his emotional pain.**

**Lewis asked the man how he was doing. "I'm good, I'm good," he responded. Lewis said how he'd noticed he seemed on edge recently. Same response. Lewis kept asking questions until the man eventually took off his mask. "I'm hurting," he said. "I'm just really going through something right now." When asked if he was feeling suicidal, the man nodded.**

Lewis is founder of The Confess Project, a mental health initiative for boys and men of color. His demonstration was attempting to show barbers and their clients how men hold in their pain—and how to break through.

Why do it in a barbershop?

The barbershop in the Black community has historically been a safe, nonjudgmental space for men to talk about anything—sports, politics, religion, women, manhood. The 90-minute conversations about mental health, called Beyond the Shop, are an opportunity to deepen sharing that is already happening, Lewis says. The initiative is similar to New York City-based Barbershop Books and the Black Barbershop Health Outreach Program in Inglewood, California, which focuses on hypertension prevention.

Through an interactive format, Beyond the Shop aims not only to help Black boys and men confess their vulnerabilities and give them resources to begin a healthier way of living, but also to show barbers how they can be mental health advocates, too.

"When you go to your barber, you're trusting them with your prized possession—your hair," says Goodfellas owner Matt Dillon. "So if you can trust and respect someone to do your hair, you can trust and respect them to help you with a problem."

For Black men, seeking help can be difficult, an effect of stigma that Beyond the Shop is hoping to erase.

"At the barbershop, guys are already outspoken and opinionated, but we don't tend to talk about self-care and the things that make sure we're around for our kids and future generations," says Sam Johnson, a Beyond the Shop participant in Louisville, Kentucky. "The biggest thing I took away was checking on my brothers. We're so quick to say, 'Man up,' when I really should be asking more questions and letting him know that if he needs help, I'm here."

The numbers are telling: Black people more frequently have post-traumatic stress disorder than other ethnic groups. Yet Black men are less likely to get treatment than the general population, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness. There's a lack of mental health awareness. Disproportionate access to health care. Increased exposure to violence. Distrust and misdiagnosis due to the lack of culturally competent care.

Lewis' approach with Beyond the Shop is modeling vulnerability through storytelling. He draws empathy from his own story.

Born in jail to an incarcerated mother, Lewis struggled with depression, anxiety, and anger throughout his youth. At 17, involved with a gang, he turned it around. Reaching out for support from family and friends was key, as was professional help. "I was in bad relationships, and not able to get along with others. I had a horrible time getting girlfriends, and when I did, I didn't know how to treat them right because I'd been through so much trauma," he told the men in Goodfellas. "I started realizing, maybe I need some therapy."

Since starting The Confess Project in 2016, he's facilitated mental health awareness sessions for thousands around the country—from national universities and organizations, including NAMI, to local health fairs and high schools. He draws from his experience of working in behavioral health facilities in Little Rock for over a decade, where he underwent training in suicide prevention and cognitive-behavioral psychotherapy.

At Goodfellas, the men were apprehensive at first about Lewis interrupting their haircuts. They didn't know what to think of him—or the strange mask the man was wearing, to illustrate how men hide their emotions.

But the men in the shop did start talking. One man spoke about the pain of being separated from his children and the stress of child support. Another admitted how he turned to unhealthy outlets to cope with working menial jobs. Heads nodded. In the next chair over, a man talked about the anger and fear that come with being pulled over by police. A common thread was how society treats Black men.

"Our mental illness is criminalized. You take a person not of color that goes in and shoots up a school and automatically the response is, 'He's mentally ill.' When a person of color does anything remotely like that, not that we even do, he's a thug," says Dr. Karen Mathis, psychotherapist in Little Rock. "But I think we would rather be labeled a thug than mentally ill. Why? Because it's a sign of weakness. And we don't want to appear weak."

Mental illness in the U.S. carries a stigma. For the Black community, especially for men, Lewis says, that stigma is manifold and gets in the way of asking for help.

At the end of Beyond the Shop, along with holistic ideas for self-care and information on suicide prevention, Lewis provides information on

**The Beyond the Shop initiative aims not only to help Black boys and men confess their vulnerabilities and give them resources to begin a healthier way of living, but also to show barbers how they can be mental health advocates, too.**

local support groups and culturally competent therapists. Black mental health professionals make up only 2.6 percent of the field, according to the American Psychological Association. And therapy can also be a financial barrier for many.

That's where barbers step in.

Barbers learn how to help the men in their chairs—from recognizing that lack of eye contact might be a sign of depression to being comfortable asking someone if they're suicidal (this can be the best way to identify risk, according to the National Institute of Mental Health). They can point to resources in the community.

"I feel more able to help somebody," says JJ Harness, owner of Broski Barbershop in Little Rock. "Now, once I see the hints they're throwing out there that they need to talk, I'll open the door up for discussion."

Increasingly, communities are starting to see the need to equip unlikely first responders to better recognize health concerns in the people they interact with on a daily basis. Librarians in Sacramento, California, for example, underwent "mental health first aid" training at the beginning of the year to be able to identify issues in the homeless people who come through their doors and point them to help. In Duluth, Minnesota, a community-wide effort trains everyone from neighbors to business owners to support people living with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia. Baristas double as mental health aides in a new coffee shop in Chicago that's openly committed to mental health awareness and suicide prevention.

> "The biggest thing I took away was checking on my brothers. We're so quick to say, 'Man up,' when I really should be asking more questions and letting him know that if he needs help, I'm here."

Since the initial pilot in Little Rock, Lewis has taken Beyond the Shop to five other barbershops in cities across the South: Louisville, Kentucky; Memphis, Tennessee; Columbia, South Carolina; Atlanta; and, most recently, New Orleans. Response to Beyond the Shop conversations overall has been positive. A survey of participants even showed 58 percent would be more prone to seek treatment if a therapist was located in the barbershop.

In Louisville, a city that saw its highest ever homicide rates in the past two years, 40 people, including the mayor, showed up at The Campus Barbershop in January. Representatives from the Louisville Urban League and Metro United Way also came. Men openly shared their stories and offered each other advice.

Shortly after the event, owner J. "Divine" Alexander went to a homeless shelter to volunteer his barber services. He met a man there who was without a job and feeling down. Alexander, who struggles with depression himself, has been more open with others since the talk. He gave the man a haircut and a beard trim and at the same time encouraged him to seek help. A few months later, the man came into his barbershop—employed and ready to become a regular.

He credited Alexander for the turnaround. "He was like, 'Yeah, man, it all started with a haircut and a conversation to do better.'"

Celeste Hamilton Dennis is a freelance writer and editor from Portland, Oregon. Twitter: @celestehdennis.

PHOTO BY SANTANNA HAYES

**COMMENTARY** :: *Shawn Ricks*

# I STOPPED PLAYING THE "STRONG BLACK WOMAN"

I never saw my grandmother rest. From morning to night, she appeared to be in service: cooking and cleaning, helping and caring for others.

She died of a heart attack at 69.

As I reflect today on the high rates of heart disease, stress, obesity, and other physical as well as mental ailments among African American women, I wonder what would have been the impact had she said, "I ain't cooking tonight, everybody is on their own," or "I'm headed out for a walk," or simply, "I'm tired, and I need to rest." What messages might I have inferred from watching her take 15 minutes of quiet time in the morning to "get centered."

Instead, I observed what appeared to be a never-ending pace of busyness, problem-solving, and making ends meet. As a result, I found myself behaving similarly. I didn't dare go to her or the other Black women in my life with what I couldn't do. I worked hard to figure things out—to trudge through my storms. I mimicked what I saw and became a professional at it.

I realized later that my grandmother and I were not the only Black women who existed in this way. There were thousands of us—of all backgrounds and ages—silently suffering, while



PHOTO BY ELECTRAVK/GETTY IMAGES

Normalizing chaos is a coping mechanism. It's what Black women have passed on and collectively reinforced, generation after generation, perpetuating the strong Black woman stereotype.

proudly praising our abilities to make a way out of no way. The more women I engaged with, the more I discovered that we had taken the chaos in our lives and normalized it.

Normalizing chaos is a coping mechanism. It's what Black women have passed on and collectively reinforced, generation after generation, perpetuating the strong Black woman stereotype. This accepted idea that Black women have an extraordinary strength beyond that of other women—that we feel no pain, we don't cry, we don't need help—has done us more harm than good.

Black women are taught to push through, keep going, and endure difficult times without protest. Asking for help—or even believing that we're deserving of it—is a sign of weakness and vulnerability that we've been taught we cannot afford. More than 80 percent of Black mothers are the primary or major financial providers for their families, compared to 50 percent of White mothers. And more than 4 million family households—about 30 percent of Black families—in the United States are headed by Black women. Nearly 1 in 3 of those households lives below the poverty level. Gendered racism, which cuts across all socioeconomic and educational levels, has been shown to be a key component in health disparities.

We are paying for this myth we've bought into with our lives.

Minimizing our mental health, masking depression, staying busy, overeating or not eating at all, and normalizing all of it is killing us slowly. Not only do Black women continue to have higher rates of physical illness with poorer quality of care, we also experience higher rates of depression than our White counterparts. And we are more likely to receive lower rates of mental health treatment.

The upside is, as national attention shines a spotlight on mental health, Black women are slowly joining the discussions and the efforts to heal. Some are using social media and podcasts to share their stories and emphasize the importance of self-care. Others are sharing their stories with friends and family. This movement for Black women to embrace self-care is gradually spreading.

Kellee Monet Rice-Jalloh, who works in pastoral care in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, helps women like me navigate the chaos in our lives. As she is one of the few Black women on her university campus, Rice-Jalloh's office has become a space where Black women feel they can be vulnerable and authentic—removing their masks and capes.

She warns us that we have to stop pretending we're not in trauma every day.

My wake-up call came in the form of burnout, exhaustion, and depression. While studying for my Ph.D., I was working full time and raising three children. I didn't want to go to work, but I pushed through, put on my mask daily, and pretended I was OK.

I wasn't.

I was in the rabbit hole of my normalized chaos and couldn't find my way out until I admitted to the harm I was causing myself. I took a hard look at my life and committed to practicing self-care. I stopped saying yes to everyone and every opportunity. I started paying attention to my nutrition and physical activity. I started to remember things that bring me joy and made time to do them. I reminded myself that I am deserving of rest, with no guilt or shame. And I spend time alone.

None of these behaviors did I learn from watching my elders, but I am confident they are saving my life. I am doing the work daily, loving it, and loving me.

Shawn Arango Ricks is a counselor, life coach, and intuitive healer in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Twitter and IG: @drshawnricks

*With climate catastrophes increasing, a Northern California community has lessons in recovery one year after devastating wildfires.*

# What the Fires Did to Our Minds


A sign of resilience posted on a tree in a fire-destroyed neighborhood of Santa Rosa, California.

PHOTO FROM AFP CONTRIBUTOR/GETTY IMAGES

Dani Burlison

**It's late spring, and I'm hiking Sugarloaf Ridge State Park in Sonoma County with therapist, ecopsychologist, and California naturalist Mary Good. A mist is drifting down, and we have the park mostly to ourselves. In October 2017, 80 percent of Sugarloaf's 3,900 acres of oak woodlands were scorched by the firestorms in California's North Bay. But today, most of what stretches out before us is green and vibrant, brushed with the last signs of a wildflower superbloom that erupted from the ash earlier this spring.**

A dozen miles west in Santa Rosa, contractors are rebuilding some of the more than 5,000 homes destroyed there. The last of 2.2 million tons of fire debris has been hauled away from the 383 square miles of charred land in the region. And therapists like Good continue seeing fire survivors pro bono, helping them navigate the aftermath of the disaster.

"It was an absolute trauma for everybody involved. The fire is over, but the grief may last a long time," Good says. "We live in a time where these natural disasters are going to be happening more and more. How do you develop resilience? What do you do to feel like you can be safe in the world again?"

Developing that resilience seems crucial. According to climate research from NASA, we can expect more droughts, stronger and more intense hurricanes, and big changes in precipitation patterns.

As climate change-related disasters become more common, there is a critical need to address the mental health of survivors after a catastrophe. Santa Rosa residents—and the greater Sonoma County community—rushed in to offer support services through pop-up holistic clinics, mental health education, and free counseling services. It's a response that may help other communities cope with future disasters.

The magnitude and chaos of the North Bay fires left local government and nonprofit organizations overwhelmed—the fires plowed through several neighborhoods overnight, sending more than 4,000 people to 43 shelters at the peak of the fires. The Red Cross and local organizations offered psychological first aid, an emergency response tactic defined by the World Health Organization

"That's what we saw in this community: There's an amazing amount of goodwill and care and love and goodness. That's part of recovery: being able to allow that support ..."

as "humane, supportive, and practical help to fellow human beings suffering serious crisis events."

National programs can help address people's mental health needs during disasters like these fires and in the immediate aftermath, for example, the Disaster Distress Helpline—a confidential, national 24/7 call and text service.

Christian Burgess, the Helpline's director, says that most calls during disasters are from people feeling overwhelmed and anxious, seeking information about the event.

"During the long term recovery ... we start to see deeper mental health concerns from callers and texters, such as persistent anxiety; depression; and substance abuse, which can be related to traumatic exposure during the event; loss of loved ones, including pets; and financial strain," Burgess says.

Other organizations in Sonoma County took a more grassroots approach to offer support.

Tré Vasquez is a youth organizer at the North Bay Organizing Project, a Santa Rosa-based nonprofit that organizes working-class and minority communities to build political power.

When the fires erupted, Vasquez and his team mobilized quickly, collaborating with local churches, herbalists, acupuncturists, ancestral healers, counselors, and community volunteers to launch community healing events called Sanación del Pueblo ("The People's Healing") to support those impacted by the fires, especially the region's large immigrant population.

The first event was hosted within days. In the following weeks and months, Sanación del Pueblo provided physical and emotional support, referrals, and meals, and donated respirators to nearly 600 people. The events have been hosted at a community garden, a local Unitarian church, and a branch of the Sonoma County Library in a largely working-class and Latinx neighborhood of Santa Rosa. Vasquez says the events are still offered on a quarterly basis and include people of all ages sharing meals or chatting while they wait for their turn at massage tables, counseling sessions, or *limpias*—traditional Mexican spiritual healings.

According to Vasquez, Sanación del Pueblo centers people who have been historically underserved by medical providers, including undocumented immigrants, women and trans people, those with existing mental health concerns, and others at risk of being left out of emergency response services.

Other local organizations stepped up to provide emergency relief after the fires. In central Santa Rosa, the Lomi Psychotherapy Clinic—a sliding-scale outpatient mental health clinic—opened their doors to fire survivors immediately, advertising drop-in services over local radio to draw people in.

Thomas Pope, Lomi's co-founder and clinical director, says they have seen about 50 new clients in their fire survivor program. The program offers free and reduced-fee counseling services and was partially funded by the North Bay Fire Fund, which raised over $32 million in four months after the fires. Pope and his staff of roughly 30 therapists hope to provide services to survivors for as long as they need them.

"What we know is that three months to a year after a disaster is



PHOTO FROM AFP CONTRIBUTOR/GETTY IMAGES

**Renee Johnson stands in the middle of her burned home in the Coffey Park area of Santa Rosa, California, on Oct. 20, 2017.**

when the most need happens; that's why we want to keep this going," Pope says. "I think it's going to be quite a while until this community finds its way out of this initial stage of shock."

Pope's advice to other communities responding to large-scale disasters echoes NBOP's actions: Create safe places for people to go where they will have connections with others and positive activities to focus on. He says that finding a balance between discussing what happened and engaging in activities that bring pleasure and nourishment is key.

"Looking at disasters and the wide range of traumatic response, it's really good for our communities to know that there is a huge range of response," Pope says. "And it's important to attend to all of it."

Pope says that providing services as soon as possible should also be prioritized. Immediately after a disaster, people need help navigating resources, calming themselves, and problem-solving—all key aspects of psychological first aid. For survivors, having trauma validated and finding a supportive environment quickly can be critical for long-term well-being.

"And we really need to learn in recovery, to be able to shift attention away from difficult things to what's working well: love, connection, beauty, and joy," Pope says. "I don't want to sound callous at all, because in the middle of trauma, we can't always do that. But in the short range we also need to learn how to get out of the well of despair and find goodness, also. And that's what we saw in this community: There's an amazing amount of goodwill and care and love and goodness. That's part of recovery: being able to allow that support and to internalize the care that is here."

Throughout Sonoma County, other support networks have surfaced, including free trauma-informed yoga classes, support groups through hospice organizations, brown-bag lunch discussions, presentations on how to recognize and support loved ones with post-traumatic stress disorder, and holistic health care providers offering free services. But as the land

**By spring 2018, fairy lanterns, or Diogenes' lanterns *(Calochortus amabilis)*, bloomed on the 3,000-plus acres of charred landscape at Sugarloaf Ridge State Park in Sonoma County.**

regenerates and homes are rebuilt, the traumatic memories and uncertainty of being unhoused remain painful realities for many.

David Leal, a U.S. Navy veteran, utilized many of these services immediately after he and his wife lost their home of 10 years—in the Coffey Park neighborhood of Santa Rosa. He attended a free yoga class for fire survivors three days after the fires started.

"The instructor was very compassionate and offered her support at no cost," Leal says. "It was my first lesson in receiving help."

Leal also attended the first Sanación del Pueblo event, where he received a free massage and herbal supplements that he continues using today. He also continues a regular yoga practice and has received free and low-cost acupuncture and herbal supplements that have helped him immensely with the service-related PTSD that was reignited after losing his home.

"The fire triggered a lot of old stuff that I had experienced all the way back to childhood. The greatest challenge has been loss of sleep due to dreams and nightmares of so many different painful episodes from my past," Leal says. "But between yoga practice and chats with my Navy psych friend—and the herbs—I've been able to recover from the sleepless nights."

"It's such an amazing example of how you can be burned through to your core both literally and metaphorically, and even after being burned through to the core, [the tree] still leafed out this spring."

He says that the early support has helped him to be calm, especially as he deals with the stress and red tape of rebuilding his home.

"We have a moment right now that's really calling upon us to figure out how we're going to return to living in a good and balanced way," Vasquez says. "We can create spaces in which the way that we care for each other is a glimpse into the world as it should be. Or as we hope for it to be, as we mean for it to be."

Back at Sugarloaf Ridge, Good says that community training and planning before disaster strikes is a must as communities look toward adapting to the new normal of climate catastrophes. She says that connecting with nature, even after a disaster of this scale, is critical, recounting stories of fire survivors regaining hope when the scorched land showed signs of regrowth. Yet she acknowledges that survivors face long roads to recovery.

"Putting an entire life back together—it just stops people in their tracks," Good says. "Where do you even begin? How do you pick a point and start?"

The light rain is letting up at the park, and Good is excited about showing me a large bay tree that was badly damaged by The Nuns Fire. A hole has been burned through its trunk, but there is new growth sprouting around its blackened base, and leaves are springing out from its branches.

"It's such an amazing example of how you can be burned through to your core both literally and metaphorically, and even after being burned through to the core, [the tree] still leafed out this spring," she says. "It's a great example of individual and community regeneration."

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PHOTO FROM DANI BURLISON

Luna, a great horned owl, was blinded in one eye in a collision with a truck when she was just a fledgling. Top: a senior member of Wildmind's education team with a serval named Savannah.

# What Hurt Wild Animals Can Teach Hurt Children

**Isabelle Morrison**

Luna, a small great horned owl, was learning to fly when she flew into the road and hit somebody's car. The person pulled over, wrapped Luna's injured little body in a jacket, and rushed her to a wildlife center to save her life.

Today, Luna is a "wild teacher" at Wildmind, a sanctuary for more than 50 non-releasable wild animals in Half Moon Bay, California. She helps heal and inspire children and young adults who visit the sanctuary to participate in its At-Risk Youth Program, which works with homeless, foster, and juvenile detention center youth in the Bay Area. "Everyone who comes to us has a different backstory, but the one thing they all have in common is that they've lost their way or don't see that they have a place in the big picture of things," says Michele Durant, Wildmind's programs and wildlife manager.

Like many of the young people who visit Wildmind, the animals who live there have been separated from their families or forced to relocate, they've been hurt, and they've had to learn to trust new people.

"By the kids hearing about the animals going through these very traumatic, tragic things that happened to them in the wild [and having] lived through them and found another purpose, the kids begin to understand that that applies to them, too," Durant says.

PHOTOS FROM WILDMIND

# Healed by Trees

*The surprising ways in which green growing things restore us.*

*Finding solitude in the concrete jungle is powerful and peaceful.*
MICHAEL DOLAN

Natalie Slivinski

**In some of my earliest memories, I'm perched between two branches of a plum tree that grew in front of my house. To climb, I'd grip the lowest branches and stretch my foot as high as it would reach, pulling myself up to sit comfortably in my little throne of branches. There, I'd peer through the pale purple blossoms, across the sidewalk, admiring the tops of cars.**

I don't remember any fear—just the scrape of callused feet on bark; the triumph of successfully hoisting my knee onto a branch; the comfort of my hands circling that final limb as I reached the perfect nestling spot.

Growing up with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, I was anxious a lot. I procrastinated constantly because I didn't know how to prioritize. I was worried I might be stupid because I couldn't finish basic tasks. Sitting still in a circle was torture. But at the tops of familiar trees, seeing everything through a veil of leaves or delicious-smelling blossoms, I could make my brain stop spinning.

Even now, laundry stays in the washing machine for three days because I forget about it. I leave half-full glasses of water all over the house. Currently, I have 52 tabs open in three Chrome windows. The other day I went into my bedroom to get my phone charger but only managed to change my shirt. Spending time with plants is still my reset button.

In my quest for introspection and mental quiet time, trees have been my most stalwart allies.

## NATURE'S "COGNITIVE RESTORATION"

Globally, more than 300 million people live with depression, 260 million with anxiety, and many with both. An estimated 6 million American children have been diagnosed with ADHD. Physical activity is known to to help combat and prevent these disorders, but a walk down a busy traffic-filled street doesn't cut it. A walk in the woods, however, is different. Just 90 minutes can decrease activity in the subgenual prefrontal cortex—a region associated with rumination (dwelling on negative thoughts, for example).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, exposure to nature can significantly reduce stress. It also alleviates symptoms of anxiety, depression, and ADHD. Spending even a short amount of time in green space can lower blood pressure; it can also help people develop healthier habits and form more positive relationships. People's mental health is markedly better in urban areas with more green space.

Attention Restoration Theory helps explain why.

Urban environments are overwhelming. City dwellers are constantly bombarded with complex sights, sounds, and smells. Researchers believe that this has a negative effect on executive functioning, making us less able to cope with distractions. Captivating natural scenes, however, can restore attention and help combat mental fatigue.

Interestingly, some built environments can have the same effect. Cities that incorporate water, or "blue space," are more restorative than those without. Monasteries and countryside cottages fit the bill because, like nature, they evoke a sense of "being away." Museums and art galleries are restorative because they provide an escape from the cacophony of urban life. These scenes all give one a sense of space—of room to explore.

The more interactive we are with restorative space, the better; a weekend stay in a cozy wooded cabin will do more good than staring at a picture of one.

## THE PROBLEM WITH URBANIZATION

Over half of the world's population, and counting, lives in an urban setting. People in cities run a higher risk of both anxiety and mood disorders than people in rural areas—20 and 40 percent higher, respectively. We're also more sedentary than ever, and green space has been shown to promote critically important physical activity.

Apartments, office buildings, subways, traffic-filled streets—we're spending more and more time away from nature. Researchers estimate that if every city dweller spent just 30 minutes per week in nature, depression cases could be reduced by 7 percent. Globally, that's a whopping 21 million people. But for a busy city dweller, a visit to a beautiful monastery isn't always feasible. We all have read about the benefits of "forest therapy," but a half-day hike in the woods is a luxury many can't afford.

The answer lies in incorporating green space into urban planning, weaving nature into the fabric of everyday city life.

To understand our fraught relationship with urban nature, consider the evolution of big cities. Urbanization exploded in the 1800s as more people left their rural homes to look for work. With the focus on high-level priorities like sanitation, not to mention basic transportation and housing, green space just wasn't considered sufficiently important for human welfare.

Kathleen Wolf, a social science researcher at the University of Washington, studies the human benefits of nature in cities.

With the industrial boom and huge population influx, rates of disease went up, she says, and we focused on clearing space for sanitary engineering systems. "What we think now is that, maybe, the pendulum went a little too far in removal of nature from cities."

## RACIAL AND CLASS INEQUITY IN GREEN SPACE

Modern higher-income communities—often predominately White—have the time, influence, and financial resources to build green space and cultivate a sense of appreciation for urban nature, Wolf says. But poorer communities—including some communities of color—don't always have the same luxury.

"There are top-level priorities in communities of need with regard to health: crosswalks, sidewalks—really fundamental needs—assurance that people have housing. I would guess that if our cities could mobilize and satisfy those high-level needs, people in those communities would then begin to say, 'We have now a baseline quality of life; now [we can talk about] parks.'"

Yet these are the people who need green space the most. People with less financial security often have more demanding lifestyles. "They may be working multiple jobs. They may be single parents. They may have inadequate support systems," Wolf says. "People in those situations ... benefit even more from green space encounters."

Add to this the growing demands on our nation's young adults—expensive housing, out-of-control student loans, unprecedented pressure to succeed—and it's easy to see the dire need for cities to address cognitive fatigue, especially in stressed and underserved populations.

## INVESTING IN "GREEN"

Integrating green space doesn't have to be difficult. Someone just has to lead the charge.

"The direct integration of nature into buildings in a substantive way makes quite a difference," Wolf says. "Biophilic design ... is an intentional effort to integrate nature into the places where people work, learn, and live."

Nor does it have to be cost-prohibitive. "With any innovation, the early adopters pay more. Once it's more broadly accepted ... best practices emerge," Wolf says. "You reach a threshold of implementation, and costs come down."

Already, cities are taking steps, often going above and beyond planting trees. Chicago; Baltimore, Maryland; Portland, Oregon; New York; and Philadelphia are all investing in green infrastructure to improve city life and reduce their carbon footprint. Internationally, cities are leading in "smart design." In parts of Singapore, garbage trucks are replaced by chutes that vacuum up refuse. In London, city planners are restructuring the city's lighting to save energy and lessen the negative impact of light pollution on human health and sleep.

Workplaces are also using green



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION ON PREVIOUS PAGE BY TIM ROBBERTS/GETTY IMAGES

spaces to address employees' health and well-being. Research shows that companies that invest in green infrastructure and promote nature-oriented activities see reduced absenteeism, higher productivity, and better problem-solving in their employees. For these cities and workplaces investing in green infrastructure, there is a clear cost benefit.

Now, greater attention must be directed to low-income communities to address racial and economic disparity—the "green space gap." In California, there are a number of community-level efforts. The Little Green Fingers initiative in Los Angeles promotes urban parks and gardens in low-income areas and communities of color. In Sacramento, the Ubuntu Green project helps convert unused land like brownfields into urban farms and gardens in low-income communities. And the Oakland Parks and Recreation department is working with the Oakland Climate Action Coalition and the Oakland Food Policy Council to preserve green space in the face of gentrification.

**HOUSEPLANTS BRING NATURE INSIDE**

People living without sufficient access to green space, particularly those living with anxiety, depression, or ADHD, may also benefit from bringing nature into their homes.

More robust research in environmental psychology needs to be done to tease apart the complex benefits of houseplants, but the existing literature is promising. Indoor plants have been shown to soothe mental fatigue, lower blood pressure, and improve quality of sleep. Some hospital patients who underwent surgery were found to have higher pain tolerance, less anxiety, and even shorter recovery times when they could see plants from their beds.

Indoor greenery also brings in a distinctly interactive element that outdoor natural space can't always provide: the opportunity to grow and nurture something. Houseplants respond to our care and can pull us to slow down. They are living reminders of the importance of staying on track and not neglecting our responsibilities. They can help us maintain good habits. Research has shown that caring for a pet can help improve mental health by alleviating loneliness, calming stress, and restoring a sense of purpose and responsibility; for people unable to adopt a pet, houseplants may be a great lower-stakes alternative.

Houseplants respond to our care and can pull us to slow down. They are living reminders of the importance of staying on track and not neglecting our responsibilities.

There is an important caveat to this. As Wolf points out, lonely, isolated people are more prone to problems with mental and even physical health. Indoor plants are no substitute for community-wide solutions. Wolf encourages apartment dwellers to advocate for shared outdoor green spaces. They may benefit more from establishing "little sitting gardens" in place of "boring landscape materials" or ensuring that green stormwater infrastructure is designed "so it becomes a people space, as well," she says.

Ultimately, we benefit most by incorporating interactive green space at every level of city life—for individuals, cities, and everything in between.

I look, with cautious optimism, to a future full of trees.

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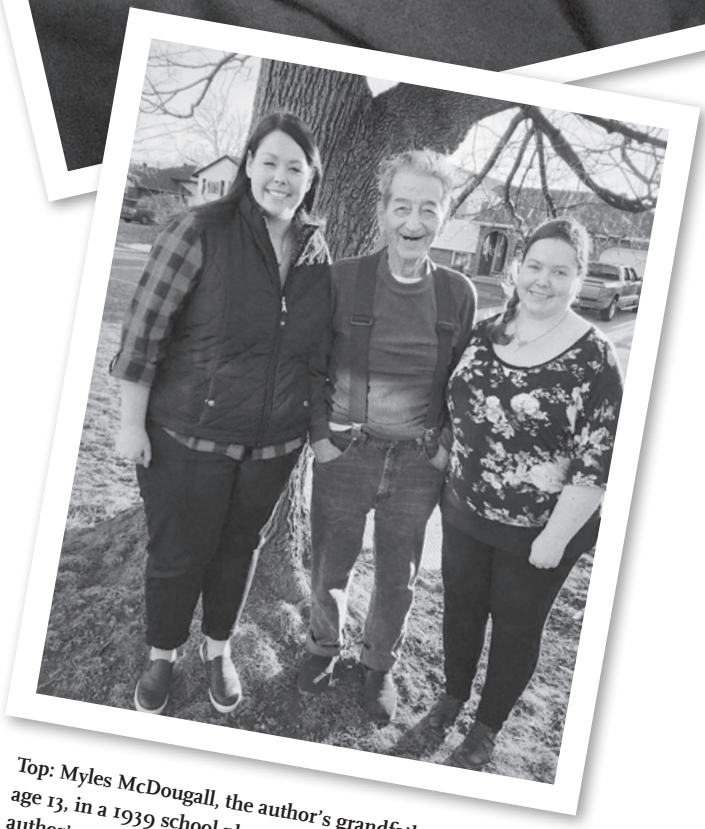
PHOTO BY ALIYEV ALEXEI SERGEEVICH/GETTY IMAGES



Top: Myles McDougall, the author's grandfather, at age 13, in a 1939 school photo. Above, left to right: the author's sister Meghan Hawksworth, her grandfather, and the author on Myles' 90th birthday, 2016.

**COMMENTARY** :: *Elizabeth Hawksworth*

# MY GRANDFATHER GAVE ME HIS TRAUMA— AND HIS HEALING CULTURE

My grandfather used to say that he'd never attended an Indian residential school. He'd shrug off his abuse in school, as if it was no big deal. After all, everyone he knew was abused by White teachers. They were all beaten for speaking Ojibwe, beaten until they forgot how to speak it altogether.

The Methodist-run residential school for Native children my grandfather likely attended was called Mount Elgin Industrial Institute. It was known on the reserve by another name: Mount Elgin Residential School. But he wouldn't call it that.

He wouldn't name that school or his trauma, but it was still there. And I inherited it, even if I spent my early years not realizing it.

I grew up away from the reserve, in a middle-class, White-passing family in Ontario. Being Native was not a way of life for me. In fact, I didn't know that I was Ojibwe until I was in the first grade. It just wasn't something my family spoke about.

Once I learned, little things poked at my sense of worth—things like regular, everyday anger and racism toward Native people in Ontario. Clashes between Natives and White communities made headlines there regularly while I was growing up. I was constantly told by the adults in my life that the Natives were "causing trouble." That they were "bringing it on themselves." It was easy to believe this racism. After all, I was surrounded by it.

At the same time, I was surrounded by family and friends who denied my Indigeneity. The racism and denial took a toll. I was constantly anxious, especially around authority. I flinched when people moved too quickly or raised a hand around me. And I was hyper-vigilant, something that continues to this day.

PHOTOS FROM ELIZABETH HAWKSWORTH

The mental illness diagnoses began racking up, and I turned to addictive behaviors—cutting, self-hating, and starving myself. And though I sat through therapy and popped anti-depressants, I continued to feel displaced and angry.

Some of that began to change after I reconnected with my grandfather. It was after I graduated from college, and I mentioned that I felt myself in a constant struggle, trying to figure out where I belonged. I was resentful, I said, feeling like I had no religion, no culture, and nowhere to go to find those things.

"That's what being an Indian is," he replied, touching for the first time on our shared blood and culture. "You're an Indian woman, so it's no one's place to tell you anything, but you're not going to find it easy. It hasn't ever been easy for us."

Then his voice turned serious.

"You're the storyteller in the family. You need to listen to me. It's your job to keep our culture going. Smarten up now."

Returning to culture is a duty my grandfather believed elders had to their communities. And he passed this on to me.

Around this point, I began learning about intergenerational trauma. While Native people have experienced it for years, researchers are just beginning to learn about how trauma is stored and passed on at the cellular level in the emerging field of epigenetics. A 2014 study showed that trauma altered gene expression in mice, and that these changes were passed down to their offspring. Knowing this is helpful for me. It helps me understand why I, and other family members, have experienced psychological issues that appear to have no trigger. Trauma changes the way our genes are expressed. It lives in our cells and becomes a part of who we are.

But that doesn't mean my trauma has to define me, my community, or my family. As Native people, we are no less resilient when we admit that colonialism has had lasting effects on us. And it starts with naming the trauma.

In his final years, my grandfather returned to culture and used storytelling as a way to heal from the trauma he experienced as a child and adult. By choosing me to tell his stories to, we both found a way to heal.

Using traditional practices has been shown to have a positive effect on mental health for Native people. Natives celebrating who we are, even in the face of erasure, has helped bring many of us back to our cultures, readying us to fight harder for what is ours. It makes sense that activities that are culturally affirming would build mental and emotional resilience. And while trauma can be passed down generations, so can healing.

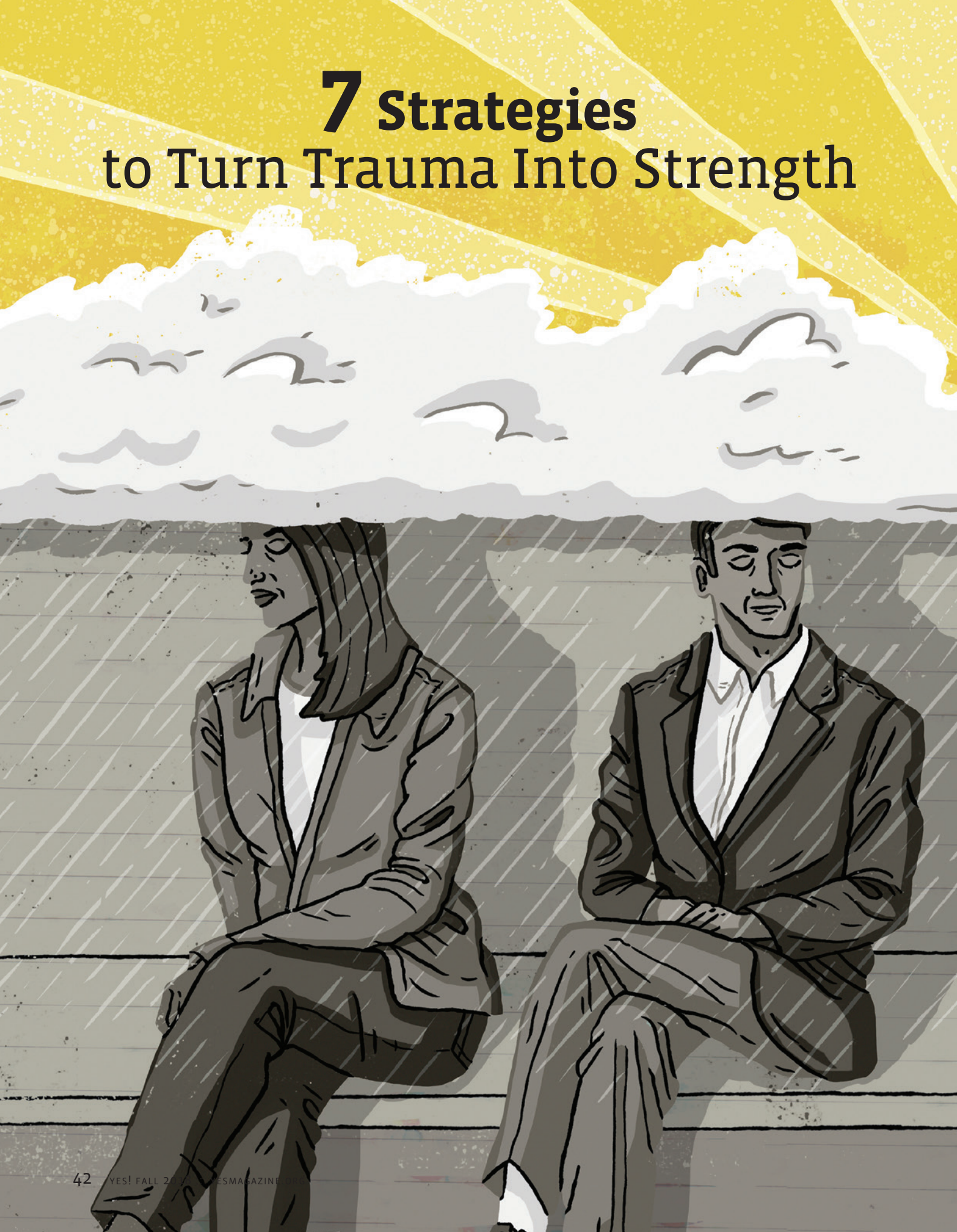
In his final years, my grandfather returned to culture and used storytelling as a way to heal from the trauma he experienced as a child and adult. By choosing me to tell his stories to, we both found a way to heal.

Connecting back to culture has been one of the hardest things I've done. Without my grandfather, I would not have known where to start my own journey. Sometimes I feel like an imposter or like I'm letting down my grandfather and the legacy he gave me, but then I realize that I'm doing exactly what he told me to do.

I am telling our story. I am healing my family's trauma by being exactly who I am—a Native woman who belongs, and has belonged, all along.

Elizabeth Hawksworth is an Anishinaabe writer with a focus on social justice and her experience as a queer Native in Canada. Web: lizhawksworth.wordpress.com.

# 7 Strategies to Turn Trauma Into Strength



*Researchers are studying how some people get to post-traumatic growth.*

Michaela Haas

When Army surgeon Rhonda Cornum regained consciousness after her helicopter crashed, she looked up to see five Iraqi soldiers pointing rifles at her. It was 1991 and her Black Hawk had been shot down over the Iraqi desert. Dazed from blood loss, with a busted knee and two broken arms, the then-36-year-old medic was subjected to a mock execution by her captors, sexually assaulted, and kept prisoner in a bunker for a week.

Her crisis included textbook causes for post-traumatic stress—a near-death experience, sexual assault, utter helplessness—and yet, after her release and medical rehabilitation, she surprised psychiatrists by focusing on ways she improved. "I became a better doctor, a better parent, a better commander, probably a better person," she says.

One might suspect Cornum was suppressing the real toll of her ordeal, but her experience is far from unique. "Post-traumatic growth," a term coined by

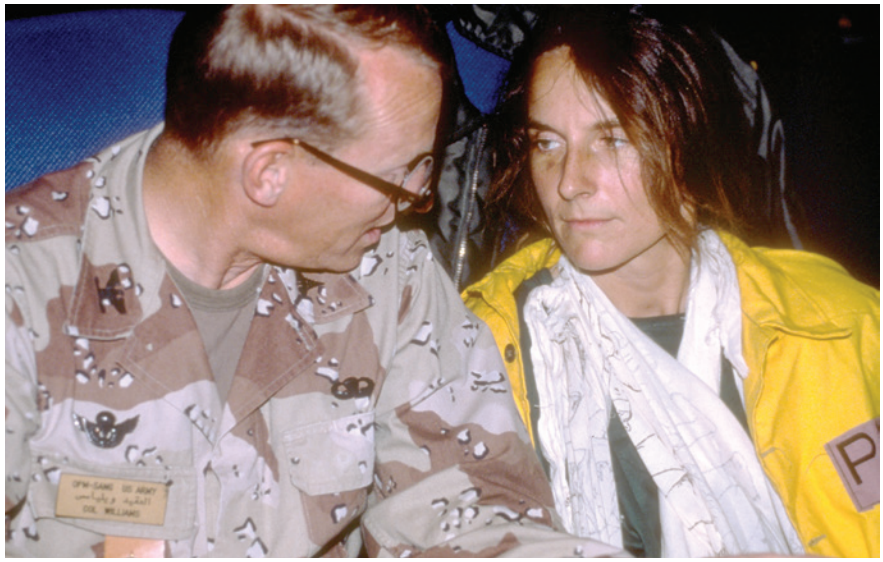
ILLUSTRATION BY EVA BEE/GETTY IMAGES

University of North Carolina psychologists Richard Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun, describes the surprising benefits many survivors discover in the process of healing from a traumatic event. After counseling bereaved parents, people who had lost the loves of their lives or were severely injured, cancer survivors, veterans, and prisoners, the researchers found growth in five main areas: personal strength, deeper relationships with others, new perspectives on life, appreciation of life, and spirituality.

Post-traumatic stress disorder gets more attention, but post-traumatic growth is much more common. Tedeschi found that as many as 90 percent of survivors from all walks of life report at least one aspect of growth. "But it is important to make clear that not everybody experiences growth, and we are not implying that traumatic events are a good thing," Tedeschi stresses. "They are not. In the wake of trauma, people become more aware of the futility in life, and that unsettles some while it focuses others. This is the paradox of growth: People become more vulnerable yet stronger."

Tedeschi estimates that most of us—almost 90 percent, according to his calculations—will experience one or more traumatic events during our lifetimes. For instance, 1.6 million people are diagnosed with cancer each year. About 3 million Americans are injured or disabled in traffic crashes. Many women have experienced sexual assault. Although most people will suffer from post-traumatic stress in the aftermath of trauma, few will develop the full-blown disorder, and even of those, most will heal with therapy and time.

Tedeschi rejects the designation "disorder" because of the stigma the term carries. "When someone crashes their car against a wall at 60 miles per hour, they'll have many broken bones. Do we say they have a broken bone disorder? They have an injury. Same with trauma survivors; they have been injured. Psychologically injured, maybe morally injured."



**Former prisoner of war Maj. Rhonda Lee Cornum, a flight surgeon, sits next to U.S. Army Col. Richard Williams on a transport aircraft after her release by the Iraqi government during Operation Desert Storm in 1991. She retired in 2012 as a brigadier general.**

"In the wake of trauma, people become more aware of the futility in life, and that unsettles some while it focuses others. This is the paradox of growth: People become more vulnerable yet stronger."

Psychiatrists and psychologists have focused on the negative impact of trauma; after all, they're trained to track the symptoms, what's wrong. But this deficit model adversely impacts survivors. Many trauma survivors simply assume that they are damaged forever. In reality, although we likely do carry a traumatic event with us forever—in our minds and bodies—we can heal and even thrive.

Cornum is convinced that resilience is like a muscle that strengthens when exercised and atrophies when neglected.

Together with specialists, she initiated a comprehensive resilience training that ran its first pilot program in 2009. Every single U.S. Army soldier now participates in the $160 million program, which has been shown to significantly decrease substance abuse and increase optimism, good coping skills, adaptability, and character strength. The training is so successful that psychologists are convinced that it can help not only soldiers but people from all walks of life.



PHOTO FROM CORBIS HISTORICAL/GETTY IMAGES

Here are strategies trauma psychologists have found particularly helpful to turn struggle into strength:

## 1
## Mindfulness

At the resilience boot camp in Philadelphia, soldiers start each day with mindfulness meditation and breathing exercises. Because the most common PTSD treatments—medication and psychotherapy—only work for about half the survivors, the army is experimenting with alternative methods, and meditation has proven to be one of the most promising. Harvard neurobiologist Sara Lazar has shown that "meditation can literally change your brain." It can actually shrink the amygdala, the "fear center" in our brain that might be enlarged after a trauma and trigger flashbacks of anxiety and panic.

## 2
## Vulnerability

Post-traumatic growth is not the opposite of post-traumatic stress. Rather, the stress is the engine that fuels the growth. Before we can overcome suffering, we need to go through it. Covering up a raw wound with a smiley face Band-Aid does not lessen the pain. Neither does suffering in silence, which only increases the risk of PTSD. Instead, growth arises from acknowledging the wounds and allowing vulnerability. A significant part of the training consists of teaching survivors to communicate openly, admit fears, and reach out to seek help.

## 3
## Self-compassion

Shame, self-blame, and guilt are all too common in the aftermath of trauma. Practices of self-compassion and loving kindness under the gentle guidance of an experienced, trauma-informed instructor can allow survivors to reconnect with parts of themselves that have been wounded, at their own pace.

## 4
## Finding meaning

"After trauma, it's important to acknowledge mental suffering will happen," Tedeschi instructs. "At a certain point, and in tandem with continuing distress, a crucial foundation of post-traumatic growth is making meaning out of and reflecting about one's trauma." As Auschwitz survivor Viktor Frankl realized, "Those who have a 'why' to live can bear with almost any 'how.'"

## 5
## Gratitude

One of the single most effective practices for resilience is keeping a journal of gratitude. The army calls it "Hunt the Good Stuff," but the exercise is the same: noticing three good things every day and reflecting on them. According to studies at the University of California, Davis, grateful people not only report that they are more satisfied, optimistic, and content with their lives, but they also have fewer medical symptoms, more energy, and even sleep better. In addition, cultivating gratitude improves our mood, and makes us more social and willing to help others.

## 6
## A holistic approach

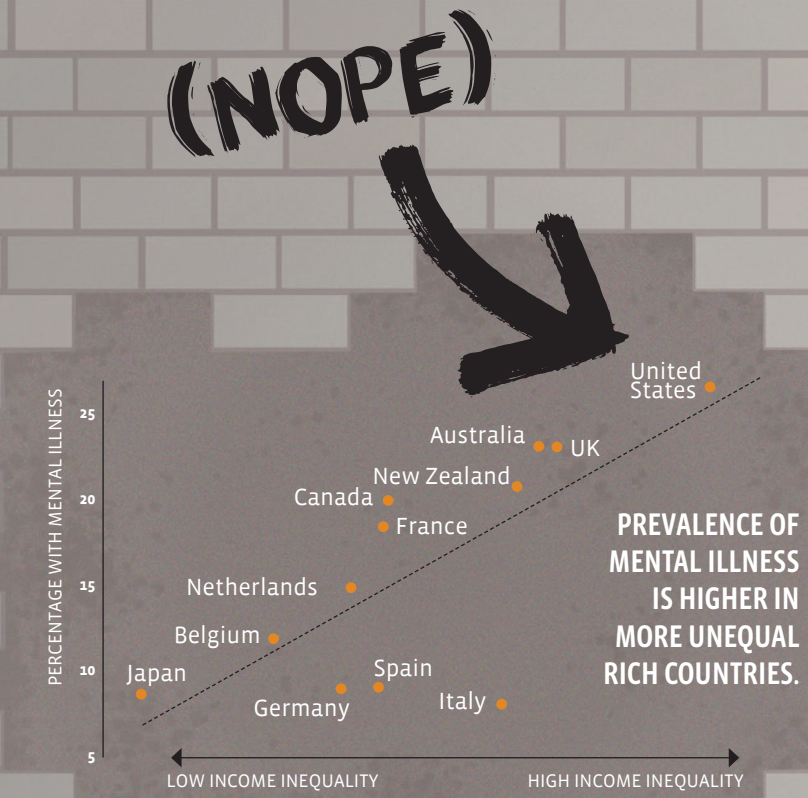
Dr. Karen Reivich, the co-director of the Penn Resiliency Project, and her team teach 14 core skills, such as goal setting, energy management, problem solving, and assertive communication. "When people have mastered and used these skills in their lives, they are more robust in the face of stress, they can cope more effectively with problems, and they have tools to be able to maintain strong relationships. So, the goal is to enhance the overall well-being and resilience," Reivich explains.

## 7
## A team effort

"Nobody ever does it alone," civil rights icon Maya Angelou recognized, years after being raped at the age of 8. Resilience is always a team effort. Moving forward after a crisis depends not only on the individual's resources and their genetic makeup or upbringing, but also on their connections to the people around them and the quality of support. The best kind of support encourages survivors to focus on their strength but doesn't gloss over their wounds. Nothing is as powerful as knowing we are not alone.

Michaela Haas is a solutions journalist and the author of *Bouncing Forward: The Art and Science of Cultivating Resilience* (Atria). Twitter: @MichaelaHaas.

# What a Society Designed for Well-Being Looks Like




**PREVALENCE OF MENTAL ILLNESS IS HIGHER IN MORE UNEQUAL RICH COUNTRIES.**

SOURCE: WILKINSON AND PICKETT, *THE SPIRIT LEVEL*, 2009
YES! INFOGRAPHIC, 2018

*Economic justice goes a long way toward improving mental health up and down the socioeconomic ladder.*

Tabita Green

**In early June of this year, the back-to-back suicides of celebrities Anthony Bourdain and Kate Spade, coupled with a new report revealing a more than 25 percent rise in U.S. suicides since 2000, prompted—again—a national discussion on suicide prevention, depression, and the need for improved treatment. Some have called for the development of new antidepressants, noting the lack of efficacy in current medical therapies. But developing better drugs buys into the mainstream notion that the collection of human experiences called "mental illness" is primarily physiological in nature, caused by a "broken" brain.**

This notion is misguided and distracting at best, deadly at worst. Research has shown that, to the contrary, economic inequality could be a significant contributor to mental illness. Greater disparities in wealth and income are associated with increased status anxiety and stress at all levels of the socioeconomic ladder. In the United States, poverty has a negative impact on children's development and can contribute to social, emotional, and cognitive impairment. A society designed to meet everyone's needs could help prevent many of these problems before they start.

To address the dramatic increase in mental and emotional distress in the U.S., we must move beyond a focus on the individual and think of well-being as a social issue. Both the World Health Organization and the United Nations have made statements in the past decade that mental health is a social indicator, requiring "social, as well as individual, solutions." Indeed, WHO Europe stated in 2009 that "[a] focus on social justice may provide an important corrective to what has been seen as a growing overemphasis on individual pathology." The UN's independent advisor Dainius Pūras reported in 2017 that "mental health policies and services are in crisis—not a crisis of chemical imbalances, but of power imbalances," and that decision-making is controlled by "biomedical gatekeepers," whose outdated methods "perpetuate stigma and discrimination."

Our economic system is a fundamental aspect of our social environment, and the side effects of neoliberal capitalism are contributing to mass malaise.

In *The Spirit Level*, epidemiologists Kate Pickett and Richard G. Wilkinson show a close correlation between income inequality and rates of mental illness in 12 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development member countries. The more unequal the country, the higher the prevalence of mental illness. Of the 12 countries measured on the book's mental illness scatter chart, the United States sits alone in the top right corner—the most unequal and the most mentally ill.

The seminal Adverse Childhood Experiences Study revealed that repeated childhood trauma results in both physical and mental negative health outcomes in adulthood. Economic hardship is the most common form of childhood trauma in the U.S.—one of the richest countries in the world. And the likelihood of experiencing other forms of childhood trauma—such as living through divorce, death of a parent or guardian, a parent or guardian in prison, various forms of violence, and living with anyone abusing alcohol or drugs—also increases with poverty.

It is clear that many of those suffering mental and emotional distress are actually having a rational response to a sick society and an unjust economy. This revelation doesn't reduce the suffering, but it completely changes the paradigm of mental health and how we choose to move forward to optimize human well-being. Instead of focusing only on piecemeal solutions for various forms of social ills, we must consider that the real and lasting solution is a new economy designed for all people, not only for the ruling corporate elite. This new economy must be based on principles and strategies that contribute to human well-being, such as family-friendly policies,

ILLUSTRATION BY MARK AIRS/GETTY IMAGES

meaningful and democratic work, and community wealth-building activities to minimize the widening income gap and reduce poverty.

The seeds of human well-being are sown during pregnancy and the early years of childhood. Research shows that mothers who are able to stay home longer (at least six months) with their infants are less likely to experience depressive symptoms, which contributes to greater familial well-being. Yet in the United States, one-quarter of new mothers return to work within two weeks of giving birth and only 13 percent of workers have access to paid leave. A new economy would recognize and value the care of children in the same way it values other work, provide options for flexible and part-time work, and, thus, enable parents to spend formative time with their young children—resulting in optimized well-being for the whole family.

In his book *Lost Connections,* journalist Johann Hari lifts up meaningful work and worker cooperatives as an "unexpected solution" to depression. "We spend most of our waking time working—and 87 percent of us feel either disengaged or enraged by our jobs," Hari writes.

A lack of control in the workplace is particularly detrimental to workers' well-being, which is a direct result of our hierarchical, military-influenced way of working in most organizations. Worker cooperatives, a building block of the solidarity economy, extend democracy to the workplace, providing employee ownership and control. When workers participate in the mission and governance of their workplace, it creates meaning, which contributes to greater well-being. While more research is needed, Hari writes, "it seems fair ... to assume that a spread of cooperatives would have an antidepressant effect."

Worker cooperatives also contribute to minimizing income inequality through low employee income ratios and wealth-building through ownership—and can provide a way out of poverty for workers from marginalized groups. In an Upstream podcast interview, activist scholar Jessica Gordon Nembhard says, "We have a racialized capitalist system that believes that only a certain group and number of people should get ahead and that nobody else deserves to ... I got excited about co-ops because I saw [them] as a place to start for people who are left behind." A concrete example of this is the Cleveland Model, in which a city's anchor institutions, such as hospitals and universities, commit to purchasing goods and services from local, large-scale worker cooperatives, thus building community wealth and reducing poverty.

Perhaps if enough people recognize the clear connection between mental and emotional well-being and our socioeconomic environment, we can create a sense of urgency to move beyond corporate capitalism.

The worker cooperative is one of several ways to democratize wealth and create economic justice. The Democracy Collaborative lists dozens of strategies and models to bring wealth back to the people on the website community-wealth.org. The list includes municipal enterprise, community land trusts, reclaiming the commons, impact investing, and local food systems. All these pieces of the new economy puzzle play a role in contributing to economic justice, which is inextricably intertwined with mental and emotional well-being.

In *Lost Connections,* Hari writes to his suffering teenage self: "You aren't a machine with broken parts. You are an animal whose needs are not being met." Mental and emotional distress are the canaries in the coal mine, where the coal mine is our corporate capitalist society. Perhaps if enough people recognize the clear connection between mental and emotional well-being and our socioeconomic environment, we can create a sense of urgency to move beyond corporate capitalism—toward a new economy designed to optimize human well-being and planetary health.

Our lives literally depend on it.

Tabita Green is a worker-owner at New Digital Cooperative, a digital communications firm based in northeast Iowa, and a new economy advocate. Twitter: @tabitag.

Fall 2018 Issue 87



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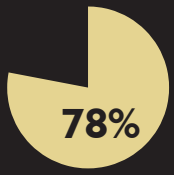


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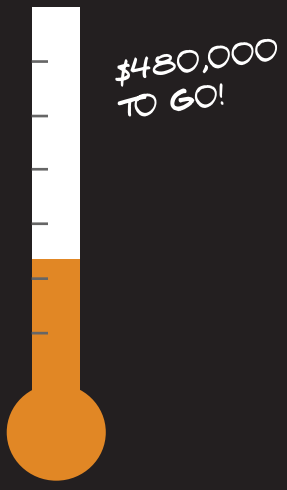


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# Why I'm Naming YES! in My Will

YEHUDIT LIEBERMAN
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I go way back with YES! I was a charter subscriber when YES! first started, back in 1996. What attracted me was that YES! showed me alternatives that were never covered in mainstream media. It featured experiments happening all around the world and made those efforts visible so people could replicate them. I saw that it wasn't just a matter of a little effort here, a little effort there. YES! showed me that all those experiments were part of larger movements to create deep, systemic change. That helped me see a path forward. It gave me hope.

All these years later, YES! still gives me that information, that perspective, that hope. I've decided to leave money to YES! in my will because YES! is the only publication I know of that, day after day, shows us how we can change this world for the better. I want to be part of that transformation—now and into the future.

I know that by supporting YES!, I'm helping spread those solutions. I'm accelerating those movements for change. When I hear people lament the state of the world, I can show them YES! and say, "Here are some alternatives that are working."

If we're going to survive, we have to adopt those alternatives. YES! needs to keep showing us the ways forward. I want to make sure that happens even after I'm gone. Our future depends on it.

I hope you'll join me as a member of the YES! Legacy Community.

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**STUDENT ESSAY WINNER** :: *Malena Vargas Sáez*

# THE RIGHTEOUS PATH OF MARÍA THE SAGE

*Think about what matters most to you about our country's future. Write a letter to someone important to you, describing that future you imagine and hope for.*

Querida María:

I have so much to thank you for. I would like to start with thanking you for your ever-growing understanding and receptivity to this changing world. I thank you for confronting all the adversities that came your way throughout your life, and for every tear you held back for your young siblings, your children, and their children. Thank you for your unbreakable will despite the crack of patriarchy's whip. For swallowing your pride for not finishing school and for becoming a strong and loving figure for your siblings and your children at home, even if it cost you getting judged by people who would not have done the same. And I begin with all this gratitude because we, the world, are in need of individuals like you—more Marías.

Inside that cement house, nestled high up in the rural mountains in the heart of Borinquen, your parents, aware of it or not, admired President Woodrow Wilson as he signed a law in 1917 that finally made us citizens of a powerful nation. Thanks to Luis Muñoz Marín and his negotiations with the United States, you got your first good pair of shoes—shoes that would hop on rocks and cross the river on your way to the only school in town. And don't forget that moment your tongue discovered the taste of peanut butter the first day American food was served in the school cafeteria. What an experience!

Remember how you would put all these honorable men on a pedestal, like your favorite wooden saint or porcelain Baby Jesus? But, to ponder the possibility that those political figures were corrupt, while most people could not access decent education, was terrifying! It was because of this that you forbade your children and husband, even the cousins and *tíos* and *tías* that came to visit, from ever speaking politics and religion at the dinner table, or anywhere within your hearing range. It is like putting water and a computer together—things just will not end well, you would always tell yourself.

You had given up on these lying puppets when Pedro Rosselló demanded a place on your pedestals. He was followed by four governors and his son Ricardo, our current governor, who stood at the end of the line. And to top it off, Mr. Donal Trom, a magnet for controversy, walked right through the door, demanding a pedestal of his own.

And María, your waking up at 4 a.m. just to make sure the house was holding up in the face of three straight days of the hurricane was simply incredible. Holding back your anger while being thrown paper towels by the "president" of the United States instead of medications and meals for your frail husband takes unbelievable strength. One might even say you live up to your hurricane namesake. Woman, how do you do it?

Tell me, what is your secret? We are watching how this government makes education unaffordable and inaccessible; watching our honorable teachers get fired while the news exposes what ridiculously large salaries new and old secretaries and assessors make. They make protests look bad and even spew on social media that demonstrations waste their time and that we are being inconsiderate toward drivers and tourists. María, you have every reason to lose hope!

In a country where powerful figures lead us to hate our differences, you accept every race, age, gender, and sexual orientation with love and respect. In a community that is divided and riddled with the holes of ever-growing violence, you do your best to keep our family together and on good terms. María, it is like you swim against the tide, but you do not seem to mind. Is it something that comes with age? Does this radical hope come with being a mother, a grandmother, a good neighbor, a hardworking woman? Is this the true definition of being human?

I am running out of words, and I am still filled with questions and doubts, but I am hoping your memory, our origins, will guide us all through these turbulent and dangerous times. You, like so many Marías, deserve to be on that pedestal in the living room instead.

With admiration from your granddaughter,

Malena

Malena Vargas Sáez is an 11th-grade student of Guillermo Morejón Flores at The Episcopal Cathedral School in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

## YES! FOR TEACHERS

**This essay was the "Powerful Voices" winner of the Spring 2018 YES! National Student Writing Competition. The competition is part of the YES! for Teachers program, bringing classroom resources on justice and sustainability to schools nationwide.**

*yesmagazine.org/for-teachers*

# CULTURE SHIFT

*Powerful Ideas Emerging*



"The ceremonies, the language, the songs, the dances are not lost. We are lost; they are where they have always been, just waiting to be recalled."
—Melodie George-Moore, Hoopa tribal member, Karuk, Cherokee, Whilkut

FROM *We Are Dancing for You*

*Illustrations by Fran Murphy*

# The Hupa Girls Are Dancing Again, as Native Culture Reasserts Women's Power

Mary Annette Pember

**Native American women and girls** are 2.5 times more likely to experience sexual violence compared to other races. The truth is, however, that it's been open season on Native women and girls' sexuality for the last 500 years.

For me, this is personal. My mother, and women of her generation, survived poverty, brutal men, sexual violence, and Indian boarding schools. While many of the Ojibwe women of my youth were bitter, quick-tempered creatures, their prickly exteriors camouflaged a capacity for deep love of family and culture and tenderness as soft as a mouse's belly.

That deep love is now driving revitalization of women-centered ceremonies, such as the Hoopa Valley Tribe's Flower Dance. While genocide and federal policies designed to eradicate Native people and cultures have had a particular impact on Native women, these celebrations represent a means of healing from the impacts of this historical trauma.

My mother would often tell me about an episode from her youth. Late one night, she and my Auntie Lucille sat waiting for their train in a deserted city depot. A group of drunken men stumbled into the building. Noticing the pretty young women, one man sat down close to my mother. He made obscene suggestions and began pawing at her with impunity.

Abruptly she stiffened and brushed her sleeve with her hand as though shaking off dirt that had landed on her white blouse.

"Keep your goddamned filthy White man's hands offa me!" she declared curtly with an assurance that must have enraged him.

"Who the hell do you think you are, anyway? You're just a dirty Indian!" he laughed.

My auntie, fearing a scene, tried to shush her. "Don't make trouble, Bernice!"

"I don't care! I made up my mind. We don't have to let them treat us like this!"

Eventually a cop walked into the depot. Although he failed to intervene, his presence was enough to defuse the situation.

Like many Native people from her generation, she was raised in a boarding school. Although the school was located on her reservation, it was as though she lived a thousand miles away from her community. The nuns there ensured the children had little contact with their culture or language.

Despite years at the school, the nun's shaming of her culture, and the sexual assault she endured, my mother retained her sacredness as an Ojibwe woman. She did this by remembering that she was one of those who take care of the water. The most important and essential element of life, water encircles our young in the womb and influences all life on Earth—and this knowledge is something she passed on to me.

Reading *We Are Dancing for You: Native Feminisms and the Revitalization of Women's Coming-of-Age Ceremonies* by Cutcha Risling Baldy reminded me of the resilience and pride of Ojibwe women like my mother.

In her book, Baldy, a member of the Hoopa Valley Tribe and assistant professor of Native American studies at Humboldt State University in California, describes the growing movement among indigenous people to rejuvenate and reinvent traditional culture, language, and spirituality as a means to heal from the legacies of colonization—particularly the legacies of patriarchy and sexual violence and assault against Native women.

One of those ceremonies is the Hupa



PREVIOUS PAGE: YES! ILLUSTRATION BY FRAN MURPHY

female coming-of-age ceremony, the Flower Dance.

The Flower Dance, according to Baldy, represents the foundational role that women traditionally play in Hupa community, culture, and nation-building. Since time immemorial, performing the Flower Dance has been a means of keeping the world in balance, of tying the community to the health and well-being of the Earth.

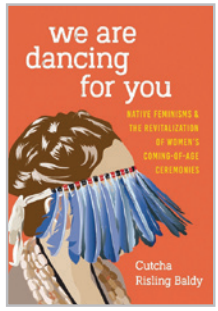
Although anthropologists might describe the Flower Dance as a coming-of-age ceremony, Baldy prefers to describe the dance as a celebration of menstruation and women's power.

The Flower Dance, or Ch'iłwa:l, which means "they beat time with sticks," can last several days. Hupa community members beat their rattles or sticks and sing special Ch'iłwa:l songs. The *kinahłdung* (girl having her first Flower Dance) wears a veil of blue jay feathers covering her eyes. She runs for extended periods and bathes in special locations called *tims*, or lucky spots. A large feast is held at the end of the dance and the kinahłdung receives gifts; she then has special power to provide blessings upon others.

Women are considered especially powerful during their first menses, according to Baldy. But for generations of Hupa, the Flower Dance was demonized and driven underground by European settlers. Revitalization of the Flower Dance and other ceremonies represents a means of healing from the impacts of this historical trauma.

By reasserting these community ceremonies, Baldy writes, the Hupa are also reasserting their foundational cultural beliefs about women, gender, and sexuality. In this way, Baldy writes, indigenous people are "(re)writing, (re)righting, and (re)riteing" their histories and ceremonies.

Indeed, after generations of failed social services administered by federal agencies, Indian Country is turning to the power of traditional ways to heal and recover from the devastation of colonization. Baldy describes the painful history of California tribes: European genocide and ongoing White male hegemony that legitimized the murderous brutalization of Native women.




**We Are Dancing for You**

Cutcha Risling Baldy

*University of Washington Press, 2018*

Among California tribes, early settlers found societies in which women held leadership positions. As Baldy writes, these women leaders were "the embodiment of the relations that configure order to the community, the community's relationship to the Earth and to life."

Early European settlers, mostly men, came from societies in which patriarchy was the norm and gender roles were narrowly defined. Men were strong, capable, and wise; women were weak, naive, and too incompetent to own land or property.

Women from Native societies in which women played leadership roles, on the other hand, had personal agency. And where women's life-giving powers were celebrated through ceremonies such as the Flower Dance, these rituals were viewed as abnormal and primitive by settlers. The strength of Native women was a direct threat and challenge to colonization.

The colonial legacy of patriarchy undergirds a long, entrenched history of abuse of Native women. And so denigrating the power of Native women became the key to taming, conquering, and exploiting indigenous land and resources.

Although learning the history of colonization and its reliance on violence against Native women is painful, it has helped me gain a measure of authority over the basis of shame and trauma that has often poisoned our communities.

This knowledge also reinforces the legitimacy of our traditional ceremonies and our right to claim them as a means to heal and restore us.

When my children and I dance, speak our language, and participate in our ceremonies, I think of my mother and her fierce pride. Although she wasn't allowed to participate in our ceremonies, she instilled in me the knowledge that in Ojibwe culture, spirituality is the bedrock of life; women play a central role.

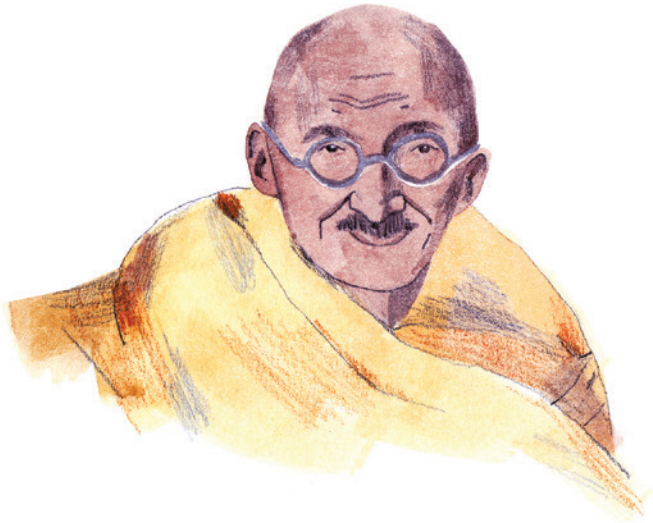
My friend Babette Sandman, Ojibwe from White Earth, once remarked:

"Sometimes I wonder where Ojibwe women's strength comes from. How is it we've survived and kept our ways and identity even when the federal government outlawed our religion? Then I remember that the ancestors taught us that there is some kind of energy that comes right out of the Earth, into our feet and into our hearts, if we take time to put down our tobacco and listen."

Near the end of the final chapter, Baldy writes, "We are not sad, dying Indians, and this documentation of our revitalizations is not of a dying culture, but instead of a culture that has always envisioned an indigenous future."

Indeed, our resilience and determination to know who we are and how to pray and make ceremony—and to pass this knowledge along to our children and community—this is our enduring strength.

Mary Annette Pember has written about Native American people and issues since 2000 for Indian Country Today, ReWire News, and others. She is an enrolled member of the Red Cliff Band of Wisconsin Ojibwe. Web: mapember.com.



# Mister Rogers, Neighborhood Nonviolence Radical

Stephanie Van Hook

**Kids have it really hard right now.** Many adults have forgotten that a world where children are safe and cared for with dignity is not a utopian vision, but a necessity.

Take Ben, for example, who happened to be sitting in my office recently. I told him about a paid internship opportunity for high school youth at a local nonviolence organization, wondering if he would be interested in pursuing it. But he liked violence, he asserted, with a certain confidence, a wry smile on his face and a mesh of hair falling across his serious brown eyes.

"I'm not very peaceful."

"That could make you the ideal candidate," I replied. "You might actually have the courage it takes to practice nonviolence."

Ben is 17 and had been expelled from school a few days before because he'd threatened, not for the first time, to fight another student. "Just go," responded the school administrator. It was the end of the school year and they were kicking him out for the rest of the year. That evening the other kid sent him threats on Snapchat, ready to pick up the fight now that they were off campus.

"But I swallowed my pride and talked him out of it. I told him I didn't want to fight him," said Ben. He went back to his school administrators to tell them that he and the other guy were "cool now" and there wouldn't be any more trouble, but to no avail. They wouldn't revoke the expulsion. He was not worth their while—he was not worthwhile. "I have one friend who really understands this, too," he told me quietly later in our conversation. "Nothing matters. Life really doesn't matter."

Something in what he'd said caught my attention. And it wasn't his violence.

"Wait, you mean, you figured out how to reconcile with this other kid even though a few hours before the two of you were ready to take each other on? You sound like someone who's done this before."

And sure enough, he told me about another time when he'd not only broken up a fight between two friends, but helped them forgive each other and even reconcile.

"Ben, I'm gonna make a wild guess that you might have a real gift for peacemaking." He became attentive now: Maybe no one had ever seen him in this light—or said so. He'd been typed as a "bad" kid, aggressive, violent; he picks a fight and is punished, but he reconciles a conflict and no one cares.



YES! ILLUSTRATION BY FRAN MURPHY

Ben was not failing school, or society. They—or rather, we—were failing him. One administrator actually told him, "You're going to end up dead or in prison."

"It makes me want to prove him right," Ben said, almost imploringly.

His story made me wonder:

What are we telling ourselves, and our children, about what it means to be a human being? Are we problems or are we problem-solvers? It depends on what qualities we are trained to look for.

The day before my conversation with Ben, I saw the documentary *Won't You Be My Neighbor?*, Morgan Neville's appropriately complex exploration of the unconventional children's television pioneer Fred McFeely Rogers. The messages we send to the very young were of primary concern to Rogers, who chose a career in television—in the early days of the medium—expressly to care for children. As the originator and host of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, Rogers celebrated dignity and kindness in a slow-paced, low-budget children's show that was a beloved cultural institution for just over three decades.

Giving his full attention to everyone and everything that came into his neighborhood, especially the challenges, Mister Rogers took up serious conversations normally censored from children, going right to the heart of the toughest problems the world faces: war, racism, assassination, even terrorism. He reminded us of our responsibility to look at how to understand and repair these conflicts, because—and this is the important part—all of us have the capacity to do that work.

In an interview included in the film, Rogers says that in times of "scary news," of tragedy and disaster, his mother taught him not to focus just on destruction or violence, but to "look for the helpers," who are everywhere. Rogers often said that he admired Mahatma Gandhi, another unassuming person with an extraordinary capacity for separating negative behaviors from the fundamental dignity of the person doing them, and then using that relationship as a basis for constructive action. Gandhi coined a special term for nonviolence that takes it out of the conceptual realm of passivity, *satyagraha*. *Satya* means what is good, what is real, what is true, and *agraha* means to grasp, to hold tightly.

With his inner strength hidden behind his homemade sweaters and signature blue tennis shoes, Mister Rogers modeled satyagraha in the age of mass media. Look at his boldness, how he taught children to resist mindless indignity: giving lessons on how to turn off a television set—his very own medium—when what is shown is degrading.

Giving back agency to the dehumanized mass viewer? That's subversive. Firmly taking his industry colleagues to task for producing media that was harmful to the development of children? Courage with a capital C.

Rogers' influence was such that he was often invited to give commencement speeches to college graduates who grew up with his show. "As human beings," he exhorted in one of these, "our job in life is to help people realize how rare and valuable each one of us really is, that each of us has something that no one else has—or ever will have—something inside that is unique to all time. It's our job to encourage each other to discover that uniqueness and to provide ways of developing its expression." This is not an easy task when we're exposed to anywhere between 500 and 10,000 brand messages a day telling us the exact opposite.

*Won't You Be My Neighbor?* offers a scene from the television show: The year is 1969. Officer Clemmons and Mister Rogers sit next to a wading pool, dipping their feet together for a friendly respite from the day's heat. Officer Clemmons is Black and Mister Rogers is White. The film now flashes to news footage of a White man pouring chemicals into a swimming pool where Black and White youth are swimming as an act of nonviolent civil disobedience to segregation and the violent "Whites Only" sign on the wall. Cut back to *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, where Rogers takes a towel and carefully dries Officer Clemmons' feet. What do we see? Two people, profoundly caring about each other, as well as the other people in their neighborhood and world around them. "Pay attention to our message," they quietly urge through their actions.

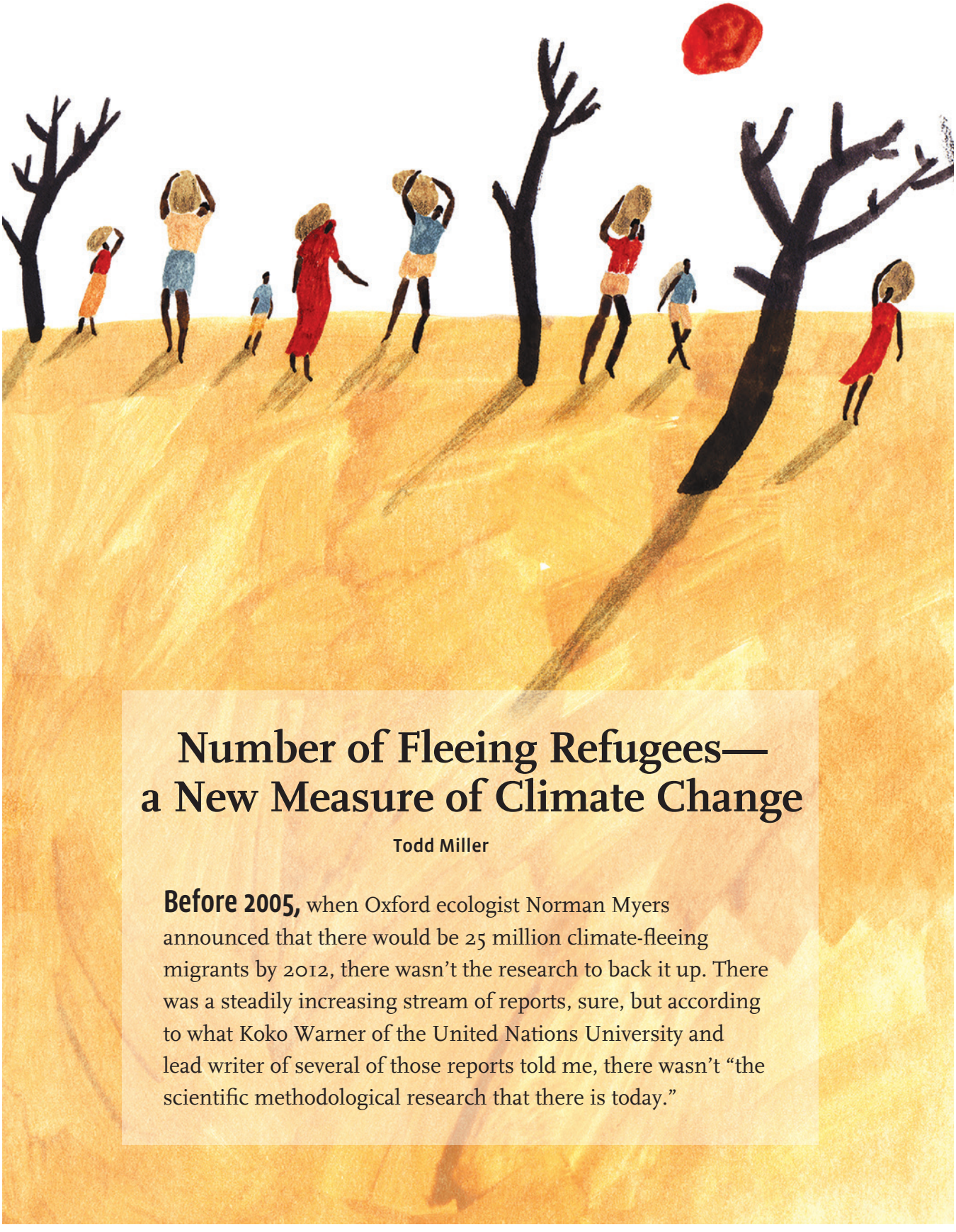

**Won't You Be My Neighbor?**

*Directed by Morgan Neville, Tremolo Productions, 2018*

In early childhood education, as in nonviolence for that matter, there are two key principles: to dignify the child/person and model the behavior you want others to emulate. Like a master teacher, Rogers invites us into this struggle with him, imperfect as we may be now. "It's You I Like" is the famous song he would sing to children (though we know that some grown-ups were listening, too). If we don't love people the way they are, he would say, they can never grow. And if we don't turn off and resist the degrading images of ourselves from commercial media, how can we love? How can we grow?

This is timeless wisdom that Rogers lived, and the challenge of a lifetime: to refuse the degradation that turns us into consumers, offer people dignity even while resisting their behavior, and, above all, love them as they are right now.

Stephanie Van Hook is the executive director of the Metta Center for Nonviolence, author of *Gandhi Searches for Truth: A Practical Biography for Children*, and host of Nonviolence Radio. Web: mettacenter.org.



# Number of Fleeing Refugees—a New Measure of Climate Change

Todd Miller

**Before 2005,** when Oxford ecologist Norman Myers announced that there would be 25 million climate-fleeing migrants by 2012, there wasn't the research to back it up. There was a steadily increasing stream of reports, sure, but according to what Koko Warner of the United Nations University and lead writer of several of those reports told me, there wasn't "the scientific methodological research that there is today."



YES! ILLUSTRATION BY FRAN MURPHY

Today's research confirms that massive migration—combined, as always, with a multitude of other effects—will be an inevitable consequence of global warming. Glacier melts are going to affect water flows and impact food production and migration. Heat and drought will also impact food production and migration. Environmental disasters are a major driver of short-term displacement and migration (though other studies have found that it is the gradual environmental degradation that causes movement in the long term). Saltwater intrusions, inundations, storm surges, and erosion from sea-level rise—all issues facing northern Honduras—will continue to impel ever larger numbers of people to move. "There is strong evidence that the impacts of climate change will devastate subsistence and commercial agriculture on many small islands." Warner et al. report that the Ganges, Mekong, and Nile River Delta are places where sea-level rise of one meter could affect 235 million people and reduce landmass by 1.5 million hectares. An additional 10.8 million people would be directly impacted by two meters of sea-level rise, which climate models now have to contemplate, given recent reports about feedback triggers and the accelerating disintegration of polar ice sheets. They report that "millions of people will leave their homes" in the years ahead.

Serious impacts of climate change are already happening and can be projected into the future with certainty. There is now a lot of empirical research that melds climate with migration. In Satkhira, the coastal district of Bangladesh, 81 percent of the people reported a high level of salinity in their soil in 2012, compared to just 2 percent two decades earlier. Farmers planted a saline-resistant variety of rice when Cyclone Aila surged in 2009, but the increase of salt in the soil has been drastic. "Almost all farmers lost their complete harvests that year." According to the United Nations University Loss and Damage report, while many farmers kept to salt-tolerant varieties, 29 percent decided to migrate. Remember, if they dare cross into India, they encounter a steel barrier and Indian border guards who have shot and killed more than 1,000 Bangladeshi people. In Kenya, researchers arrived after the 2011 floods, which followed a pattern of increased precipitation over past decades, washing crops away, drowning livestock, severely damaging houses, and causing an outbreak of waterborne diseases. Aid came, but it was not enough. Sixty-four percent of people migrated or moved to camps. The drought in the north bank of Gambia in 2011 affected 98 percent of 373 households interviewed, many of which lost entire harvests. People also attempted to find alternative income to buy food. They sold things in the informal economy, and borrowed money. Still, displacement or migration impacted 23 percent of the region's inhabitants. And although many people prefer to stay close to home after displacement and do not cross an international border, the tales of people from many countries in Africa facing the European border enforcement regime, often referred to as Fortress Europe, are virtually endless.

Current estimates for climate refugees are wide-ranging, and go as high as 1 billion people displaced by 2050. No matter what the final number may be, it is worth remembering that most of those making projections say that human migration in the 21st century will be "staggering." The International Organization on Migration keeps their estimate around 200 million. The American Association for the Advancement of Science foresees 50 million mobilizing to escape their environment by 2020. As things stand, Honduras, and many countries in the global South, will contribute to those numbers significantly.

Harsha Walia wrote that "patterns of displacement and migration reveal the unequal relations between rich and poor, between North and South, between whiteness and racialized others." And while visiting a refugee-occupied school in Germany in May 2015, renowned human rights advocate Angela Y. Davis said that "the refugee movement is *the* movement of the 21st century. It's the movement that is challenging the effects of global capitalism, and it's the movement that is calling for civil rights for all human beings." And it is, dare I add, the movement that will challenge fossil fuel consumption and its contamination of the living biosphere. It may be in refugees, and their experience, where the answer lies.

Michael Gerrard of Columbia University's Sabin Center for Climate Change Law told climate journalist Eric Holthaus: "I think the countries of the world need to start thinking seriously about how many people they're going to take in. The current horrific situation in Europe is a fraction of what's going to be caused by climate change." Gerrard argued in an op-ed for the Washington Post that countries should take in people in proportion to the greenhouse gas emissions they pollute. For example, since between 1850 and 2011 the United States was responsible for 27 percent of the world's total carbon dioxide emissions, the European Union 25 percent, China 11 percent, Russia 8 percent—so each country should be obligated to take in an equal percentage of climate refugees.

Instead, these are the places with the largest military budgets. And these are the countries that today are erecting towering border walls.

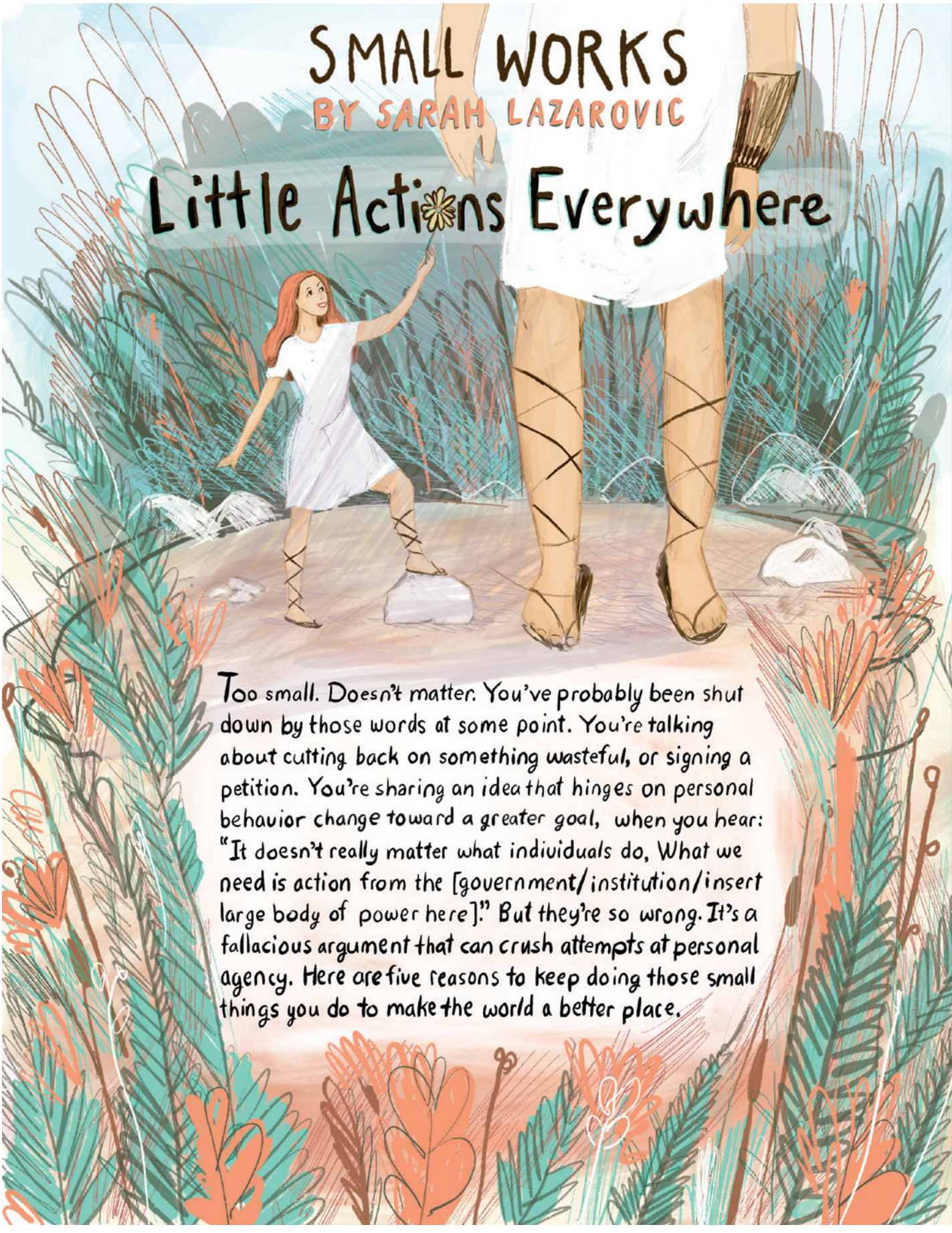
Todd Miller has researched, written about, and worked on immigration and border issues from both sides of the U.S.–Mexico divide for organizations such as BorderLinks, Witness for Peace, and NACLA. He is the author of *Border Patrol Nation* (City Lights, 2014).

*Excerpted from Todd Miller's book,* Storming the Wall: Climate Change, Migration, and Homeland Security, *recently published by City Lights Books, citylights.com.*

# SMALL WORKS

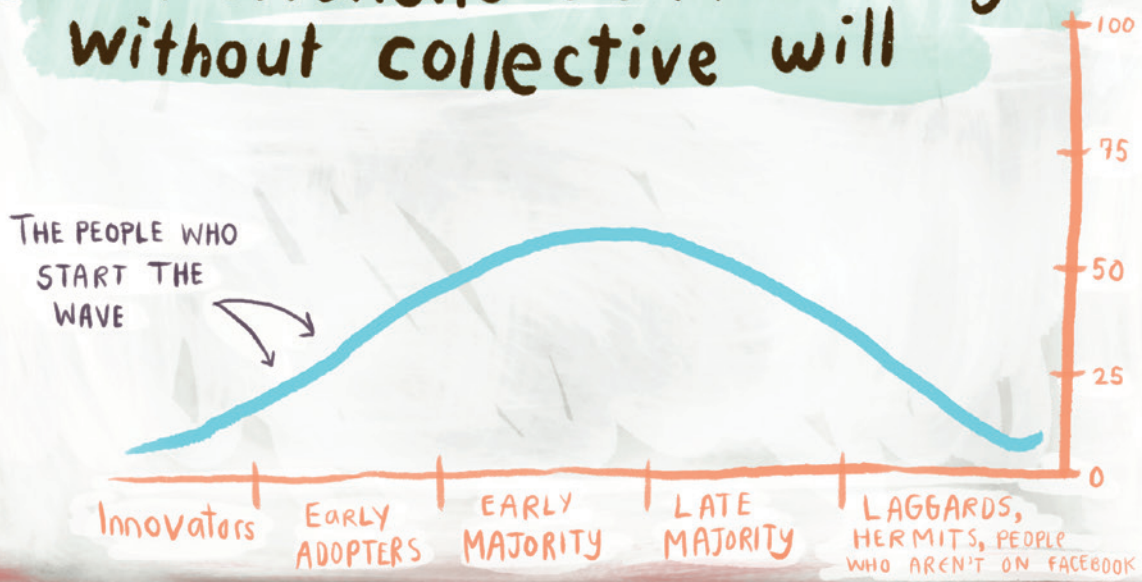
BY SARAH LAZAROVIC

## Little Actions Everywhere



Too small. Doesn't matter. You've probably been shut down by those words at some point. You're talking about cutting back on something wasteful, or signing a petition. You're sharing an idea that hinges on personal behavior change toward a greater goal, when you hear: "It doesn't really matter what individuals do. What we need is action from the [government/institution/insert large body of power here]." But they're so wrong. It's a fallacious argument that can crush attempts at personal agency. Here are five reasons to keep doing those small things you do to make the world a better place.

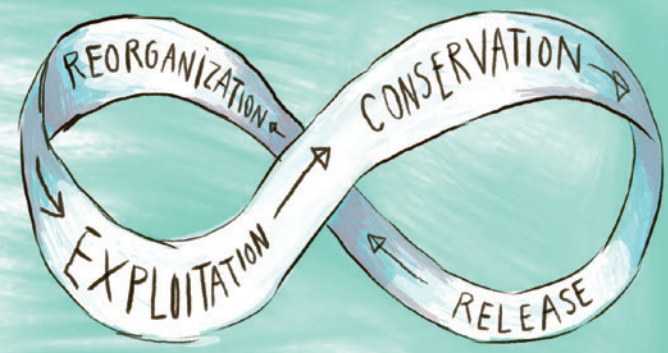
# 1. Institutions don't change without collective will




In his book *Diffusion of Innovations*, Everett Rogers set out a basic theory of change that established the idea of "early adopters." These innovators push the majority to think/shop/eat/legislate in a new way. With critical mass, industry and institutions take notice — and eventually change.

# 2. A big thing is just a bunch of small things put together

Most of our challenges exist in systems, in which all the parts are interacting and interrelated. When we push, however small, from within the system, we create a feedback loop that changes it.


The Adaptive Cycle is a Moebius Strip for resilient growth

# 3. SMALL creates new norms

It's more democratic when a million people do something small than when a very powerful person does one big thing (though that can be nice, too). It's in the small actions of the many that we see behavior change and new ideas seeded by many diverse conversations finding commonality. We'll always need big players to make big gestures, but every movement needs to accommodate for the inclusive participation of all.

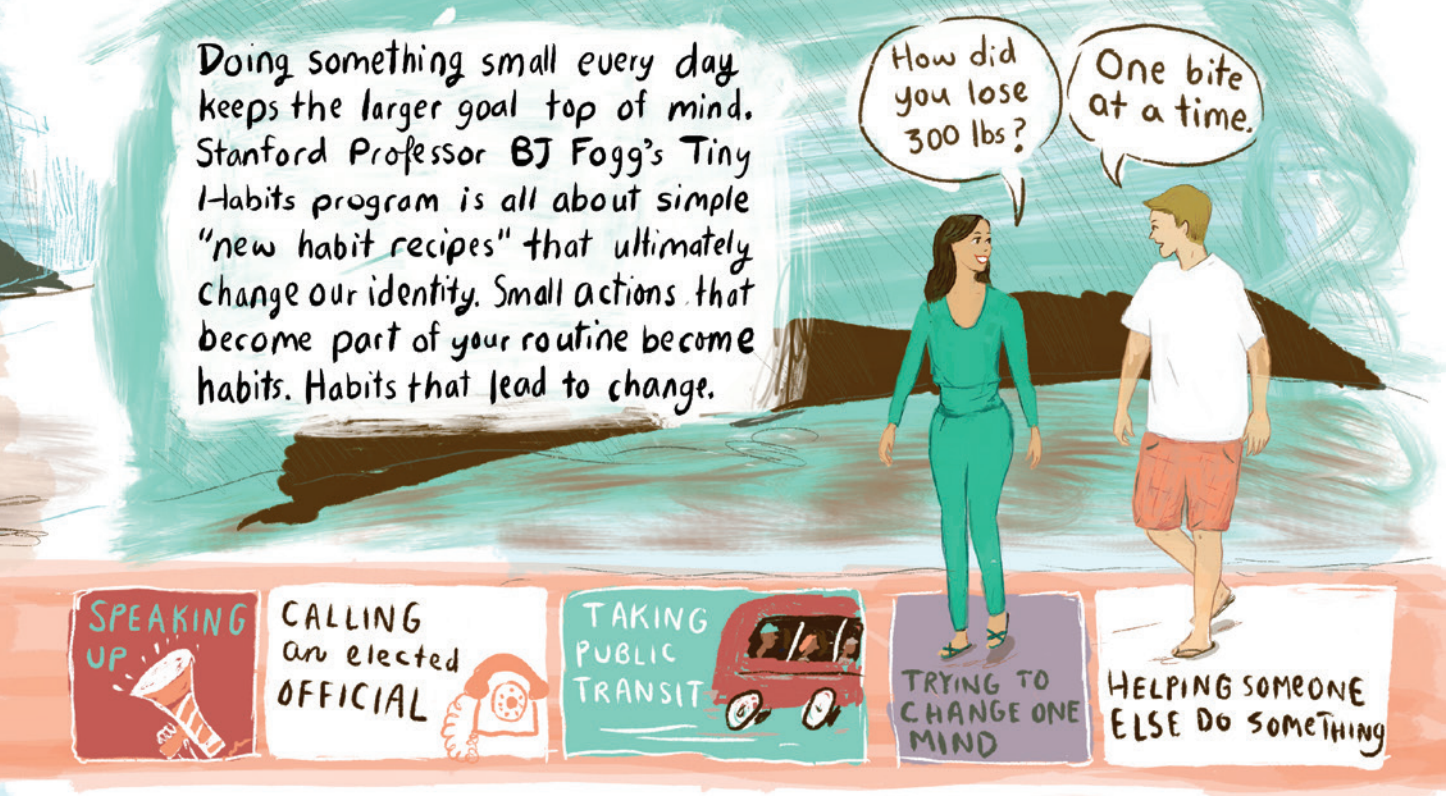


# 4. GOAL attainment is about little victories

"Chunking" is the term for breaking a goal into smaller pieces, for discrete wins (and frequent dopamine hits). The New York Times writer Tim Herrera calls this process "micro-progress." We need immediate and drastic action on climate change, but no one person can fix climate change. Some people can stop fracking in their community. Others can stop buying plastic toothbrushes.

# 5. Small becomes you

Doing something small every day keeps the larger goal top of mind. Stanford Professor BJ Fogg's Tiny Habits program is all about simple "new habit recipes" that ultimately change our identity. Small actions that become part of your routine become habits. Habits that lead to change.




## If you're still getting small static, throw it back!


## #START SMALL

Behavioral science teaches us that writing down what you plan to do (called implementation intention) goes a long way toward helping you achieve your goals. What little positive thing will you do this week?

I WILL:

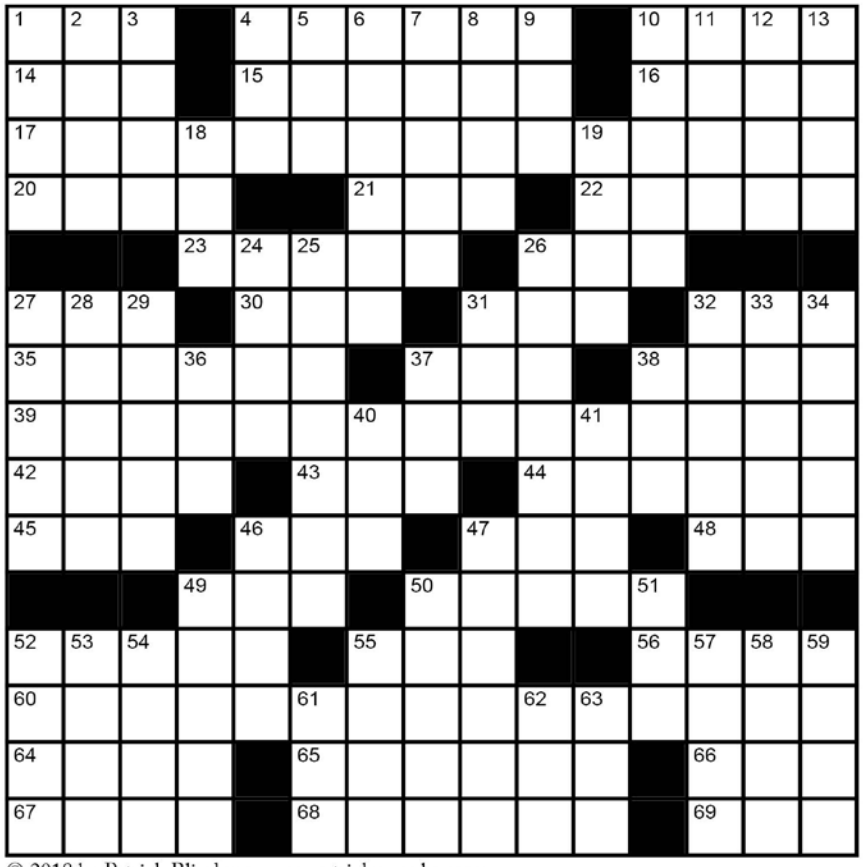
# SERENITY NOW

**ACROSS**

1 Abolish ___
4 "An Inconvenient Truth" star: 2 wds.
10 Gait between walk and canter
14 Shapiro of NPR
15 Gaze upon: 2 wds.
16 "Radical ___: Letters of Love and Dissent in Dangerous Times" (2017 book)
17 Shopper who isn't looking for anything specific?: 2 wds.
20 "A Prayer for ___ Meany" (Irving novel)
21 Buddy
22 Neighbor of an Afghani
23 Sees socially
26 Modern-day court evidence: Abbr.
27 Canoe propeller
30 "Yes We ___" (2008 Obama slogan)
31 "Listen up!"
32 Popular lunchbox sandwich, for short
35 "Brokeback Mountain" author Annie
37 "Meet the Press" network: Abbr.
38 Spiced milk tea
39 Excessive amount of a sport with tackling?: 3 wds.
42 Actress Thompson or Watson
43 WWW address: Abbr.
44 Hashtag of political protest
45 "Que Sera, Sera" singer Doris
46 The Rockies, e.g.: Abbr.
47 Like a woman in her 39th week of pregnancy
48 Dorm overseers: Abbr.
49 Bro's counterpart
50 Pause indicator
52 Part of LGBTQI, informally
55 "Aaron Burr, ___" ("Hamilton" song with a rhyming title)
56 Michael of "Juno"
60 Vehicle for Juliet's love?: 2 wds.
64 Scandinavian furniture giant
65 Injured
66 "I ___ You Babe" (Sonny and Cher hit)
67 Music to slam-dance to
68 "But my ___." (Hillary Clinton tweet of 6/14/18)
69 Meditation sounds ... or what's been added to 17-, 39-, and 60-Across

**DOWN**

1 "Othello" villain
2 Workers under Bligh or Queeg
3 "___ Kleine Nachtmusik" (Mozart piece)
4 Month in which Thomas Jefferson was born: Abbr.
5 Thompson of "Back to the Future"
6 Ballpoint alternative
7 Black-and-white swimmers
8 Julia of stage and screen
9 Aliens: Abbr.
10 Birch of "American Beauty"
11 Type of plum tomato
12 Like some primaries
13 Garr of "Tootsie"
18 Bread slice also known as the heel
19 "Living Large in a ___ House" ("Yes!" article)
24 Group behind votingrights.org: Abbr.
25 "___ and Jobs Act of 2017" (policy that gave 52% of the benefit to the top 10% while the bottom 60% only got 17%): 2 wds.
26 Dignified behavior
27 ___ out (decided not to take part)
28 Savory smell
29 Spacious
31 "Game of Thrones" network: Abbr.
32 Rocker Liz
33 Model airplane wood
34 Abandons, as a lover
36 Thurman of "Dangerous Liaisons"
37 Gridiron org. whose middle letter crosses what it stands for: Abbr.
38 "Criminal Minds" network: Abbr.
40 "48 ___" (1982 action comedy)
41 Be rife (with)
46 Paste used in Japanese soups
47 "The Sound of Music" song: Hyph.
49 Creep furtively
50 Cutlass ___ (old Oldsmobile)
51 Obamacare: Abbr.
52 Stumble while walking
53 Streaming video device maker
54 Blessing ender
55 Canned meat brand since 1937
57 Frozen food brand originally called Froffles
58 Part of a Clue accusation
59 Members of some armies
61 "Nevertheless, ___ persisted"
62 Shannon who sang "Runaway"
63 Sentence parts: Abbr.







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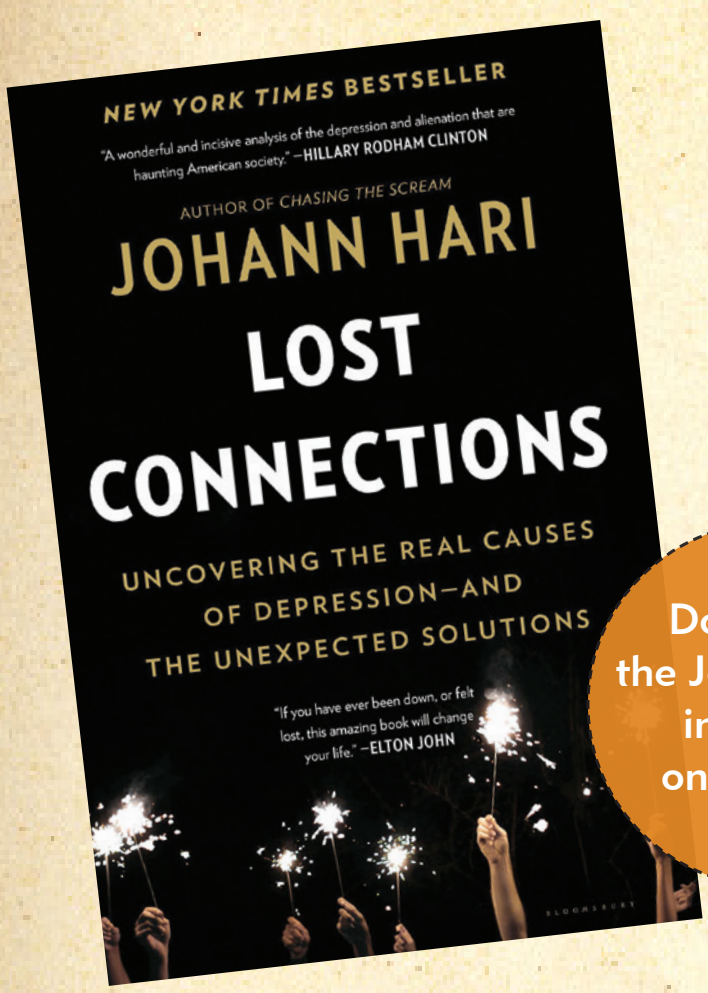


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