



# VOICES Against Torture

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL ON HUMAN RIGHTS

VOL1, NO. 2 - SEPTEMBER 2021

*A publication of  
Vancouver Association for  
the Survivors of Torture*



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## Land Acknowledgment

Voices Against Torture is published on the Unceded Homelands of the displaced xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam), selí' lw' itulh (TsleilWaututh), and skwxw' ú7mesh (Squamish) Coast Salish peoples. We pay respect to the Elders past and present and are grateful for the many diverse Indigenous peoples who, over generations, cared for these shared Traditional Territories. We recognize the truth of violence, the painful history of genocide, and the forced removal that took place on this Ancestral Land. We are committed to the everyday actions that can help transform colonial impacts and help us move towards a culture of healing. This also means to us deeper alignment with the values rooted in anti-oppression and universal trauma-informed care, supporting a society based on equity, equality, and justice. We hold ourselves globally accountable to all human rights and to all Traditional Custodians of the Land wherever they now exist or compelled to co-exist. We comprehend that this Land Acknowledgement is a small but essential step in our ongoing process of remaining in right relations and continuum towards transparency and accountability.

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# Editorial

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## Are the buried voices the lost voices?

On July 1, 2021 a Canadian Indigenous Group's Report revealed: a search using ground-penetrating radar has identified 182 remains in an unmarked grave in British Columbia, at a site near a former Catholic-run Church residential school housing children taken from their families ([Canadian Indigenous group says more graves found at new site - ABC News \(go.com\)](#)). These were in addition to the 215 and 600 unmarked graves already found at other Residential Schools, and to be followed by many more still being counted, although only a fraction of the nation's former school sites has been searched.

If we listen to the stories of Elders and survivors and look at the documentation we have of Canadian Government policies, we know how and why this genocide took place. This heinous crime, done at the hands of foreign occupiers, helped to establish their rule on the land of indigenous people. The remains of indigenous people in unmarked graves speak louder of their voices, although buried, yet never lost. As portrayed in the poetic verses by Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi, a progressive poet from Pakistan, "the red blood has black streaks in it."

Racial discrimination, white supremacy, and resultant phobias are a big stigma on the face of so-called modern civilization. It is even more painful and humiliating when those responsible for such inhumane actions become the victims' spokespeople to sweep the crimes under the rug. Ethnic identity stereotypes and skin color discrimination are used to further precipitate hatred against minorities.

It was just a few weeks later that yet another buried voice spoke from the massive graves in the central state of Mexico. This was of young teens - mainly girls. A mass grave of 2700 persons has been reported in Indian-held Kashmir (<https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/>), with others reported in Ireland, Russia, Oklahoma in the US ([Search for Victims of the Tulsa Massacre Uncovered 27 Coffins - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#)), of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, and at the Indian Residential School near Kamloops, Canada ('Horrible History': Mass Grave of Indigenous Children Reported in Canada - The New York Times (nytimes.com)).

These unceremonious burial sites, the torture inflicted on the victims before their deaths, and the intergenerational trauma of their surviving families, are weeping wounds.

It is high time that the United Nations should investigate the matter and bring the report open to the light. Let those responsible tenders an apology to the victim's families, and both national and international bodies, must take measures to help put an end to such horrific crimes.

Farooq Mehdi and Frank Cohn



*By: H. Victoria*

# VAST Healing Community

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**Frank Cohn**

VAST stands with the Survivors of Canada's Residential Schools, operated by the Catholic Church as well as the Anglican, Presbyterian, and United Churches, and with the families and communities of the Victims. Although now is a time of great sadness and anger, VAST also recognizes that the survivors of Canada's colonial violence have already informed us, during the painful sharing they did during the Truth & Reconciliation Commission, of these murders of children, and we did not listen. [The Honorable Murray Sinclair](#) reminds us that their request to further investigate based on the stories of survivors was denied.

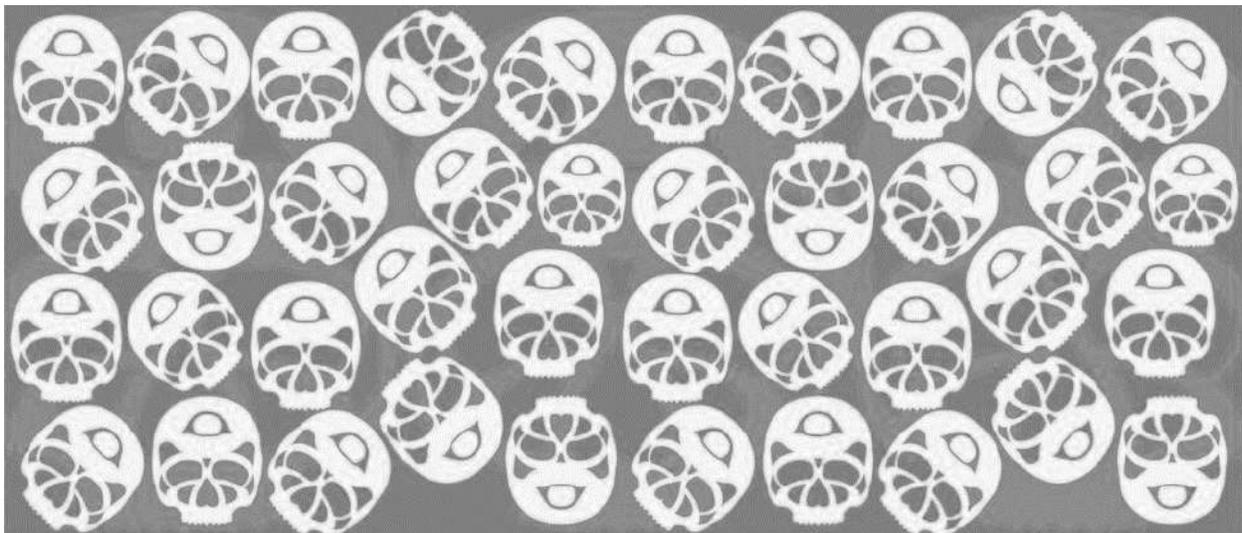
VAST also acknowledges that this colonial oppression continues, in 2021, against the indigenous people whose lands we are on. Our institutions of 'Child Welfare' and 'Corrections' disproportionately and negatively impact indigenous people. BC's population is only 6% indigenous, but they represent an obscene 55% of children in 'care' and over 80% of the inmates in some provincial prisons. In other words, the perpetrating institutions proceed with impunity. And no wonder - Canada's active legislation regarding the lives of indigenous peoples is still the Indian Act of 1876. We call on our government to ensure that each and every child's death is investigated and that, when possible, perpetrators are brought to justice.

VAST was founded in 1986 in response to the [United Nations Convention Against Torture](#), of which Canada is a signatory. According to this convention, which guides

all our work, "the term 'torture' means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person...when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity". There is no doubt that many of the victims and survivors of our Residential Schools, the last of which closed in 1996, qualify under this definition and the more detailed language of the UN convention. Canada's responsibility is also clearly stated, that: "Each State Party shall ensure that all acts of torture are offences under its criminal law" (Article 4), and that "Each State Party shall ensure in its legal system that the victim of an act of torture obtains redress and has an enforceable right to fair and adequate compensation, including the means for as full rehabilitation as possible. In the event of the death of the victim as a result of an act of torture, his dependants shall be entitled to compensation." (Article 14).

VAST honors and celebrates the essential rehabilitation and healing work of Survivors themselves, and the [Indian Residential School Survivors Society - British Columbia](#), and today with the [First Nations Health Authority](#), as well as Traditional healers, Elders, and practitioners of Indigenous Focusing-Oriented Therapy (IFOT) and other methods effective in healing these deep wounds.

We are honored to use this beautiful and frightening image created and shared with us by artist [Roy Henry Vickers Gallery](#). [International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims](#)







## I shall not concede!

Whose lamp shines only in mansions,  
Which sets out only with a few folks' elation,  
Under the shadow of self-interest which finds  
protection, That tradition...That dark morning...  
I shall not revere!  
I shall not greet!  
I too am not afraid of the powers that be!  
I too am Mansoor, go and tell the enemy!  
With the prison wall why do you try to scare me?  
The tongue of oppression...  
The night of ignorance...  
I shall not defer to!  
I shall not acknowledge!  
"Branches are abloom with flowers" you say!  
"The thirsty have got to drink" you say!  
"Wounds of the heart are being sewn" you say!  
This open lie...  
A plunder of reason...  
I shall not consent to!  
I shall not recognize!  
For centuries you have pillaged peace that was  
our Your spell over us shall have no more power  
How can I possibly call you a protector?  
You are no protector!  
Even though some may agree...  
I shall dis-agree!  
I shall not concede!

Habib Jalib

# Life in Palestine: Palestinian Workers - II

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Mohammad Abu Srour

## Introduction

Since 1967 the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip has imposed many restrictions on the Palestinian economic sectors. These restrictions have been to reduce the freedom of movement in the operational capabilities of the Palestinian economy and Palestinian employment, especially the agricultural and industrial sectors. The Israeli occupation has not only enforced such ongoing, oppressive restrictions but has further pursued a range of discriminative policies aimed at but not limited to confiscating land and prevention the Palestinian people from accessing and utilizing their natural resources.

These restrictions and policies have led to the demise of many productive sectors and high unemployment rates. The existence of the illegal Israeli settlement project<sup>1</sup> in the West Bank and its need for continuity and prosperity was an alternative job opportunity for the Palestinian workers. The project forced workers into Israel and into settlements which increased the proportion of Israeli imports into the Palestinian territories because of the decline in the size of the productive sectors.

According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), in 2019, the number of Palestinian workers inside Israel and illegal settlements was approximately 130,000, most of whom worked in the construction field, where they constituted about 64% of all workers. It is estimated that of these workers, only 71% have permits. The Labour Force Survey Results of 2019 also revealed that the unemployment rate [68% for females and 35% for males] was the highest among youth graduates aged 19-29 years old.<sup>2</sup>

In this article, we will review local history and the most important challenges facing the Palestinian worker; how the impact of working in the occupied interior and illegal

settlements has an impact on their lives, their families, and the Palestinian economy.

## Palestinian Workers Since 1948

Since 1948 the life of the Palestinian worker has been contingent on early morning hours of preparations and difficult checkpoints. To this day, thousands of workers still gather from the city of Bethlehem and Hebron at Checkpoint 300, located north of the cities. Without obtaining a work permit and security approval from the occupation authorities, workers cannot legally cross the barrier. Each security approval requires verified information such as the worker's age and marital status. If it appears a worker has been involved in a political activity related to the rights of the Palestinian people, the worker is denied permission; blacklisted until further notice.

"Israeli NGOs consider that many of the workers whose names have been blacklisted do not pose a real threat to security."<sup>3</sup>

***The goal of these restrictions has been to reduce the freedom of movement in the operational capabilities of the Palestinian economy and Palestinian employment, especially the agricultural and industrial sectors.***

Security approval is not the only factor to obtain a permit; a job application (is this a contract?) from a contractor to work is also needed. Many contractors take advantage of the Palestinian worker's need for this request, and many contractors refuse to provide workers with the needed

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<sup>1</sup> Israeli settlement is a term used to refer to the movement of Jewish colonial settlement under the State of Israel. It refers to urban activity and the establishment of modern Jewish population centers on Palestinian land, in addition to the practices of settlers and the state with regard to controlling land, transferring residents, or controlling their ability to move.

<sup>2</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2020, Feb 13) The Labour Force Survey Results 2019 <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/postar.aspx?lang=ar&ItemID=3665>

<sup>3</sup> The situation of the workers of the occupied Arab territories (2013, June) International Labor Office, Geneva <https://unispal.un.org/pdfs/ILC102DGAPPa.pdf>

document until after deducting part of his salary; taking advantage of the worker's vulnerable position charging an amount between \$500-700 per month, which is collected illegally.

Mustafa, one of the workers I spoke to regarding his experience of crossing Checkpoint 300, mentions the following:

“The checkpoint is very crowded, and there are thousands of workers trying to cross at the same time to reach their workplace; there is a lot of scrambles due to overcrowding, and the pressure is high. I feel like I can't breathe. I try to stand on tiptoes so that I can breathe better. I feel that my life will end at any moment due to this crowding and scramble. After crossing, I sit for a few minutes trying to get back to normal.”

As for workers who do not have permits, also known as (“smuggled workers-A reference to the way workers go to work without a permit-”), their journey to work is characterized by humiliation, suffering, and fear. These workers walk for hours each day until they crossover and reach their place of work.

With the Israeli Military in a position to kill, a worker without a permit is at risk of death, arrest, or injury at any moment. They go to work in unsafe and risky environments, without guarantees or rights, and with the high financial costs of the transit process. These workers without permits to help avoid these dangers of crossing take up a place of residence and confined accommodations in the workplace. They reside for an extended period, exceeding weeks to several months and leaving behind their community and families.

These contractors who employ and exploit the workers without permits pay lower wages compared to workers who have permits. In addition, the costs incurred by employers for workers without permits are far less compared to the others, such as not being obligated to pay insurance and compensation dues or any other entitlements to the workers. The worker does not benefit from legal protection or any of the social guarantees<sup>4</sup> if the worker suffers an accident, work injury, or damage while at his place of work, the worker will be thrown into the Palestinian territory area and does not entail any obligations on the employer or the occupation government.

In a conversation with my friend Muhammad, a young father of three, we spoke about his journey to work as a construction worker without a permit. He talked to me about how he gets up at 2:00 A.M., leaves his place of

residence in the city of Beit Sahour, and travels to the village of Al-Walaja, West of Bethlehem. Here he walks with others, still in the dark, a few hours into the mountains so they may reach the Israeli areas. At this point, there is a driver in a yellow-tiger vehicle — an Israeli car — waiting for them. These drivers are always without a license and without insurance and paid 450-600 Israeli shekels in case they are arrested on the road.

After one previous confrontation with the Israeli army, where Muhammad was chased beyond the crossing and broke his foot, he now sleeps at his workplace for up to several weeks.

Many Palestinian workers contribute to professions such as construction and cleaning; many Israelis choose not to work in these fields. According to the laws of the Israeli occupation, the Palestinian worker with a permit is considered a legitimate employee, leading one to believe that the Palestinian worker will be equal with an Israeli worker in all legal aspects.

However, the lived experience is different for many Palestinian workers because the policies and legislation established by the occupation were primarily by its intention, discriminatory. Never was it intended to achieve equality.



“Five different types of deductions are deducted from the wages of Palestinian workers in Israel: income tax, health insurance, union membership, retirement, and national insurance. The Palestinian worker pays the same tax rate as the Israeli, but the Palestinian worker does not receive the same services, as national insurance covers Palestinian workers in the event of their injury in an

<sup>4</sup> Palestinian work in Israel 1967- 1997(1998, August) MAS <https://www.mas.ps/files/server/20142110125609.pdf>

accident, the bankruptcy of the employer, or only maternity leave.”<sup>5</sup> (Page 29) “ Other social security forms, such as unemployment compensation, additional retirement payments, child assistance, health insurance, etc., Palestinian workers are not eligible for them because they are forms of security contingent on “residence” in Israeli territory.”<sup>6</sup>

### **The Reality of Palestinian Workers in Illegal Israeli Colonies**

International law recognizes that humanitarian law must be applied to the occupied territories, which include the West Bank and Jerusalem. International law states that it is not permissible to change the facts on the ground or transfer the citizens of the occupying country to the occupied areas, where they are classified as illegal acts, in addition to IHL prohibiting the occupation from exploiting these areas for political purposes or civil needs, including the building of colonies. Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention expressly indicates that population transfer is a war crime according to the Rome Statute.<sup>7</sup>



From 1967 until now, the occupation has illegally built more than 200 colonies and outposts on the lands of the West Bank<sup>8</sup>, indifferent to the international law that criminalizes this act. Thousands of Palestinians work in these colonies. In those areas, however, the occupation authorities deliberately allow workers without permits for the sake of trying to speed up the pace of construction and expansion and the need for cheap labor.

Ibrahim, one of the workers in the Beitar Illit colony, West of Bethlehem, which is built on the land of a Palestinian village called Husan, talks about his work

experience after he obtained a work permit in November of last year.

“I was working in a bakery and a place for sweets, the employer was an Israeli colonizer, and he kept mistreating (us) ...I could not continue working in that place, I was intentionally insulted without reason, maybe because I am Palestinian, a few days later I decided to

***With the Israeli Military in a position to kill, a worker without a permit is at risk of death, arrest, or injury at any moment. They go to work in unsafe and risky environments.***

leave work there.”

Ibrahim’s adds his daily wage was \$50, a much lower wage than the Israeli employees.

The construction of the apartheid wall and the illegal colonies killed the last chance of a two-state solution. It is no longer possible to build a Palestinian state because the Israeli occupation has torn the lands of the West Bank and turned them into small population centers separated from each other to facilitate control. In addition to the transfer of approximately 800,000 colonizers to these areas — building settlements, stealing land, looting natural resources, restricting population movement, and other colonial policies have turned the archetype of the Palestinian into a servile who is physically and psychologically tired.

### **Working for Israeli companies inside the Palestinian territories: circumventing normalization**

Israeli companies have recently started to follow a new model of business that targets Arab markets. This model relies mainly on the Palestinians to deliver services, where Israeli companies are the main provider of services in the shadows.

Palestinian companies play the role of a mediator or a contractor in transferring services to those markets. Workers are then treated accordingly to the Palestinian law in terms of wages and rights. This is a way of

<sup>5</sup> Palestinian work in Israel 1967- 1997(1998, August) MAS <https://www.mas.ps/files/server/20142110125609.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Where do the deductions from the wages of Palestinian workers in Israel go (2013, Julie 13) jadaliyya <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/29193>

<sup>7</sup> Settlements Legalization Law(2018, Feb 4) Adalah <https://www.adalah.org/ar/content/view/9367>

<sup>8</sup> Settlements (2017, Nov 11) Btselem <https://www.btselem.org/topic/settlements>

*hopscoching* over the livable wages and benefits an Israeli worker employed by an Israeli company would be expected to receive. This model has brought many benefits to many Israeli companies, such as more significant revenue and fewer costs and obligations.

One of the most prominent Palestinian companies working in this capacity is the *Rawabi Tech Hub*, owned by Bashar Al-Masry, founder of *Rawabi*. This company works in the software field and co-operates with the Israeli company, *Start-up Nation*; in turn, these tech companies work to connect technology and provide greater access in high-potential markets.

The contract between *Rawabi Tech Hub* and *Startup Nation* provides an opportunity to access the Arab markets through a Palestinian front. In addition, *Rawabi Tech Hub* employs Palestinian programmers not without transparency in knowing if the productivity will serve the Israeli occupation or one of its branches, such as the army, its ministers, or its intelligence.

The BDS<sup>9</sup> movement had a clear position in this regard. The organization condemned these practices and made it clear that they are normalizing practices that seek to benefit the occupation from cheap labor to serve and sustain the occupation project. The organization also called for confronting the Palestinian companies that cooperate with the occupation, such as *Rawabi Hub Tech*, *Honey Company*, and others. The movement also called for a boycott of Palestinian technology companies involved in normalization and pressure to withdraw their licenses, in addition to calling for an end to the presence of Israeli companies in the Palestinian labor market and fighting the concept of economic peace<sup>10</sup> through which the occupation seeks to legitimize its existence.

### **Palestinian workers during Covid 19**

The long closure of the West Bank has raised the unemployment and poverty rate very dramatically, many Palestinians have lost their jobs because of this pandemic, and many other Palestinians working in the occupied territories were unable to work because of the

closure of military barriers. Since the closure period, the occupation authorities compensated those affected. However, the Palestinian worker was excluded from this compensation, despite the majority of these salaries contributing to income tax in Israel.

The rise of the coronavirus presented new challenges and procedures. Many Palestinian workers were granted permission to sleep in Israel; however, Bethlehem workers were excluded from this decision. The new procedures also did not include the guarantee of protection or health care for a worker in case they were infected with the virus. Palestinian workers were in difficult circumstances, surrounded by dangers as the epidemic was spreading widely in Israel. What followed was Palestinian workers being left or abandoned at checkpoints if they were infected by the virus or suspected of being infected.<sup>11</sup> These racist and discriminative policies increased frustration and angered Palestinian society. The voice of the Palestinian community called for workers to return to their homes as a result. Many workers responded to this plea, despite the threats from their Israeli employers to cancel permits if they did not return to work.<sup>12</sup>

My friend Ali, a Palestinian construction worker in West Jerusalem, spoke to me about the difficulties of working amidst the spread of the virus. He said there was no possibility of social distancing between workers.

### **Conclusion**

I find parallels in the stories I hear from the Palestinian people to that of the narrative of Jesus Christ, *The Via Dolorosa* — it is a long road full of hardship, humiliation, and torment. Palestinians live and work in ongoing dangerous conditions. As of 2020, more than 7000 were injured, and 47 workers were killed the suffering of the Palestinians and the psychological and physical labor can only end by finding a permanent solution based on ending the occupation and restoring the rights and property of the Palestinians.

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<sup>9</sup> Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions is a Palestinian-led movement for freedom, justice and equality. BDS upholds the simple principle that Palestinians are entitled to the same rights as the rest of humanity. <https://bdsmovement.net/what-is-bds>

<sup>10</sup> "Economic peace," is a flawed theory that assumes an economic solution to any political problem. In other words, there is a widespread belief among the so-called "experts" those economic incentives will discourage Palestinians from claiming their right to self-determination.

<sup>11</sup> [Palestinian workers in Israel. Between the danger of corona and throwing at the barriers \(aljazeera.net\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Sk: "Battle" On Palestinian workers \(mas.ps\)](#)



# Between East and West

The clothesline was hung  
As a victory flag over the Arabs  
Standing tall between two mountains  
The Clothesline  
Witnessing the shame  
And the Arabs.  
Has a clothesline been a witness, ever?  
Get up, girl!  
Hang the victory flags  
On tombstones  
Hang the socks and  
The underwear  
Hang the torn shirts  
And hang...a dead girl tent  
On a clothesline.  
Hang the hanging ropes  
Every morning and every evening  
Let's hang the Arab dignity  
Under the pants of childhood  
Under women's socks.  
But you! Arabs!

Put your face in it, too  
Sirs.  
Just relax,  
Like an ostrich  
Resets in darkness  
I know that dignity has  
Consumed you.  
And I know  
In the mud you are resting.  
So, sleep and leave your burdens behind  
Don't be shy...  
When dignity sleeps  
It does for years...

Original date: 12/03/2021

Translation date: 09/04/2021

*Rawan*



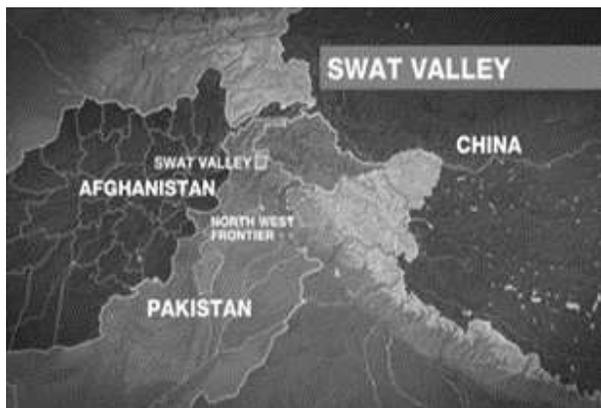
# Post-Traumatic Growth in Victims of Terrorism Trauma in Swat (Pakistan)

Rehana Siraj and Nelofar Kiran Rauf

## Abstract

This research aimed at investigating the impact of terrorism trauma on post-traumatic growth in victims of terrorism trauma in Swat (Pakistan). Moreover, gender differences across study variables were also explored. The cross-sectional survey design was used in the present study. The instruments used in the present study included Terrorism Trauma Questionnaire (Javaid, 2007) and Post Traumatic Growth Inventory Short Form (Aziz, 2012).

The sample of the study comprised 441 participants from the district swat of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Pakistan). The purposive sampling technique was used for data collection. Results showed that avoidance is the strongest predictor of post-traumatic growth, depicting 47% variance. Independent sample t-test results revealed significant differences in gender i.e., male's scores are higher on terrorism trauma, whereas on two domains of post-traumatic growth (relating to others and spiritual change), significant differences were observed between females and males. Where female victims of trauma scored high on both domains (relating to others and spiritual change) as compared to male victims. Intervention related to post-traumatic care, especially for male victims, is required in backward areas like Swat (Pakistan) So that people can recover from their trauma and take a new start.



Swat is a beautiful and attractive place in the Northwest of Pakistan, was once in control of the Taliban, where television was forbidden, public executions were common, educational institutes were

banned (Khan & Khan 2019). The valley of Swat is located on a small drive of (153.5 miles) from the capital of Pakistan. From year 2007 to 2010, the Taliban imposed a rough form of Shariah law in the district and started a battle against female education in the area.

Approximately 640 educational institutes of Swat were ruined, and Taliban activists had banned girls' education and forbid female instructors from institutes. Swat valley is also the birthplace of Nobel prize winner Malala Yousafzai, who was shot in the head by the Taliban in 2012 for her courageous voice for girls' education; it was a shameless attack on Yousafzai, at that time, her age was just 15 years. The terrorism trauma faced by the people of Swat resulted in dangerous as well as uncommon traumatic experiences. This leads to prolonged, impulsive, and intense experiences, which effected their routine life cycle, the value of lifespan, and the prosperity of the person (Anwer, 2019).

Terrorism is a kind of physical and psychological conflict that badly affected the people living in Swat. Terrorists used different methods to provoke terror and fear in people, but their tenacity behind these schemes stayed similar. Bomb blast, suicide bombing, bio-psychological bombing, and even economic warfare can be formed to create destruction in society (Crenshaw, 2007). Terrorism is a faux and man-made trauma that can be an outcome of an abortive, intent, or failed system (Riaz, Malik, Nawaz, Batool & Shujaat, 2015).

The term "trauma" mainly labels the harm or damage that is produced by experiencing or perceiving frightening events such as mistreating or abuse (sexual, physical, and emotional), conflict, war, disorder, drug addiction, loss of a close one, tragedy, and disaster (natural disasters, man-made disasters terrorism). Traumas are frequently related to negative consequences (Posttraumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD) (Grenon, Consigny, Lemey, Simson, & Coulon, 2019), but can also be escorted by positive features, that is, Post Traumatic Growth (PTG), where an individual experiences a variation in their mental development that covers beyond their earlier functional level (Zalta et al., 2017).

Post-traumatic growth (PTG) has been defined as a capacity to persist in the face of difficulty and is assisted by the use of constructive psychosocial incomes, such as beliefs that life is understandable, controllable, and significant (Antonovsky, 1987; McKee-Ryan et al., 2005). In the field of psychology, the concept of a traumatic event is changing as researchers identified that difficulty not only leads to defective life but can lead to positive changes and suitable life. Voluminous literature demonstrates that trauma survivors often experience negative outcomes, including disruption in a relationship, post-traumatic stress, etc. However, the adversity likewise evokes new coping skills and a sense of personal strength, more specifically post-traumatic growth. Terrorism is a major threat to Pakistan's sovereignty, safety and security. Acts of terrorism have taken place in every nook and corner of the country, and the beautiful Switzerland of Pakistan is considered the most affected area. Keeping in view the lack of studies in this area present study was focused on investigating the impact of terrorism trauma on the post-traumatic growth of people living in Swat (Pakistan) and studying the gender differences with reference to terrorism trauma and post-traumatic growth.



### **Method**

#### **Sample**

The study's sample size was composed of 441 males and females of District Swat Tehsil: Kabal and Tehsil: Matta, which was the more affected region of Swat (Khan, 2015). to report of Khpalkor foundation, DIG, DPO, And DC of Swat from the total population of 2.31 million, the affected population was 2 million people. Approximately all villages of this district were affected fully or partially and had severe economic and human losses. The statistic showed that in 2007 and 2008, there were deaths of around 5,000 people and injuries to around 10,000 people (Khan, 2015). There is no independent confirmation of the number of casualties.

In January 2009, the military said 142 soldiers and paramilitary troops had died since August 2008. In 2007, the military confirmed the deaths of 230 civilians and 90 military personnel. At the end of 2007, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) in Swat said at least 400 civilians had died, and 1,000 houses were destroyed. According to human rights groups and the media, approximately 800,000 of Swat's 1.8 million individuals have escaped (A profile of the internal displacement situation, 2 December 2009). The age ranged between 18 to 60 years ( $M=25.62$ ,  $SD=7.57$ ). The sample included both males ( $N=271$ ) and females ( $N=170$ ). The participants were chosen through purposive and convenient sample techniques. A non-probability purposive sample is used to select the sample. Inclusive sampling criteria were individuals above age 18 from district Swat, who directly experienced terrorist trauma in Swat. Only those individuals were included as a participant of the study who has the ability to read and write and can be able to comprehend the questionnaires.

#### **Procedure**

First, permission was taken from the respective concerned authorities for the purpose of collecting the data. The people of District Swat who were victims of terrorism trauma were approached after permission, and only those people who met the criterion for inclusion in the study were included.

The nature, purpose, and scope of the study were clearly instructed to participants, and informed consent was obtained from the participants, and it was ensured that information provided by them would be kept anonymous, confidential, and solely used for research purposes.

The contributors were then given the questionnaire booklet, which also contained informed consent along with a demographic sheet with complete instructions. The participants were also informed that they could ask if any query was there about the study, and their queries were answered inefficiently polite and professional manner. They were also given verbal instruction about how to respond to the research questionnaire items as the items were neither in true false nor yes-no format. Participants were also told that they had the right to withdraw themselves during the study if they needed. In the end, participants were thanked for their cordial cooperation and best wishes for their bright future.

#### **Instrument**

The following measures were used to collect data for research. The detail of each scale is given below.

**Traumatic Appraisal Questionnaire.** An indigenous scale for measuring post-traumatic stress symptoms based on DSM 5 criteria, developed by Javaid and Hanif (2017), was used in the present study. This scale consists of items

indicating four major domains i.e., “Intrusion (items:1,6,11,16,22), Avoidance (items:2,7,12,23,26), Change in mood and cognition (items:3,4,8,9,13,15,18,19,24,27), Change in arousal and reactivity level (items:5,10,14,17,20,21,25)”. This is 27 items scale in which participants rated the degree of change they experienced after any trauma on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1(I did not experience this change as a result of this trauma) to 5 (I experienced this change to a very great degree as a result of this trauma). The alpha reliability of the traumatic appraisal questionnaire for the present study was .93.

**Post-traumatic growth inventory (PTGI-SF).** The post-traumatic growth inventory short form (PTGI-SF), developed by Cann et al. (2010) and translated in Urdu by Aziz (2012), is a 10-item measure of post-traumatic growth. The participant will rate the degree of change they experienced after any trauma on a six-point Likert scale ranging from 0(I did not experience this change due to my crisis) to 5(I experienced this change to a very great degree as a result of my crisis). The measure yields a total score in addition to five subscale scores: New possibilities (items:3,6); Relating to others (items:5,10); Personal strength (item:7,9); Spiritual change(items:4,8); appreciation of life(items:1,2). A higher score on this scale

indicates more post-trauma growth. The alpha reliability of the scale for the present study was .70.

***The purpose of this study was to investigate post-traumatic growth in victims of terrorist trauma in Swat (Pakistan); it is a land of breath-taking beauty, but unfortunately, this beauty was destroyed.***

**Results**

Pearson correlation depicted a positive correlation between two subscales of terrorism trauma: Intrusion, Avoidance with post-traumatic growth, where a negative relation was observed between two other sub-scales of terrorism trauma, i.e. (alteration and Hyperarousal) Post-traumatic growth. In order to see the impact of terrorism trauma on post-trauma growth, multiple linear regression was done, which is given below

**Impact of terrorism trauma on post-trauma growth of individuals experienced trauma Table 1**

*Multiple linear regression of Intrusion, Avoidance, Alteration, and Hyper arousal for prediction of Post Traumatic Growth (N=441)*

Variables	Post Traumatic Growth	SE B	B	95% CI	
	B			LL	UL
Constant	29.90***	1.09		27.7	32.04
Intrusion	.015	.14	.00	-.26	.29
Avoidance	.468***	.10	.30	.25	.67
Alteration	-.145	.09	-.15	-.32	.03
Hyperarousal	-.037	.11	-.03	-.25	.17
R <sup>2</sup>	.049				
ΔR <sup>2</sup>	.040				

*Note.* Constant= Post Traumatic Growth; Intrusion; Avoidance; Alteration; Hyperarousal; β= Standardized coefficient, SE= Standardized error, LL= Lower Limit, UL=upper Limit; ΔR<sup>2</sup>= Change in R. \*p<.05\*\*<.01.

Table 1 showed that there are fewer differences in beta values for all variables in the regression model. Beta values indicate the direction of regression; positive coefficient indicates the relationship of the positive variables with post-traumatic growth, and negative sign predicts post-traumatic growth negatively. The result indicated that avoidance is the strongest predictor (.468\*\*\*, p<.001) as compared to other subscales.

**Gender-wise comparison for study variables**

For comparison of gender on terrorism trauma and post-traumatic growth and their sub-scales independent sample t-test was run.

**Table 2**  
*Mean, Standard Deviation and t Values of Study Variables between Men and Women (N=441)*

	Gender								Cohen's d
	Male (n=271)		Female(n=170)		t(439)	p	95%CI		
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
TT	61.76	20.67	56.93	19.03	2.46	.01	.97	8.68	0.24
INT	11.41	4.16	10.91	4.19	1.21	.22	-.30	1.29	
AVO	12.92	4.48	11.82	4.58	2.49	.01	.23	1.97	0.24
ALT	22.16	7.55	20.35	6.75	2.54	.01	.41	3.20	0.24
HYP	15.21	6.38	13.83	5.76	2.28	.02	.19	2.55	0.22
PTG	32.42	6.84	32.05	7.19	.54	.58	-.97	1.71	
NEW	6.16	2.20	6.21	2.19	.24	.81	-.47	.37	
RELA	5.64	2.55	6.35	2.00	3.10	.00	.262	1.17	0.30
PSTR	6.66	1.88	6.38	2.27	1.30	.19	-.13	.68	
SPIR	6.97	2.05	7.51	1.97	-2.73	.00	-.93	-.15	0.26
APPR	6.26	2.19	6.29	2.37	-.11	.91	-.46	.41	

*Note.* TT= Terrorism Trauma; INT=Intrusion; AVO=Avoidance; ALT= Alteration; HYP=Hyper Arousal; PTG=Post Traumatic Growth; NEW=New Possibilities; RELA=Relating to others; PSTR=Personal Strength; SPIR=Spiritual change; APPR= Appreciation of life.

Table 2 shows significant gender differences in terrorism trauma and its three subscales, namely Avoidance, Alteration, and Hyperarousal. Male sample score high on all three subscales as compared to the female sample of the study. Moreover, females score high on two dimensions of post-traumatic growth relating to others and spiritual change.

### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate post-traumatic growth in victims of terrorist trauma in Swat (Pakistan); it is a land of breath-taking beauty, but unfortunately, this beauty was destroyed, and people were traumatized because of a wave of terrorism in 2009. It is the land of a daughter like Malala and a son like Etazaz. In a time of trauma, the people of Swat (Pakistan) bounce back with remarkable strength and hope. The present study was conducted on the victims of Swat terrorism trauma to investigate the impact of terrorism trauma on post-traumatic growth and also to study the gender differences across study variables.

As mentioned before, adversity often leads to growth and strength. To see the predictive role of terrorism trauma, multiple linear regression revealed that effects of the traumatic event (avoidance) strongly predict post-traumatic growth variables. A study was conducted in New York following the attacks of 11 September 2001 and in Israel during tumultuous periods of violence and terrorism. Post-traumatic growth is related to greater psychological distress, more right-wing political attitudes, and support for retaliatory violence (Hobfoll et al., 2007). Moreover, people in the trauma group reported more PTG (Kastenmüller, Greitemeyer, Epp, Frey & Fischer, 2011). Trauma symptoms were positively associated with growth in this study (Butler et al., 2005).

Several other studies have also found this association (Cadell et al., 2003; Park & Ai, 2006).

Mean differences were analyzed on a sample of terrorism victims based on gender. The result of the t-test showed that male victims of terrorism showed more symptoms related to stress as compared to female victims. Results revealed that male victims of terrorism trauma in swat (KPK) showed more stress-related symptoms to trauma as compared to female victims. Similarly, they are more prone to avoid distressing memories, thoughts, feelings related to trauma as compared to their female counterparts. Again, they (male victims) are generally more pessimistic, and they have a persistent and distorted sense of self-blaming and inability to remember key aspects of the trauma-related events. Moreover, male trauma victims showed more physiological symptoms related to stress (hyperarousal) than female victims. Their behaviors are marked by aggressive, reckless, or self-destructive behavior along with sleep disturbance and hyper-vigilance. According to previous studies, male participants were inclined to have relatively low levels of post-traumatic growth and more trauma-related stress (Carmassi et al., 2014; Zhou, Wu, Yuan, et al., 2015). Barrett and Bliss-Moreau (2009) showed that male participants were less likely to engage in repetitive thoughts about traumatic cues than female participants. Repetitive thoughts can expose people to trauma-related memories or the materials to elicit Post Traumatic Stress

Disorder (Janoff-Bulman, 2010). This can also increase the propensity to form positive cognitive reappraisals to produce Post Traumatic Growth (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2006) and increase post-traumatic stress in males. In addition, in collective cultures, male individuals of the family are usually less expressive. They usually hide their extreme emotional expression just to show that they are a man of the family and are brave. In such circumstances, avoidance, pessimism, and distraction might lead to more stress-related symptoms of trauma.

Gender differences also depicted no significant difference between male and female victims of trauma on post-traumatic growth, and this shows that both genders experience emotional and psychological changes as a result of their struggle with a highly traumatic life event, but the difference is not significant. On two subscales of post-traumatic growth that are “relating to others” and “spiritual change,” significant differences are observed in female victims scoring high compared to male trauma victims. They show an increased faith in religious or spiritual beliefs after personally experiencing a traumatic event. Harper and Pargament (2015) mentioned that religiosity facilitated growth and exacerbated distress related to the crisis. The current study results also support this, as female victims of trauma showed less stress-related symptoms than male victims.

#### **Limitations and suggestions**

Like every other study, the current study also has its limitations. The first limitation of the study lies in its quantitative research design. While this study has its benefits, it lacks a detailed inquiry of the phenomenon under study in this research method.

The study’s second limitation is based on a targeted sample of half area and not all the population, so results cannot be generalized to a community sample. Although this research has a relatively large sample and fulfills the normal distribution condition, it is limited to only some severe district areas. To achieve more generalizable outcomes in future, this study requires a sample from some non-severe areas of the district too.

Future research should use a qualitative study method with in-depth interviews to get detailed information. Respondents may be reluctant to give their actual responses because of the fear of being judged. Although they were previously assured of their anonymity right and privacy, their responses were still affected by their social desirability.

#### **Implications**

Research may suggest points to add to existing interventions to produce Post Traumatic Growth associated with other aspects. This study may help to

improve their coping and resilience. It may also help to reduce the prevalence or intensity of traumatic symptoms. This research also reinforces that Post Traumatic Growth is a possible post-trauma outcome for terrorist-affected areas. Given the ongoing difficult work circumstances and repeated exposure to potentially terrorism trauma, efforts to promote Post Traumatic Growth may help individuals perceive positive benefits, which in turn may aid in keeping people well. This research is an addition to the limited research done with the terrorist-affected people of Swat and their Rehabilitation.

#### **Conclusion**

The conclusions derived from the study demonstrated that post-traumatic growth is a valuable concept in trauma psychology and suggests that difficult situations inspire ingenious solutions. The research findings highlighted the concept that resources available to the survivors and available in the environment are essential for understanding growth rather than the mere passage of time. Therefore, the results suggested that Terrorism Trauma (avoidance) positively predicts Post Traumatic Growth in trauma victims. Male victims of terrorism trauma showed more stress related to trauma, and they need more help and intervention.

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# Traumatizing Impressions on Young Social Media Consumers: Reflections on the Israel-Palestine Crisis

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**Saba Khurshid, Hafsa Khalil Toor and Rubina Hanif**

## **Abstract**

Social media impact has enlarged and became irreplaceable over the last few years. The distressing and heart-wrecking contents broadcast on social media platforms place a long-lasting impression on its consumers, especially the younger population. Therefore, the current study aimed to examine the traumatizing impression on young social media users during the Israel-Palestine crisis through focus group discussion design.

A Focus group guide based on literature and suggestions by subject matter experts was developed and used to evaluate constructs under study. The sample was comprised of 45 participants divided into six independent groups. The focus group discussion was audiotaped and transcribed. Content analysis technique (Krippendorff, 2004) was employed to analyze the data. Inter-rater reliability was found to be substantial. The major themes identified showed depression, distress, aggression, and anger among social media consumers after viewing conflicting videos and images related to the Israel-Palestine Crisis. The current study's findings contribute to understanding the traumatizing and heart-rending impression of violent social media content on its users. Subsequently, to avoid these deadly consequences, all countries need to play their constructive role positively and resolve these conflicting national or international matters.

*Keywords: Traumatization, depression, social media consumer, mental health*

## **Introduction**

Conflict always impacts one's mental and physical health negatively. For the past few decades, the continuous Israel and Palestine conflict has left deep impressions worldwide. This ongoing conflict exacts a hefty price on the physical and mental health of the region's population. As videos of the collapsing building, rockets streaking through the sky, bombardment, and devastated families caught worldwide attention on social media such as

Facebook, Instagram, Tik-Tok, and Twitter. This proves that social networking is the fastest and popular digital activity across all around the world. During the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, the use of social media also increased three times more than usual. People are spending more time on Facebook, Twitter, Tok-Tok or Instagram. According to the (Digital Global Statshot Report, 2021) approximately, 4.72 billion people worldwide are using social media and the internet. Total 332 million new users joined this online platform last year (KEMP, 2021). Social media consumers share and comment and show reactions to trending or viral videos and news. However, this is not just limited to their reactions or comments; sometimes, these viral footages affect them deeply and make them stressed or depressed. Israel and Palestine's conflict is also leaving a deep impression on social media consumers worldwide.

Viral video footage of Israeli soldier's invasion of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, air raid sirens, the sound of dozens of rockets, and collapsing buildings have a long-term impact on the region's population and social media consumers (Farzan, 2021). It has been observed that people demand more transparency and blame many social media companies for a glitch for taking down posts. This situation also increased anger in people all around the world. These all-distressing scenarios are increasing stress and traumatizing impact on social media users as well. One widely shared video on social media is a young Palestinian girl pleading with viewers as she asks: "what do you expect me to do? Fix it? I'm only 10", leaving a profound impression on addressees (Dastagir, 2021). A traumatic situation dramatically impacts a person, whether he is a victim or observer. The population on both sides of the conflict is exposed to traumatic events and explosions. Different researchers carried out their studies on traumatic effects on children or populations in both regions, but unluckily, we cannot find out any latest studies on the traumatizing impact on social media consumers. As tension between Israel and Palestinian militants has been escalated, social media also has emerged as a forum for broadcasting general panic and tension. Footages of annihilation in Gaza,

continuous rocket fires, and protests have gone viral on social media sites. This footage on people's phone screens or social media has amplified the conflict and tension worldwide (Luckhurst, 2021). Social media users started to post these protest clips under the hashtags, and these videos are being shared and viewed by thousands of people worldwide. As Luckhurst (2021) highlighted in one of his news articles in the BBC News, one viral video of Israeli strikes in Gaza, destruction, and crying Palestinian children had been viewed by "more than 44 million views on TikTok". Hence, this indirect exposure to violent news or footage on social media can affect its users mentally and emotionally.

The social cognitive theory posits that an individual learns behavioral responses by observing different models in a social circle (Prot et al., 2017). Similarly, General Aggression Model (GAM) is an integrated model from social learning and Information processing theory that explains how an individual can be influenced by media content (Anderson & Bushman, 2018). GAM describes that exposure to aggressive content on media has a long-term impact on individual behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs. Therefore, exposure to aggressive or violent media content can make them desensitized to real-life violence and may develop an aggressive personality (Martins, 2020). Keeping in view the theoretical models, the phenomenon of exposure to violent content on social media and the negative responses of young people can be best understood.

In the present study, a qualitative approach uses a focus group discussion with participants to highlight the traumatizing impression of the Israel and Palestine conflict on young social media consumers. This exploratory study focused mainly on the traumatic, stressful, or depressing impacts of the Israel and Palestine conflict on young social media users. The study outcomes would be a great addition to the literature review and would give a new feature of these conflicting

situations to viewers worldwide. The particular objectives are:

- To identify the traumatizing impressions of violent social media content on Young Social Media Consumers.
- To explore the traumatizing impact of the Israel-Palestine Crisis on young social media users.

## Method

### Sample

The sample of the study consisted of 45 young people age ranged from 15-28 years. The sample was recruited through a convenient sampling technique from Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Further, participants were divided into six focus groups (7 to 8 in each group). The inclusion criterion was set as only those adolescents who were made part of the current study who were actively using social media such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram.

### Procedure

The core motivation for carrying out a focus group discussion is that it encourages more depth reflection on different estimations. After having informed consent from the participant, participants were explicated about the study aims and procedure. A Focus Group Guide was developed based on literature review and suggestions by subject matter experts. The moderator organized all focus groups as the main focal point to carry out the focused discussion and ensure everyone participated. The observer task was to be attentive to group interactions and to record field notes. The Focus Group Discussion duration was 90 to 120 minutes. Discussions were audiotaped and transcribed by the researcher.

The whole process of Focus Group Discussion is explained in figure 1

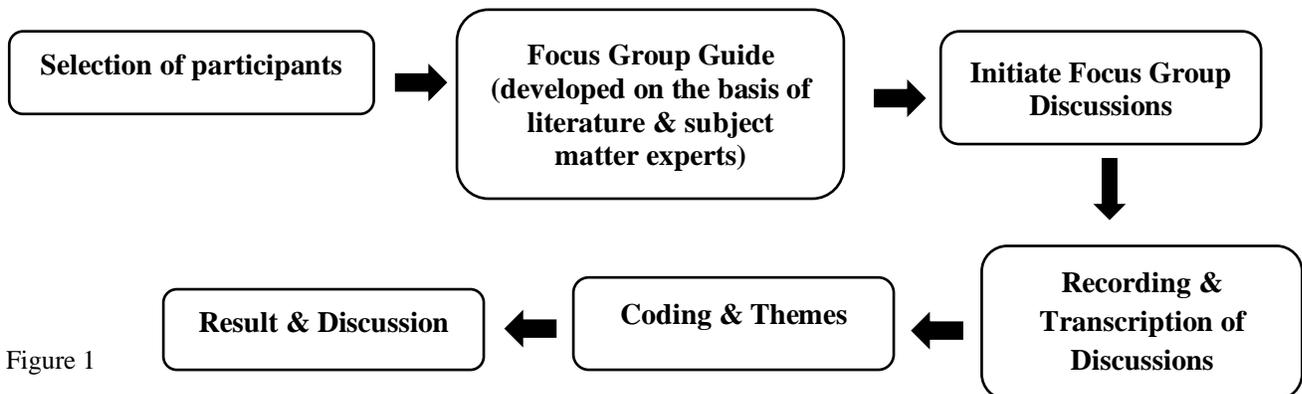
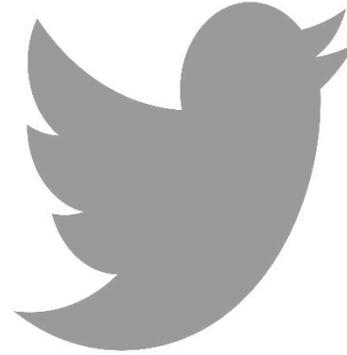


Figure 1

*Overview of the process and preparation phases of Focus Group Discussion*

**Data Analysis**

The data collected from discussions were transcribed. The transcribed data were analyzed by carrying out content analysis (Morgan, 1997), as content analysis permits the analysis of extensive qualitative data and focuses on variation in opinions (Krippendorff, 2018). The initial step was to repeatedly read the transcripts to get immersion and understand participants' main concerns. The next step of the analysis was dividing the text into smaller units such as condensation and then generating codes and grouping those codes into different categories. Furthermore, the researcher identified suitable themes by keeping the codes in mind. For accuracy and precision, themes were reviewed and analyzed by two independent raters, and inter-rater reliability for themes was found to be substantial.



The overview of the analysis process has described in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Overview of Steps involved in the analysis process*

<b>Steps</b>	<b>Description</b>
Step 1: Revisit the main purpose of FGDS	Revisiting the research aims and questions helps to proceed with the analysis procedure.
Step 2: Organization of FGD recordings	Organization of recorded data and copies of all records help get back to the original record.
Step 3: Immersion of material	Being familiar with the material helps to get an overall picture of the information.
Step 4: Coding	An analysis is based on the coding of participants' verbatim
Step 5: Classification	Turing codes into categories and grouping them is a central process.
Step 6: Analysis	Analysis of transcribed data depends on inter-rater reliability

*Note.* FGDS= Focus Group Discussion

**The Results**

Several interconnected themes related to the traumatizing impact of the Israel and Palestine Conflict on young social media consumers were identified in the focus group discussion. The findings reveal that young social media consumers are experiencing psychological effects by watching this deadly conflict. The themes related to traumatizing impressions of violent social media content related to Israel-Palestine are discussed in Table 2.

Gratitude for own condition	Thankfulness and Obligation Contentment	“Although devastating scenario in Israel-Palestine has made us emotional, depressive on the other hand, it helps us learn the value of blissful life.”
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**Table 2**

*Themes representing traumatizing impression on young social media consumers*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Subtheme</b>	<b>Quotations</b>
Traumatizing impact	Depressive feelings Stress out	"Exposure to traumatic events and explosions made us stress out and depressive."
Aggression and violence	Anger and aggression Feeling of helplessness Feeling of hopelessness	"Israel-Palestine conflicting situation and violence are making us aggressive and hopelessness as we are unable to do anything to help them out."
Social media Campaign	Social media Campaign Requesting all States to play their roles Protest on national and international forum	"By social media campaign and protest, we are requesting to all states to resolve this conflicting situation."
Rumination of negative thoughts	Negative thinking Negative automatic thoughts	"We observe a sudden change in our thinking pattern. This prolongs conflicting situation has intensified our negative thoughts."
Empathy	Compassion and Concerns Empathic attitude	"Traumatizing videos of violence and deaths made us more empathic towards victims of both sides."

### ***Traumatizing impact***

Most young social media users claimed that exposure to such traumatic events and news of explosions related to the Israel and Palestine conflict escalate depressive feelings in them. They become depressive and stressed by watching this news on social media.

### ***Aggression and violence***

It is already understood that exposure to violent acts or conflict, whether through social media or by experiencing it directly, constantly leaves a profound psychological impact on people's minds. During focus group discussion, most participants highlighted that watching videos of violence and images of dead-on social media also gave rise to aggression and anger. The feeling of helplessness related to this political conflict made them aggressive.

### ***The social media Campaign initiative***

During focus group discussion, most participants indicated that through a social media campaign, they tried to deliver their viewpoint and emotion related to the ongoing conflicting situation in Israel and Palestine. They tried to ease their anger and aggression through a social media campaign and requested to peacefully solve this conflict.

### ***Rumination of negative thoughts***

During the discussion, many participants specified that they started to think more negatively. As prolong clashes between two regions and the pathetic condition of people have intensified their negative thoughts.

### ***Empathy***

As being humans, we learn to empathize with people who are going through difficult life periods. Same in the case of the Israel and Palestine war, people who belonged to a different culture, region, or religion have shown compassion and concerns. Participants exhibited empathic attitude towards people of both region as war always bring destruction for both sides. They further highlighted that innocent people and children are badly affected on both sides in these clashes or deadly encounters.

### ***Gratitude for own condition***

They were thankful for blessings or pieces of stuff we have always brought contentment and peace in life. Waking up in the morning without having any sound of a siren or rocket firing, we need to appreciate such a blissful life. During the focus group discussion, participants also indicated that viewing such heartbreaking footage of devastation made them very

depressive, but they also learned to appreciate their peaceful lives.



### **Discussion**

By indirect exposure to traumatizing events or by viewing violent news on social media can cause people to experience similar symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as indicated by the British Psychological Society (2015). Hence, the current study aimed to explore the psychological and traumatizing impact of Israel-Palestine's conflicting situation on young social media consumers. The result of the study highlighted that observing the news or footage of the demolished buildings, dead bodies, recording of firing rockets, lack of medical and mental health facilities have cast a massive and undesirable psychological impact on the viewers. The current study's findings were also consistent with recent research on the effects of screen violence on youth behavior (Anderson et al., 2017). Watching or listening to aggressive content on social media can bring a theatrical change in individual behavior.

As in current study findings, it has been highlighted that participants reported severe depression and distress by watching the devastating images or footage in Gaza. This heart wrecking situation harmed people of both regions and affected social media users all around the world. The role of social media platforms now has become very prominent especially broadcasting tragic and traumatizing events. Once, President Obama said in 2014 that "The world has always been messy." He further pointed out the people's attention to even tiny detail on social media during the string of doom and gloom news cited by (Wayne 2016).

Nowadays, social media platforms have experienced more technological advancements, and one of its "live streaming" features has become widely used on social

media. It can be proved by watching live rockets firing, collapsing buildings, and people screaming on Facebook, Twitter, or Tik-Tok. But unluckily, we are still unaware of how this content can be proved sensitive to some viewers. Such as, empirical researchers shared the same opinion as the participants of the current study expressed. The effects of horrifying videos, graphic images, destruction increase high blood pressure, depression, and anxiety among late adolescents (Madan et al., 2014).



Current study findings also underlined feelings of gratitude and thankfulness in participants. After viewing the worst conflicting situation in Israel and Palestine, the study participants expressed that they started to appreciate the harmonious and peaceful lives they have. They also showed a very emphatic attitude toward the survival of this war. These outcomes of the current study are very noteworthy as it is believed that media and screen violence influence sympathy and empathy in people. But these findings are also found to be contradictory to a few of the past studies as this earlier research communicated that long-term indirect exposure to traumatic and violent events can desensitize people, especially adolescents. Hence, this desensitization to the sufferings and agony of other people can decrease empathic attitudes and increase aggression in them (Stockdale, 2015).



Despite teenagers' innate resilience, traumatic events pose a threat to their wellbeing. Individuals who are exposed to traumatic trials also experience a severe psychological setback. The same goes with indirect exposure, such as news coverage of traumatic events on social media, which impacts viewers' psychological wellness (Joshi et al., 2008) as results of the current study showed that participants of focus group discussion expressed their distress and depressing thoughts due to continuous indirect exposure to violence and explosions.

One reason behind this can be that these indirect exposures have become more frequent during the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, people, especially the young generation, are spending more time on social media as compared to before lockdown. Therefore, they are consciously exposed to the violent ethical, and conflicting political situation between two regions. Social media is over streaming with aggressive and depressive reactions and comments due to the prevailing contradictory situation between Israel and Palestine. Continuous news or footage on social media, especially Tok-Tok, makes viewers anxious and depressive (Luckhurst, 2021). Although, through social media forums, people started a social media campaign to request a ceasefire and peacefully solve this burring issue.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

The current conflicting situation between Israel and Palestine has increased tension and worries among people around the globe. The role of social media cannot be ignored or denied. However, when social media users come across violent and depressing material, it can impact them emotionally and psychologically. Social media platform owners need to focus on this issue and try to play a positive role in prevailing conflicts worldwide. It is just not about the current ethical or political clashes between Israel and Palestine; it is about the deadly encounters and traumatizing material worldwide. Social media consumers can work out on these worldly issues by using a positive approach such as a social media campaign, creating awareness about how social media platforms can positively solve these issues. All concerning authorities need to be more focused on how these conflicts can charge people of all ages psychologically or emotionally.

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# Exploring Syrian Men's Mental Health and Participation in Labor Employment: A Community Participatory Arts-Based Project

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Nancy Clark

**Background:** Refugee men experience significant discrimination and violence throughout their migration journey. Discrimination and violence do not end once refugees are received into third-country nation-states. Resettlement is recognized as a key protection tool for refugees to ensure protection and well-being, but only if their gendered specific needs are recognized and addressed. Research and policy on refugee integration tend to adopt a gender mainstreaming approach to address inequities across gender(s) but have primarily focused on refugee women Clark and Vissandjée (2019).

Stressors of acculturation, change in gender roles, and adjustment in gender role expectations may negatively impact refugee men's mental health (Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC [AMSSA], 2019). The Syrian refugee crisis is the largest of its kind and initiated an unprecedented immigration policy. Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada [IRCC] has resettled approximately 51000 Syrian refugees between 2015 and 2018 as a result of the Syrian Arab Republic refugee crisis IRCC, (2017). Burgeoning research shows mental health needs of Syrian refugee



men after resettlement can be attributed to low annual income and the need to support larger family households (Tuck et al. 2020; Immigrant Service Society of BC [ISS of BC], 2018). In some cases, refugee mental health is constructed through trauma discourse and biomedical perspectives, which may overshadow an equally important need to understand social determinants of refugee mental health (Lenette, 2019; Marlowe, 2010). Cultural explanations, stigma, and normative masculinity make it particularly challenging to elicit refugee men's

vulnerabilities and stressors associated with mental health (Hilario et al. (, 2017). Syrian men, whose identity is grounded in their role as the families' main providers of material and financial needs, may experience psychological distress if they are not able to provide food or money for their families (Hassan et al., 2015).

With the COVID-19 pandemic, Canada has also witnessed an economic and ongoing humanitarian refugee crisis. This crisis has exposed more dramatic unemployment rates, particularly for immigrants and racialized groups who face the most severe challenges in the labor market (Government of Canada, 2020; Hiebert, D (producer) 2020 *UBC Public Webinar - Centre for Migration Studies* [video] <https://migration.ubc.ca/events/dan-hiebert-canadian-migration-during-and-after-pandemic>. Against this backdrop, anti-immigration sentiments toward Muslims have grown since September 11, 2001, and Muslims have become targets of policy aimed at strengthening national security (Bryant, 2017; Clark & Saleh, 2019).

The majority of Syrian refugees identify as Muslim and experience multiple levels of discrimination and social exclusion. Studies on Syrian men's vulnerabilities show increased experience of torture, violence, and discrimination pre-migration based on their gender and ethnic identity, with profound debilitating and destabilizing mental, psychological consequences (Kisilu & Darras, 2018b; Turner, 2016). Most common hate crimes are motivated by racism in Canada, and where Arabs and West Asians are increasingly targeted (Mental Health Commission of Canada [MHCC], 2016). Syrian refugee men experienced some form of discrimination related to accessing labor employment pre-migration. In addition, being unemployed, underemployed, a secondary earner in the household can have unique effects on men and their identity (Affleck et al., 2018).

A study done on urban refugee men in Jordan revealed that Syrian men felt ashamed and depressed of their inability to continue with work and education and are forced into low-paying jobs (Care Jordan, (2013, April). *Syrian refugees in urban Jordan. Baseline assessment of*

*community-identified vulnerabilities among Syrian refugees living in Irbid, Madaba, Mufraq, and Zarqa. Rapid Participatory Community Assessment* <https://www.alnap.org/help-library/syrian-refugees-in-urbanjordan-baseline-assessment-of-community-identified>

These experiences may continue in the Canadian context and may lead to domestic violence and increase mental health challenges associated with acculturation stressors (Hassan et al., 2016). Mental health stigma among racialized Asian men has been linked to broader processes of normative masculinity, where strength is often equated with stoicism and passed down from one generation to the next (Morrow et al., 2019). Despite struggling with mental health issues and trauma, Syrian refugee men may be less likely than their female counterparts to access mental health services due to cultural stigma. When Syrian refugee men do seek help, it is more likely to be from peers, but there is often a lack of formalized peer support networks for men and boys CARE, (2017) *Men and boys in displacement Assistance and protection challenges for unaccompanied boys and men in refugee contexts*. CARE, co-published with Promundo. <https://promundoglobal.org/resources/men-boys-displacement-challenges-refugee-contexts/>

Immigrants' mental health deteriorates over time compared with Canadian-born populations, and refugee men report slightly poorer health than female counterparts (Ng & Zhang, 2019). Reasons for these differences may be related to gendered experiences post-migration. Gender identities are shaped by broader structures of masculinity across migration histories and cultural contexts for refugee men (Hyndman, 2012; Marlowe, 2011). Increasingly, social determinants, such as income, gender, and housing, are viewed to compound the experience of migration and resettlement stressors for Syrian refugees in Canada (Hynie, 2017). Studies on labor market attachment show that refugees are disadvantaged due to language proficiency (Frank, 2013; Sherrell, 2011). Refugee men are less likely than women to complete Language Instruction for Newcomers (LINC) classes—a finding which may be related to the gendered pressure to earn an income (Hyndman, 2012). Unemployment and underemployment are associated with poor self-image among refugee men, and the failure to secure employment poses risks to men's mental health (Bauder, 2005). Concerns about the safety and security of their families, unemployment, exploitation, and working illegally may also lead to increased trauma among Syrian men (Hassan et al., 2015). Overall, studies report a need for more nuanced understandings of gender-based distress. An intersectional analysis can be used to examine social identity constructs and how social

realities and structures shape masculinity (Affleck, 2018; Kisilu & Darras, 2018; El Feki et al., 2017). To date, little research attention has focused on the mental health of refugee men in Canada and the gendered effects of migration and resettlement. Additionally, few studies have analyzed the relationship between economic employment and mental health from refugee men's perspectives. Refugee economic integration is an issue of paramount importance that carries risks for mental health (Beiser & Hou2017).

**Research Questions:** The research questions guiding this study are: (1) What do Syrian men perceive as important factors in shaping their mental health and well-being in the context of their participation in labor employment? (2) How does unemployment and/or unemployment impact Syrian refugee men's mental health and well-being? (3) What are Syrian refugee men's gendered experiences of economic integration?



**Methodology:** This research is informed by a critical theoretical paradigm of intersectionality and the lens of cultural safety. Arts-based methods of photovoice will be used to elicit Syrian men's experiences, to understand their perspectives on the factors that promote mental health and community strengths. In addition, these methods can be a valuable conduit for language barriers and the expression of complex concepts, such as mental health (Lenette, 2019).

Participatory arts-based methods fit with this theoretical approach because they are used as a form of social activism that stems from a critical qualitative research paradigm, which draws attention to human rights and who has the power to speak. Intersectionality will be used as an analytic framework to examine the multiple dimensions that structure Syrian men's mental health, including labor employment. The central premise of intersectionality is that refugee men are not a homogenous category even when they may meet similar characteristics as refugees (Hill Collins, 2019; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Hankivsky et al., 2014). Fitting with the photovoice method, intersectionality is explicitly

oriented toward social transformation, building coalitions among different groups, and working toward social justice (Hill Collins, 2019). Using intersectionality and lens of cultural safety, this study analyzes how power and privilege operate in the production of knowledge and an ethical obligation to mitigate potential harms caused by research.

**Research Design:** The proposed study is exploratory and participatory in design using qualitative, arts-based methods and principles of community-based participatory action research (CBPAR). CBPAR is an inclusive process that leverages the strengths of all involved by addressing community issues for the purpose of positive social change (Friedman, 2021). Arts-based methods of photovoice (a group activity used to examine the meaning of photographs and designing knowledge mobilization) and photo-elicitation (use photographs in the research interview to enlighten and raise awareness and co-produce critical reflexive texts and images) will also be used. Photovoice is complimented by photo-elicitation because it prompts knowledge holders (KH) to discuss particular themes linked to images during interviews and shifts the emphasis from researcher interpretation to the perspective of the KH to co-construct meaning. Different kinds of information can emerge through photo-elicitation, e.g., resiliency factors, that may not otherwise be gained through photovoice. Together these methods encourage active participation by community groups in collaborations with other stakeholders, including non-profit organizations and the government (Reid et al., 2020).

Using photovoice is a novel approach in refugee research and can provide a medium for telling more complex stories, expression of emotions, and experiences for people who have encountered displacement and who are 'refugees' (Lenette, & Boddy 2013). In addition, fitting with political and structural intersectionality, participatory arts-based methods place Syrian men as KH and active participants in the social production of knowledge on policies and practices which directly affect them (Cho et al., 2013).

**Anticipated Outcomes:** The mental health and wellbeing of refugees require a multisectoral and multidisciplinary approach. This research seeks to build community capacity for health in all policies to address international and national health promotion initiatives. Benefits to target audiences include not-for-profit organizations that work with immigrants and refugees and provide employment services, counseling, and health promotion programming. We expect that findings from this research will also inform policies and practices that

provide mental health counseling and support as well as family services offered through the settlement sector.

This research will also lead to enhanced training and skills in using arts-based methods and Community Based Participatory Action Research with academic learners and the broader community. Visual storytelling methods, such as photovoice, are powerful knowledge dissemination tools that can facilitate the agency of KH traditionally excluded from the policy-making process. Methods of photovoice and photo-elicitation provide opportunities for 'political listening' in ways that can be meaningful to produce social change. Through this research method, photographs and narratives of Syrian men will be exhibited. Understanding the unique vulnerabilities that refugee men experience during resettlement will build intellectual exchange between academic and community sectors. Media will be used to disseminate knowledge about Syrian men's experiences to a wide range of stakeholders and knowledge users, including settlement counselors and labor employment programs.

**Acknowledgment:** Exploring Syrian Men's Mental Health and Participation in Labour Employment: A Community Participatory Arts-Based Project is supported in part by funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Government of Canada.

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# CASE STUDIES

# Voice of My Voice

To jump or not to jump, that is the question  
In the voice of my voice, the rays  
Of light shattered darkness.  
It wasn't always so, the caverns of insight  
Were stifled by the fear of the unknown.  
Will I descend into the well spring of truth,  
In order to reflect that which saturates me?  
A voice that is lost, is a voice that is silenced  
But silence is broken with the vibrations of light,  
So, fight to be heard because they can't see  
What is not spoken.

**Jameel Coles**

# Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Correctional System: Perspectives of a Prisoner

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**James S.H. Wong and Jameel Coles**

## **Introduction**

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected everyone across the globe, but it has disproportionately impacted those who are the most vulnerable in our society. As of June 2021, nearly half a million inmates and staff in prisons have been infected by the COVID-19 virus in the United States (US) (Park et al., 2021). This equates to approximately three in 10 people in state and federal prisons getting COVID-19, but many correctional health experts believe the true number is higher. Strikingly, the COVID-19 case rate in prison is about three times the national rate.

This tragic loss of life has revealed that prisons have been unprepared to tackle the pandemic, with crowded conditions and substandard medical care across centres. The pandemic has shone a light on widespread violations of human rights plaguing prisons, as many have limited access to personal protective equipment and proper sanitation and live in excessive solitary confinement (Amnesty International, 2021).

In the state of California in the US, COVID-19 has surged across the overcrowded prison system (The Sacramento Bee, 2021). Many inmates and families have struggled with the California Department of Corrections and reported its failures to prevent and control outbreaks. In our case study, we will share revealing insights from Ishmael,<sup>1</sup> a 43-year-old inmate currently serving a Life Without the Possibility of Parole (LWOP) sentence in Californian state prison. He provided written informed consent.

## **Ishmael's Story**

Ishmael tells us of his tragic story in the earlier part of his life, from his tumultuous childhood to the crime he committed at the age of 22. He reports experiencing physical, emotional, and sexual abuse and feeling a lack of belonging from his neighborhood: "When my mother was pregnant with me, my father pushed her down a

flight of stairs with the intent of aborting me. I was born into a world feeling unwanted and abandoned by my father. My mother, who raised me on her own, did all that she could to raise me to be a good person. However, she struggled to show me love and affection. Growing up, my mother rarely hugged me or told me that she loved me. She loved me in the best way that she could."

"My childhood was riveted with internal confusion; I just did not know who I was"

I felt as if I was living in two separate worlds, two worlds that I could not reconcile together, the Black world I lived in and the White and Asian world I was bused to school in. It was around this same time that my mom started attending a predominantly white church; there were only about five black families attended the church. Some crisis of identity was amplified."

Ishmael was around ten years old when he struggled with these intense feelings of identity. It was also the time that a neighbor's 16-year-old grandson who was visiting from New York molested him. At the time, Ishmael stated he did not know what had happened to him was wrong – it was years later, he realized what had happened was wrong, but he had already taken on immense shame.

According to Ishmael, this shame that he took on led him to take on hyper-masculine behaviors. He played football for his high school and became the hardest tackler on the freshman team. He strove to be the hardest hitter (tackler), "but this still was not enough to drown out the voices of shame that [he] constantly heard telling [him] that, 'I was not a man, that I was less than a man.'" This led to Ishmael becoming involved with a gang and criminal activity, as he wanted to prove to himself that he was a man.

"At the time, I thought I was trying to prove to my friends, my enemies, and the world that I was a man. But in reality, I was trying to prove to my ten-year-old self that I was sexually abused that I was now big enough and tough enough to protect him."

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<sup>1</sup>Name has been changed in this article to protect the subject's identity.

Ishmael states he continued into his “misguided pursuit of masculinity,” which resulted in his involvement of pimpin’ (human trafficking).

“It was at this point that my life began to completely spiral out of control. While I was engaged in human trafficking, I got involved with a carjacking that led to the tragic death of an innocent man. While I was not the individual who committed the actual murder, I am still morally responsible for my choice to live a criminal lifestyle that eventually culminated in the loss of innocent life. For my role in this horrific crime, I was sentenced to Life Without the Possibility of Parole (LWOP) in a California, USA state prison. I was 19 at the time that the Crime happened. I was 22 when I was sent to prison to serve an LWOP sentence. Although California has since changed its laws, now stating it will prevent individuals who did not commit the murder from being found guilty of murder, most California Courts have yet to recognize this amendment. This is another example of the injustice of the California justice system, which disproportionately impacts people of color. Almost 3/4 of people who have LWOP are people of color, and half of those people were 19 or younger when they committed the crimes.”

### **Present Day**

Decades have now passed. As of April 2021, Ishmael is 43 years old and is staying in the male-only state prison, California Medical Facility (CMF), in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The following sections describe how the pandemic has ravaged the correctional system, his current circumstances, and his reflections.

### **COVID-19 Situation at CMF**

Ishmael reports that CMF managed the COVID-19 situation relatively well in the first several months. He believes that this was due in part to the close relationship between prison officials and the Inmate Advisory Council (IAC).

However, the situation began to worsen after the Governor visited the facility. Shortly after his visit, there were several attempted transfers where inmates were transferred from another prison that was experiencing an outbreak to CMF. The IAC and the Inmate Family Council (IFC) were able to stop these transfers. In November 2020, at the direction of the Secretary’s office, inmates from prisons experiencing an outbreak were transferred into CMF. Furthermore, staff at the facility disregarded physical distancing rules, held office parties, and then returned to housing units, which contributed to the spread of COVID-19. On December 18, 2020, COVID-19 “spread like wildfire,” according to Ishmael – four positive cases increased to over 40 cases in a single day. By the end of the month, there were over 400

positive cases, culminating in a total of nearly 700 positive cases.

Ishmael states that the pandemic has “decimated social relations and social support networks.” Due to the pandemic, it has been difficult for him to be around the people who can support him emotionally and mentally, and he also cannot support them. Furthermore, social activities are nearly impossible to partake. Activities that were allowed before the pandemic, such as chess, cards, and board games, we’re no longer allowed due to physical distancing rules. Exercise is allowed, but inmates must wear masks and physical distance. Ishmael states that “COVID-19 has caused people to become more physically, mentally, and emotionally isolated.”

Reaching out to family and friends is permitted for some inmates at CMF, but there are several barriers to get over, which the pandemic has now exacerbated. Individuals are allowed to make a 15-minute phone call every three to four days; however, some have to decide whether to make a call or a shower. Contact visits have not started since the pandemic began. Ishmael states that “COVID-19 has made it near impossible to maintain family relationships.”

Ishmael notes that the pandemic has worsened the racism experienced by individuals in prison, “The pandemic has emboldened prison officials to become more punitive and anti-rehabilitation.” He states that some correctional officers wear symbols of White Supremacy, including the Proud Boys, Don’t Tread on Me, Punisher Skulls, and Bills of Rights.

### **Ishmael’s Health and Wellbeing**

Even though Ishmael has recovered from COVID-19, he still feels the residual effects of COVID-19. He experiences brain fog, fatigue, and body/muscle aches.

Ishmael reports suffering from anxiety, long-term depression, and trauma. In December, he was the victim of a racially motivated attack when he was treated for COVID-19 in the isolation dorm. The pandemic has intensified his past trauma and worsened his mental health. He states that his health and wellbeing concerns are being overlooked and marginalized in the correctional system.

“There is inadequate access to mental health, medical, and dental treatment. COVID-19 has given them an excuse for the already poor mental health, medical, dental treatment that was occurring prior to COVID-19. For instance, I have suffered from asthma since my childhood; however, in 2019, before the pandemic, I was taken off all asthma treatment and monitoring. This affected the way medical viewed my risk assessment. I was taken off to save money. There are too many individuals incarcerated in California to provide adequate medical, dental, and mental health services.”

### **Ishmael's Reflections and Insights**

Ishmael describes everyday life as follows: "It's like trying to catch your breath when it's difficult to breathe." When asked how he is currently doing, he says:

"I am straddling the fence between hope and hopelessness, faith and despair, joy and sadness. I was, by nature, an optimistic person. However, I have experienced so much loss and a justice system that is completely unjust when it comes to people of color. So, I just feel plain tired, mentally and emotionally."

The US has the largest prison population in the world and also the highest per-capita incarceration rate. According to the Human Rights Watch and other international and domestic human rights groups, the US prison system is ridden with human rights violations through excessive control of individual behavior, social control of marginalized groups, use of solitary confinement, and more (Human Rights Watch, n.d.). Ishmael provided his insights on what he would like to see changed in the US prison system.

"The prison system, especially in the United States, needs to take on an incentive-based/trauma-informed approach to rehabilitation. Incentive-based/trauma-informed rehabilitation is where you structure incarceration based on three levels: maximum (where you are considered prone to violence and refuse to participate in rehabilitative programs, a very restricted environment), medium (this is where you start your time off, you will

have access to multiple rehabilitative programs, and be in a less restrictive environment), minimum (is a minimally restrictive environment, access to all the rehabilitative programming possible, a measure of freedom that prepares you for re-entry back into the community)."

*We sincerely thank Ishmael for his contributions to this article.*

*Stay tuned for more collaborative pieces with James S. H. Wong and Jameel Coles in future VAT issues.*

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ART & SCIENCE OF HEALING

# Trauma-Sensitivity in Action

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## Emily Lapolice

As our world continues to navigate a global pandemic, sociopolitical, cultural, and racial reckonings, and revolutions, as well as innumerable accounts of individual and collective trauma and loss over this past year, we are in need of healing and reconciliation efforts that can account for these multidimensional, longstanding, and widespread wounds. Traumas that are both vast in scope and impact, and deeply personal in nature. The term “trauma-informed” or “trauma-sensitive” is often used to describe a policy, practice, or institution that “understands” trauma and works hard not to “mirror” trauma in its delivery. But what does that actually mean? What does it look like, or more importantly *feel* like - on both the administration of said policy or practice, but also on the receiving end? How does this “buzz word” translate into policies and practices that affect change, and transform healing potential to support resiliency and dignity in the individuals and communities that we serve? “Trauma-Informed Care understands and considers the pervasive nature of trauma and promotes environments of healing and recovery rather than practices and services that may inadvertently re-traumatize”.\* But what encompasses a *healing environment*?

We are introducing this column as a way to provide a platform for ongoing discussion and interaction with our readership. We would like this feature to be a living, breathing, and evolving contribution shared by all. A place where we can ask hard questions and lean into uncertainty with compassion, curiosity, and respect. Together, could we aim to create a framework where power-sharing is centered, and “trauma-sensitivity” is not only informing our work but also embodying it? Could we “live out” trauma sensitivity *together* through this collaborative exchange? We welcome your thoughts, feedback, questions, and comments and aim to invite your engagement with this material in a way that is collaborative, culturally sensitive, and open to change.

We would like this feature, this column, and our journal as a whole, to feel *safe*. As we open doors to facilitate awareness, prevention, and healing, we invite you, our readers, into an exchange where power is shared.

At the core of any “safe/healing” space or relationship, this tenant must be central.

Here are some questions to consider when aiming to provide a safe/healing “trauma-informed” experience:

- How can conditions (in the environment and through the relationship) be created for an individual or community to come forth in a way that feels “safe enough” to be fully seen and valued?
- How can individuals and communities feel *invited* into the work/relationship/policy in a way where power is shared, choices are provided, and hierarchical prescriptive methods are dismantled?
- Is there enough space to honor our unique intersections of race/culture/gender expression/sexual orientation/spiritual beliefs and practices, as well as our distinct and overlapping personal lived experiences?

We, at [Voices Against Torture](#), believe that being “trauma-informed,” in any capacity, enables a range of lived experiences and expressions of trauma to be met not only with compassion but also with the aim of giving power back to individuals and communities who have been repeatedly denied agency, dignity, and empowerment. We believe that healing approaches and modalities must address, unveil, and uproot systemic paradigms that have kept marginalized groups of people in the frontline experiences of trauma and oppression. The circuitous power-hoarding patterns of individual and group behavior, as well as institutional policies and practices, need to be interrupted. We are committed to engaging in this imperative dialogue among our growing team of interdisciplinary advisors and contributors, from diverse cultures and backgrounds but most importantly, with *you*, our readers and the individuals, groups, and communities that we serve.

We welcome your thoughts and look forward to furthering this collaborative dialogue, where we may each enter at different points and at different times - with a range of lived experiences, both personal and professional. A “separate togetherness” that honors our unique perspectives, as well as our shared humanity.

\*University at Buffalo Center for Social Research.

# Felt-Deadness and Felt-Completion: The Opposing Archetypal Affects of Immobility

## Luke Felczak

Jung proposes that human emotions are the wellspring of human energy, imagery, value, and new consciousness (Jung in Chodorow, 1991). Emotions, in a behavioral context, are also critical to human survival. Defensive action systems, which include the fight and flight responses, as well as the action systems of (non-threatening) daily life, which include attachment, exploration, energy regulation, caregiving, sociability, play, and sexuality (Ogden et al., 2006), each involves core affective experiences that range from terror and rage to interest and joy. Building on Jung's theoretical framework, Stewart (in Chodorow, 1991) proposes that the higher functions of the ego and self-evolve and develop from these primal affects. It is clear, in this sense, that these primal affects correspond to both defensive action systems (i.e., Fear, Anger, Sadness, Contempt/Shame), as well as to the action systems of (non-threatening) daily life (i.e., Joy and Interest). However, it is less clear the degree to which, according to Stewart's formulation, the "non-affective" affective states of human experience – including hypo aroused immobilization, as well as restful immobility – also impact the evolution and development of these higher functions. If, in fact, after Jung and Stewart, affects are central to the evolution and growth of the human personality, it is critical to also examine and explore the role of apathetic (non-emotional) affective states on the furtherance, or hindrance, of this same evolution and growth.

This paper explores the spectrum of movement/immobility, which spans the range between the immobilization defenses of feigned death and freeze, the mobilization defenses of fight and flight, the action systems of (non-threatening) daily life, and, finally, the "resting place" of Felt-Completion. This range will be theoretically described and explored employing multi-modal creative expressions, which were created, both in and out of the studio, over a span of several months this last year. I have included a special focus, as an illustrative example, on a single movement sequence titled *Movement with Nadya*. This movement, which was witnessed and guided by my classmate, happened, by a good chance, at the end of class, nearing the close of a course in movement-based expressive arts therapy at Langara College, British Columbia, Canada, in the Spring of 2020.

## The Walking Dead

*"I am walking on eggshells,  
spacey walking, disembodied.  
Frozen."*

From *Movement with Nadya*

In type I freezing, clients report immobility coupled with a hyper-awareness of their environments, feeling tense and energized, and ready to run or move if needed (Ogden et al., 2006). In type II freezing, immobility is coupled with feeling "paralyzed", and terrifyingly unable to move or breathe. This type of freezing is often secondary to a felt sense of entrapment, with no possibility of escaping perceived threat(s). Lastly, in feigned death, immobility is coupled with limp passivity and behavioral shutdown. The affective core of this state is characterized by the profound emotional numbness associated with extreme hypo arousal

### When the Children Go Missing

We who were no one  
expected now  
To be someone

A field divided  
half-moon

Who can understand us  
those who are trapped  
in endless lines of bodies  
used and unseen

The earth too is missing  
and the loneliness  
of dull teeth

(i.e., extreme apathy, non-interest, and non-emotionality), or, possibly, by what Améry – a torture survivor – describes as a phenomenological state of felt-nothingness that exists "beyond the border of death" (1980, p. 35).



The conditions of type II freezing and feigned death have been observed in the survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings, as well as in the “inmates” – especially among those who perished – of the Nazi concentration camps and killing centers (Borowski, 1976). More commonly, however, this condition can be observed in the victims of inescapable domestic violence – including victims of child abuse and/or neglect – who, for a variety of reasons, cannot effectively fight against or escape their entrapment. In chronically abused children, this condition is also associated with profound impairments in self-awareness and self-perception (van der Kolk, 2015). In this regard, type II freezing and feigned death represent dissociative states in which there are profound alterations in information processing related to both environment and self. This immobilized “non-affective” state of Felt-Deadness is captured by initially idiosyncratic shadow movements with Nadya (Chodorow, 1991) and in a fragment of the poem *When the Children Go Missing*. It is also conveyed, I believe, by an untitled drawing, in black marker, which depicts the image of a slender dead tree beside a gravel path in an otherwise barren landscape. The egg-shaped chop in the bottom-right corner of the picture reads: *As the pain grows, so does my presence with you. Here is a path that leads both towards and away from this dead tree; both towards and away from this dead, paralyzing place*

The Walking Terrified and Enraged  
“*Strangle waltz with Captor,  
Pin Captor’s neck to the ground  
until Captor is motionless*”

From *Movement with Nadya*

When danger of threat is perceived to be escapable or surmountable, a person, who has not developed an automatic response to perceived danger in terms of their immobilization defenses, will typically engage in active defense strategies. Which is to say, a person will typically run away from the threatening situation/person (i.e. flight), or, if faced with inescapability, will attempt to

We Circle

We Circle  
the red  
stain  
the red  
mark  
the red  
door  
which until  
we enter through it  
will colour  
the sky  
the sun  
the sea  
as though they were less  
important or worse still:  
nothing at all  
Red  
is only one colour

neutralize the threat by destroying its capacity to harm (i.e., fight) (Ogden et al., 2006). The affective-movement core of these active defensive responses ranges from fear to terror, in flight, and from anger to homicidal rage, in the fight, and may include highly energized movements of orienting, running, and/or striking out with the extremities. This may also include, especially in the context of interpersonal trauma, the affective-movement core associated with the post-traumatic experience of sadness, expressed *in extremis* as inconsolable grief, to contempt and shame, which, *in extremis*, can be expressed as extreme hatred of another or intense self-loathing. The movement tendencies of these affects may include a forward collapse of the shoulders, hypokinesia, as well as movement tendencies that either socially disconnects, over-protect, or either hide or conceal the body from the self or others. Logically, the affective-movement core associated with these active defense strategies corresponds to Stewart’s primal affects of existential crisis (i.e., Fear, Anger, Sadness, and Contempt/Shame). They also correspond, I would argue, with Chodorow’s (1991) movements from the primordial

unconscious, which are characterized by affects at a level of primal intensity. In fact, I would suggest that overwhelming experience, which can result in unresolved emotional complexes or traumatic reactions and may be described as a form of *primordial existential crisis*.

The homicidal rage that can be experienced towards a captor is not only expressed in the circling “strangle waltz” and by the ultimate disarming of a captor by means of self-protective homicide – which is expressed in the *Movement with Nadya* as a kind of ritualized act of killing from within a cultural unconscious (Chodorow, 1991) – but also in a fragment of the poem *We Circle*. At this position along the affect-movement spectrum, there is already an observed tendency in the text towards both overt physical as well as more clearly imagined *movements* (e.g., circling, entering through doors)<sup>1</sup>. The constriction of the red door must be entered through so that the expansiveness of the sky, sun, and sea are not lost. The red stain must be circled, confronted, and delimited, and the red door must be entered so as to preserve the vitality of the living world. By moving this primary emotional complex, emergent from the primordial unconscious (Chodorow, 1991), and centered around dissociated homicidal rage, one may explore the completion, through the active imagination, of a truncated defensive action (i.e., fight) (Ogden et al., 2006) and so catalyze a breakthrough into a new way of being (Halprin, 2003). This is also to say; this imaginative experience can enable a shift along the affect-movement spectrum towards those affect-movements of the active imagination more characteristic of non-threatening daily life.

#### The Walking Safe and Loved

*“Lightness of movement, more clear eyes,  
looking and reaching up,  
Body filling up with colour and sensation”*

From *Movement with Nadya*

When perceptions of danger have passed, and when the emotional complexes of unresolved trauma have

been explored and integrated, it is easier for a person to begin to re-engage and develop their action systems of (non-threatening) daily life. Ogden et al. (2006) proposes seven (7) fundamental and inter-related action systems of this kind:

1. **Attachment** – Proximity seeking to save others; comforting physical touch; smiling, eye contact; crying and reaching; shaping/conforming oneself to an attachment figure’s body.
2. **Exploration** – Behavioral and facial expressions of curiosity and openness; seeking, tracking, and orienting movements whose purpose is to discover, investigate, and interact with novel stimuli.
3. **Energy Regulation** – Innate behavioral tendencies to search for resources of warmth, food, water, and protective sleeping places needed for long-term survival.
4. **Caregiving** – Behavioral action tendencies are activated when attachment figures perceive that their close-ones/loved ones are stressed, threatened, or in danger. There is an enormous range of caregiving movements/behaviors whose affective core has been described as “subtle, warm, and soft” (Ogden et al., 2006, p. 116)
5. **Sociability** – Facial expressivity, verbal and non-verbal vocalization, gestures, and body postures and movements that enrich interpersonal communication.
6. **Play** – Relaxed open body posture. Rapid changes from one behavior to another. Random, non-stereotyped movements that shift quickly (including leaps, rolls, and rotational movements).
7. **Sexuality** – Movements of courtship, seduction, pair-bonding, and mating action tendencies and fixed action patterns, which become apparent when the sexuality/reproduction system becomes aroused.

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<sup>1</sup> To understand *movement* in the expressive arts, it is important to acknowledge that the construct of “movement” itself has undergone a radical transformation in the neurosciences beyond the narrow definition of movement associated with either physical or embodied movement(s) (e.g. dance). Recent neuroimaging studies have shown, for example, that the human nervous system, and in particular those cortical regions most closely associated with physical movement, are also activated in response to motor imagery (Zabicki et al., 2019), imagined action (Mohad et al., 2019), abstract art (Umilta et al., 2012), and abstract concepts (Harpaintner et al., 2020). In other words, the information-processing that is integral to human movement perception and performance is essentially intermodal, and may be activated by the imagination, as well as physical, visual, and verbal stimuli.

Expressive movement cannot be conceived independently of these fundamental action systems and either the behaviors/movements they embody and express or the core effects shaping their expression. Nor can expressive movement be conceived independent of the literal or imaginative possibilities, conflicts/frustrations, and felt completions of each system.

Generally, it is apparent that the basic affective core of these action systems corresponds to Stewart's archetypal affects of the libido (i.e., Joy and Interest). In this regard, it may be said that the archetypal affects of Joy and Interest are only possible in the non-threatening context of environmental and interpersonal felt safety. Although for the purposes of this paper, we will not explore the action systems of non-threatening daily life in-depth, it is important to note that both experientially and expressively, these action systems and their core affects often overlap.

As the self-approaches, a complete state of felt-safety and felt-love, the impulse, which first necessitated the beginnings of the movement, may begin to slow and fade. For this reason, there is the imagery of a gentle and approaching restfulness captured in the line of a poem: *an uplifting of hands/a floating cloud*. When I "moved" this poem as part of my final class presentation, I remember moving slowly and calmly, almost as slowly and as seemingly absently, from both imagination and body, as a ghostly figure. In fact, the final line of this poem, *Still Water*, expresses a gateway point to the final stage along the movement-affect spectrum, whose movement is non-movement and whose core affect is one of Felt –Completion.

#### Imagining Stillness

*"Witnessed as wonderful by creator,  
Not by doing but by being,  
Walking, grounded through feet, jewel and energy  
emanating from belly,  
Giving of myself, not intentionally giving.*

From *Movement with Nadya*

In culturally diverse traditions, *stillness* – or a state of non-movement – is associated with higher, if not transcendent, ego-states. In diverse meditation traditions, one sits. In religious iconography, the stillness of imagery radiates the sacred. A common closing pose in yogic practice, which in some ways may be generally conceived as a practice of mindful observation, movement, and rest, is the resting posture of *savasana*, which means "corpse pose." In corpse pose, the practitioner's intention is non-intentionality, the complete cessation of movement in body, heart, mind,

and spirit. In addition to these diverse cultural practices, stillness in the natural world can often evoke feelings of serenity, tranquility, and completion (is this *the felt absence* of a moving predator?). Likewise, in the expressive arts, there comes the point where the movement of the active imagination, which can be either energized, sharp, or even outright anarchic or chaotic, begins to slow and settle and attains, though not always, a felt sense of completion. At these moments, the client-artist may also begin to slow and settle: the paintbrush, in contemplation, is placed to the side, the clay releases the hands, the final words reverberate with closure in the last line of a poem, and the expressive body, if only for a few moments, also ceases to move. Although essentially non-expressive, this post-expressive non-egoic state of Felt-Completion, I believe, is the desired end of all movement. I would further argue that the overlapping movements intrinsic to both the active imagination, as well as to the defensive and non-defensive action systems, seek out and search for a Felt-Completion to which the totality of their simple and complex movements strive.

This is apparent in the fact that most instances of expressive movement function as a recapitulation, in either shadow, cultural, or primordial forms, of these core movement-affect action systems. My additional hypothesis is that the prolonged frustration of being unable to move to places of stillness with respect to any of these core movement tendencies is likely to result in one or more of the primary affects of existential crisis, described by Stewart (in Chodorow, 1991) (i.e., Fear, Anger, Sadness, Contempt/Shame), and potentially in the primordial affects of existential crisis associated with unresolved trauma. By imagining the real, vis-a-vis the active imagination, the expressive arts allow for the movement of these fundamental movement tendencies and make possible the attainment of their experientially imagined stillnesses – and this, with literal and real-world consequences. For example, by imagining killing one's captor, one may experience a *striking-out*, and this embodied/imagined striking-out adaptively impacts implicit memory structures and thus effects adaptive traumatic memory reconsolidation.

By attaining, through movement, the *stillnesses* associated with the appropriate satisfaction of these core action tendencies, I believe that the human being may more proximally attain something akin to a state of Felt-Completion. A state in which one no longer has to do; in which one no longer needs to imagine; in which one no longer needs to move.

The affective core of this state is not adequately captured, I believe, by either Stewart's affects of

existential crisis, or by his proposed primary libidinal affects of Joy and

		Aspect	
	Action System	Movement	Stillness
Defensive Action Systems	Flight	Escape	Felt-Safety
	Fight	Striking Out	Felt-Resistance
Action Systems of (Non- Threatening) Daily Life	Attachment	Seeking Attachment Figures	Felt-Embrace
	Exploration	Seeking Novelty	Felt-Discovery
	Energy Regulation	Seeking Physical Resources	Felt-Comfort
	Caregiving	Seeking the Well-Being of Others	Felt-Having Given
	Sociability	Seeking Connection	Felt-Connection
	Play	Seeking Levity	Felt-Relief
	Sexuality	Seeking Union	Felt-Merger

Interest, and is more akin to a kind of apathetic felt finality of human life. This arguably non-affective, the non-moving state represents, I believe, the potentially elusive and often frustrated end-goal, conscious or otherwise, of all affect-

laden movement tendencies, and should also be included, along with immobility associated with type II freezing and feigned death, in Stewart's typography of the archetypical affects of the Self (Stewart in Chodorow, 1991, p. 95).

SYMBOL AND PRIMAL AFFECT			EVOLVED, DIFFERENTIATED FUNCTIONS	
Stimulus	Image	Affect	Expressive Dynamism Noetic Function	Cultural Attitude Ego Function
Inner Deadness <i>(Type II Freeze and Feigned Death)</i>	The Dead	Felt-Deadness	Retraction The Unrelated	Nihilistic Attitude Non-Being Function
The Complete	The All	Felt-Completion	Stillness The Un-needing	Resting Attitude Non-Doing Function

Figure 2. Symbol, affect, and function of Inner Deadness and The Complete

Although the absolute cessation of the need for movement is unattainable, as even in the yogic corpse pose, the breath must continue, the relative degree to which the human body and human movement can attain the *still nesses* of Felt-Safety, Felt-Resistance, Felt-

Embrace, Felt-Discovery, Felt-Comfort, Felt-Having Given, Felt-Connection, Felt-Relief, Felt-Merger, or Felt-Completion, may be a matter of both personal and collective interest, as well as both therapeutic conceptualization and intent.

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# Art Therapy: An Effective Tool in Managing Traumatized Individuals

Rubina Hanif and Meh Para Siddique

Trauma is an event in which the person has experienced, witnessed, or been confronted with an event or events that involve actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of oneself or others and stipulates that "the person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror (APA, 2013). Another explanation of trauma posits that it is not the event itself that determines the impact, but rather how the individual processes and assigns meaning to the traumatic event on an individual's daily life, establish the impact (Boals & Schuettler, 2009). Based on this narrative, researchers are exploring strategies through which individuals' perceptions and resilience can be altered in a meaningful and positive way. Traditional therapies are now integrating various modes of art in dealing with trauma survivors. Evidence-based treatments are being implemented through art-based activities (Sarid & Huss, 2010; Tripp, 2007). Literature has established that individuals who experience multiple types of highly stressful events are at risk for entering a dangerous state of allostatic load (Sprang, Katz & Cooke, 2009). This load finally turned into a traumatic state for individuals and impacted their daily life functioning.



For thousands of years, people have relied on the arts to connect with others, express themselves, and to get heal. Art therapy is based on the belief that creative expression can help people heal and feel better (Stuckey & Nobel, 2010). Testa and McCarthy (2004) have effectively used art therapy-based intervention for trauma survivor

adolescents. Individuals who have mental illness frequently expressed themselves in drawings and other artworks, prompting many therapists to consider using art as a curative approach (Farokhi, 2011).

*Art opens the closets, airs out the cellars and attics. It brings healing (Cameron, 2021).*

Art has now become an essential aspect of the therapeutic area, with some diagnostic and therapeutic procedures using it. The use of artistic methods to treat psychological disorders and to enhance mental health is known as art therapy. Art therapy is a technique rooted in the idea that creative expression can foster healing and mental well-being (Stuckey & Nobel, 2010).

Generally, art therapy aims to utilize the creative process to help people explore self-expression and, in doing so, new ways to achieve the personal insight and enhance new coping skills. The creation of art is used to help people to explore their own emotions, develop self-awareness, enhance stress coping, boost self-esteem, and work on social skills. As clients create art, their artwork is analyzed to know about what they have made and how they feel about this process. Through exploring their art, people can exhibit their conflicts or frustrations that may be affecting their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Cherry, 2021). Art therapist uses various art techniques such as drawing, painting, sculpture, and collage for the enormous range of clients, i.e., young children to older adults. It has been reported in many studies that clients who have experienced emotional trauma, physical violence, domestic abuse, anxiety, depression, and other psychological issues can be treated effectively from creative expressions (Wadson, 2010).

While evidence suggests that art therapy may be helpful, the results of several studies on its efficacy are still lacking (Regev & Cohen, 2018). Because studies are limited and inconclusive, further study is needed to determine 'how' and 'when' art therapy is most beneficial.

Previous literature depicts that art therapy dramatically reduces trauma symptoms and depression levels in adult trauma patients (Regev, 2018). The art therapy technique assisted cancer patients in improving their quality of life and alleviating various psychosocial ailments while undergoing medical treatment (Ching-Teng, Ya-Ping, & Yu-Chia, 2019).

Art therapy has been used frequently to treat traumatized individuals, with promising outcomes in clinical practice (Schouten, de Niet, Knipscheer, Kleber, & Hutschemaekers, 2015). For years, art is frequently used in helping people explore emotions, develop self-awareness, cope with stress, raise self-esteem, and improve social skills through creating or appreciating them. It employs artistic techniques such as sketching, painting, coloring, and sculpture, Collage, Doodling and scribbling, Drawing, Finger painting, photography, and working with clay. As clients create art, they may analyze what they have made and how it makes them feel. Through exploring their art, people can look for themes and conflicts that may be affecting their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Cherry, 2021). Art can aid in trauma management by allowing an individual to process stressful events differently. When words fail, art provides an outlet to ventilate. Every phase of the therapeutic process involves art when working with a trained art therapist.

Traumatized people may struggle to control their emotions, becoming easily enraged or agitated. Because they have not been fully processed, traumatic memories can appear out of nowhere. There is frequently a response to unconscious cues, such as survivors of sexual abuse fearing an aspect of their abuser's physical appearance. Hearing the scream of car brakes can send a person's nervous system into a tailspin, especially if they have been in a tragic car accident. When a person is exposed to a traumatic event, the Broca's brain region (which is responsible for language) shuts down. At the same time, the amygdala, our brain's danger recognition area, is on high alert and captures the traumatic memory visually and as bodily sensations (Rausch et al., 1996).

Thus, in parallel, employing art to communicate emotion accesses both visually stored memories and body memories, as it allows people to create visuals and allows them to link to physical sensations through the use of art materials such as clay and paint. They may be deprived of their bodily senses, especially if they have been subjected to physical or sexual abuse. According to certain studies, individuals' perceptions of touch and sight are linked directly to our brain's fear region (Lusebrink, 2004), which is why art therapy is ideally placed to work with traumatic memory. Victims of trauma benefit from therapeutic relationships because

they feel safe and centered in the present moment. This is necessary before any painful memories are addressed, so they can feel comfortable knowing that the trauma has passed and that they are in the present moment in the treatment session. As the painful experience is processed, this can save them from feeling overwhelmed or "flooded." Because unpleasant memories are kept visually, interacting with them through art might be more instantaneous. It lets a traumatized person choose what they produce and release portions of the trauma at their own time, preventing them from becoming overwhelmed. The art enables nonverbal communication, which can help individuals feel safer and more willing to relate their narratives. Individuals may also lack vocabulary; thus, the image might help them put their feelings into words. By talking about the work and

***Because unpleasant memories are kept visually, interacting with them through art might be more instantaneous. It lets a traumatized person choose what they produce and release portions of the trauma at their own time, preventing them from becoming overwhelmed. The art enables nonverbal communication, which can help individuals feel safer and more willing to relate their narratives. Individuals may also lack vocabulary; thus, the image might help them put their feelings into words.***

giving words to the trauma, the therapist can help the person. However, with the help of an art therapist, the painful experience can be processed and placed in space and time, communicating to the brain that it is no longer happening today. Instead of being kept in the brain's fear center, the memories are saved as autobiographical memory. This helps to minimize the symptoms of trauma by reducing their intense emotional content.

Individuals who have been traumatized may make collages of images that express their internal strengths. They make a mask or draw a sensation and discuss it to evaluate feelings and thoughts regarding trauma. By

photographing precious objects, art develops grounding and coping skills. By generating a graphic chronology, it can assist in telling the tale of trauma. Integrating art into therapy addresses a person's entire experience because trauma is not experienced solely via words. Art expression is a vital tool for adequately containing and separating from a traumatic experience. When words fail, art safely provides a voice to and makes a survivor's experience of emotions, ideas, and memories visible (Schouten, 2019).

In addition, trauma rehabilitation entails recovering the safety of one's body. Many people who have experienced trauma become alienated or separated from their bodies. Generally, this is the outcome of feeling physically intimidated and unsafe after distressing experiences. Learning to establish a healthy relationship with one's body, on the other hand, is essential for trauma recovery.

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# Voices of Gifted Children

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**Shazia Munir**

Resilience may get strengthened by high emotional development, advanced cognition, and strong mental wellbeing. However, they do not protect us from trauma. Anyone can undergo psychological injuries from neglect, abuse, and violence. Bullying behaviors can also cause injuries, including trauma in some cases (Gray, 2019). Gifted students could be experiencing more victimization resulting from bullying than non-gifted. In research, Peterson et al. (2006) reveal two-thirds of gifted students have experienced bullying significantly related to the emotional impact and violent thoughts by eighth grade. That is more than double bullying incidents in the overall population ((Reiney, 2016). Similarly, Ronksley et al. (2019) identified a direct proportional between giftedness and victimization. The more gifted a student is, the greater the likelihood he/she will experience oppression.

Giftedness can be both an asset and a vulnerability when these students respond to developmental challenges. It is critical that educators and parents go hand in hand to end the cycle of violence and keep youth safe. A number of myths about gifted students themselves and programs designed to serve these students tend to inhibit educators, parents, and students themselves from developing their creativity and expertise (Sheffield, 2017). This paper discusses some of the myths that can impact gifted students' development, understanding and/or are well-intentioned solutions with unintended consequences and includes research results from other studies designed to counteract these myths and maximize students' achievement and engagement.

## **All Children Are Gifted**

The myth that 'all children are gifted' is not true rather, it exerts pressure on other children who are not gifted. My understanding of the word gifted is the same as able, talented, and exceptionally able. Also, giftedness might be a result of diligence and a high motivational level. Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1990) found that gifted children have a higher self-efficacy and achievement level than non-gifted children. Similarly, Subotnik et al. (2011) noted gifted children to be persistent and have higher motivation in their priority areas. They give promise of hard work at a high order (Scager, 2012). I agree that all children have strengths, but only some are gifted. By gifted children, we mean one who is far more educable than the generality of children is. This greater

educability may lie along the continuum of high self-efficacy.

Meta-cognition is crucial in giftedness (Hampson, 2009). Further, giftedness refers to domains of human abilities, talents to domains of human accomplishments (Schindler, 2017).

It is difficult to make a judgment on a belief that 'all children are gifted.' However, in a study of culture-dependent predictors of teacher's attitudes towards gifted education, Tirri et al. (2002) identified that all children are gifted. Since there is no finished product when it comes to research on gifted children and how we are able to meet their needs (Zanetti, 2019), some researchers consider these groups to be vulnerable and are more often involved in situations of harassment as victims (Casino-García, (2019). I understand that everyone has a gift or talent, but the real challenge is finding and grooming it accordingly. We also need to consider how we work with the field of education in general.

## **Giftedness is innate, and High IQ**

There is some truth in this idea that some abilities are innate and tend to appear early given the right circumstances. Neurosciences also corroborate physiological differences in the brain of gifted kids as their brain has the ability to perform more intellectually and purposefully (Geake, 2008). But there are some gifts that demand life experiences before they can thrive. Children possess domain-specific natural abilities, but giftedness becomes visible in challenging and supportive environments (Gagne, 2004). Ng et al. (2016) added that environmental factors and performance influence beliefs about abilities and knowledge, affecting giftedness development. According to Bandura, (1978) exception in student's performance is dependent to proper interaction of personal, behavioral and environmental variables. These students face the fear and humiliation of verbal, physical, and relational aggression and, as a result, often suffer psychological ill effects (Tenenbaum, 2011).

In the early years' experience plays a key role in nourishing innate abilities ((Graeme, 2018) as the brain remains evolving during that time (Hunt, 2012). Children exposed to a supportive environment during their early years articulate more domain-specific abilities and motivation, which can be used to develop their innate

gifts (Shore, 2009). Additionally, challenging environments and opportunities are important for efficient brain development and to utilize those abilities to their full potential. Dai (2020) described that giftedness is not something fixed and unchangeable and stressed the unfolding and transforming the unusual potential among young children into exceptional performance.

In my opinion, giftedness is not about high IQ rather, and it is more than that. According to Pfeiffer (2008), IQ tests assess students' cognitive ability; however, students' potential abilities vary around a variety of subjects and skills in life, which may not be measured through IQ. Moreover, IQ scores do not remain the same as children go through different situations and ages. By recognizing giftedness, we are not assessing fixed and unchangeable humans rather, we are searching for development in abilities subjected to change due to conscious training (Winner, 1996). Moreover, we emphasize a growth orientation and outline the importance of considering giftedness as a process-based entity (Lo, 2019). IQ tests measure a relatively narrow band of abilities. Children from immigrant communities may not have the cultural or linguistic background to show their abilities. According to Renzulli (2012), students' exceptional talent such as motivation, creativity, and task engagement cannot be quantified what IQ does. What if some of our exceptional students become bored or confused because they can spot alternative answers that the test devisers had not appreciated. These students may need enhanced psychological support.

### **A single assessment can identify giftedness**

Identification of giftedness is vital to ensure the effective implementation of the gifted education program. It requires different considerations to make the plan equitable, affordable, reasonable, and practicable for the students who designed it (Callahan, 2012). According to Sternberg (2017) identification is not just labelling gifted and not gifted rather it is conclusion of providing favorable opportunities, assistance and support. Moreover, it is not a single-step assessment but a complete process to identify and accelerate students learning in a preferred direction (Worrell, 2013).

There are individual differences in student's abilities, potentials, interests, and progress. Winkler and Voight (2016) identified the over-excitability nature of gifted persons. Additionally, giftedness is not about typical abilities; it is something about the exception that ranges around a different aspect of life. There is a good all-rounder, but some talented students excel in only one area of the curriculum or a group of closely related subjects

such as science or humanities (Goodhew, 2009). Therefore, it can be difficult to make accurate assessments of children's potentials. Hence Moon (2013) finds non-traditional assessments such as portfolio and performance-based assessments more useful to comprehend what students know in the particular subject area and how they can interpret, apply and evaluate that knowledge in the field.

According to Falaschi (2019), assessment tasks should provide a maximum chance for gifted students to show predictable results in specific domains besides providing feedback on their performance. Different assessments can be developed to provide an equal chance for each student to perform specific to different subjects to assess different skills in that area. Tests of general ability such as IQ tests can be used with talent. As these are less dependent on the teaching, a child has received and provided a picture of underlying ability.

Dori (2018) examined students to the gifted programs based on standardized tests are gender fair. They showed that open-ended tools for analyzing students' scientific thinking might better serve both research and practice by identifying gifted girls and boys equally well. Some practitioners, Kaufman (2012) advocate using creativity assessments to identify a student with creative potentials—those able to think, do or make something different, the very people our world needs. They review the state of the creativity assessment, from divergent thinking tests to the consensual assessment technique to rating scales and self-assessments.

Some teachers argue that creativity is specific to such a narrow field in some students that these tests may not pick them up (Goodhew, 2009). Despite the many flaws present in creativity measurement, there are compelling reasons for including creativity as part of a gifted assessment battery. Different assessment techniques have their own cost and benefit, helping some students and disadvantage others (such as gifted with special needs) make the variation in the assessment inevitable for suitable identification of students' strengths and weaknesses (Callahan, 2013). According to Pfeiffer (2018), psychologists need to: Identify and assess gifted students; integrate multiple assessment measures including intelligence, cognitive ability, and achievement tests; assess gifted students with co-existing disabilities; promote the abilities of gifted students using evidence-based strategies. As gifted experience some sources of stress (Krafchek, & Kronborg, 2018) that are different from those experienced by general students. Milic (2020) emphasized the use of creating software for gifted assessment. Consequently, a variety of formal and informal assessment tasks should benefit all the gifted and provide practical data for decision-making.

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# BOOK REVIEW



## Book Title: Higher Education and Social Justice

### The Transformative Potential of University Teaching and the Power of Educational Paradox

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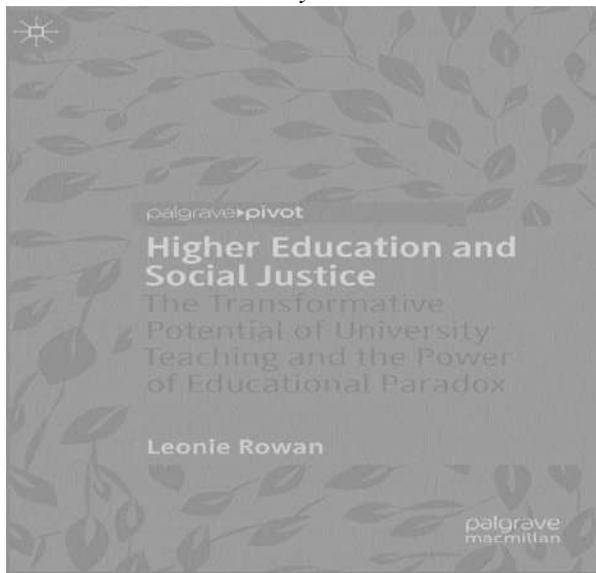
**Author: Leonie Rowan**

**Year of Publication: 2019**

**Publisher: Cham: Palgrave Macmillan**

**PP: 151**

*Reviewer: Patrick Swanzy<sup>1\*</sup>*



The book *Higher Education and Social Justice: The Transformative Potential of University Teaching and the Power of Educational Paradox* authored by Leonie Rowan, a renowned education scholar, brings social justice in school settings, a hardly discussed phenomenon to the forefront. Underpinned by a simple foundational belief that education is the practice of freedom, she situates the discourse in one hundred and fifty-one (151) pages categorized into five chapters. The book is well presented with an easy overview and solid coherence. The author illuminates some key social justice aspects that concern higher education institutions from chapters one to five. In chapter one, the author argues that university education is key to perpetuating or transforming wider patterns of justice or inequality. Being aware of this, she cautions that this transformative

potential requires in-depth knowledge of the issues that impact academic decision-making and purposeful engagement with the kinds of philosophical resources that can underpin a genuine desire to labor for a change.

An outline of an educational philosophy fundamentally motivated by a desire to create university contexts in which diverse learners feel themselves to be included, valued, and safe is offered. She captures the beliefs that underpin all the arguments advanced in the book as firstly, education can change lives; secondly, education never has been, and never can be, a neutral act; and thirdly, if the transformative power of education is accepted, and if evidence regarding the links that exist between type/quality/length of education and the length, quality, and even a fact of life is also accepted, then university educators are confronted with an unavoidable challenge. However, she cautions that education's transformative potential is not always realized in ways that advantage the full population. Interestingly, this write-up is the in-depth knowledge of the subject the author brings to bear and her privity to social injustices in various levels of education delivery. She argues that in many eras, and most communities, some groups have been denied access to even basic education or educated in ways that sought to position them into pre-determined, acceptable, socially, politically, religiously sanctioned roles linked to the differences among us. Rowan lamented that even these had been acknowledged above: gender, race, class, and religion; physical ability, geographical location, age, sexuality. The author echoed a statement by Einstein (1938) that "Everything that is really great, and inspiring is created by the individual who can labor in freedom."

In chapter two, the author introduces an argument that decisions that will impact upon who might/do benefit from any educational activity must emerge from conversations about the aims, purposes, and activities associated with higher education and, as well, analysis of the environments within which we work: even as the landscape changes, shifts, and evolves around us.

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This is remarkable because, in most higher education systems, especially those in the developing and underdeveloped where unequal access to education is rife, their systems seem to be guided by new public management (NPM). This management model advocates that the efficiency of higher education institutions could be improved by introducing management techniques and practices drawn mainly from the private sector. This seems to negatively impact most minority groups' attempts to access higher education, a social justice issue. The author later in the chapter outlines the key features of environments labeled as engaging, satisfying, rewarding, and high quality and focus on terms at the centre of many current university conversations such as student-centered learning, student engagement, and student satisfaction and explored these with reference to different sources of data. Regardless of how the term is understood, the author argues that student-centered learning is often positioned as oppositional to, a radical departure from, and fundamentally better than "traditional" or "teacher-centered" learning. She illuminates an important point that students are diverse, and there is no single mechanism that will ensure all students are engaged or inspired.

Chapter three extends the conversation on social justice in school settings by using the concept of educational paradox to investigate the kinds of decision-making processes associated with the production of learning environments that diverse learners perceive to be simultaneously hospitable but charged and bounded but open. Further in the chapter, Rowan explains how decisions relating to curriculum and pedagogy can directly impact the extent to which students from very different backgrounds feel themselves to be included, valued, and respected in a learning environment. She advocates that the ways academics can or should aspire to teach must be interpreted from a location that consistently returns to the foundational question: in whose interests do we labor? The chapter reminds readers that when key educational stakeholders bring issues of student satisfaction and student engagement to the fore, they must focus on the means through which an environment might be experienced, not by a kind of ideal, or assumed, "typical" learner, but by the actual diverse learners with whom we are working.

I appreciate the book's analysis of social justice in the university setting. In chapter four, the author outlines key features of learning environments that university students most commonly linked to the belief that their voices can be heard, valued, and supported, even as they are challenged to think critically about challenging and confronting curriculum materials. Throughout the book, the author demonstrates that students are most likely to actively engage in university learning environments

when they have access to materials that are intellectually charged, demanding, new, even strange and are guided through this material by teachers who are confident in their ability to create hospitable environments that are characterized by clear boundaries, high expectations, diverse forms of support, and opportunities for choice. He goes a step further by exploring some ways in which university educators can respond to the longstanding patterns of speech and silence within academic classrooms by reflecting on four further paradoxes outlined by Palmer (1998). The author re-emphasizes that all decisions made by an educator need to emerge from the understanding that students are diverse, and this diversity can shape interactions with content in powerful ways.

Chapter Five, which is the last chapter, focuses on the work teaching contributes to transformative educational agendas associated with the creation of educationally and socially just futures. The chapter further explores the extent to which the complex processes generally bundled together and labeled as "university teaching" or academic pedagogy are shaped by what might loosely be described as an academic's personality or produced through deliberate, theoretically informed decision-making. Throughout the book, the author constantly reminds academics to be cautious of the following questions: who/what is included or excluded? Who or what is valued/devalued? Who or what is celebrated or demonized? Who or what is naturalized or minoritized? Who or what is heard or silenced? If they are keen to ensure social justice in their universities. Rowan's book is a supreme intellectual achievement because it is challenging to isolate one outstanding chapter as each chapter is a replica of a tour de force. The only major criticism of this book is that the author seems to have - concentrated on students in her discussion of social justice in university settings and missed the opportunity to highlight the precarious working conditions, especially of teachers in the developing world social justice matter and fast worsening. This remark does not necessarily the book's contribution; rather, it's a clarion call to the academic community for further work on social justice.

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# **Trauma Centre Trauma-Sensitive Yoga in Indigenous Communities: A Review and Experiences from the Field**

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**Hannah Watler**

## **Land Acknowledgement**

I would like to start this article by giving acknowledgement to the territories I resided in while I completed this research. I would like to give thanks to the LheidliT'enneh First Nation and the We Wai Kai First Nation for allowing me to live and work on their land. I would like to acknowledge that I am a guest on these lands. My mother's side came from Scotland, Britain and Germany in the late 1800s to settle in the territory of the Anishinaabek Peoples of the Credit First Nation. On my father's side, I am a first generation Canadian from Jamaica with lineages to Ireland, Britain and West Africa.

## **Abstract**

Traumatic life events affect a significant percentage of the population. The effects of trauma and complex trauma can have lasting effects throughout one's lifespan. Mental health statistics show a grave disparity between Indigenous Peoples in Canada and non-Indigenous populations that mirror the impacts of intergenerational trauma. This report investigates some oppressive societal issues Indigenous Peoples face today, how yoga can be used as a tool to benefit one's mental health and gives an overview of experiences teaching Trauma Centre Trauma-Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY) within Indigenous communities.

## **Trauma Centre Trauma-Sensitive Yoga in Indigenous Communities:**

### **A Review and Experiences from the Field**

Mental health has become a major public health issue. The global prevalence rate of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is 20% (Maschi et al., 2012). Research reveals that in the United States, 3.6% of men and 9.7% of women may experience PTSD at some point in their

life (Gradus, 2020). Although mainstream talk therapy modalities can be useful, more options of therapeutic modalities are required. Modalities based on creating a mind and body connection can help to fill this gap in service and can provide a space for people to slowly regain control of their own lives (Follette & Vijay, 2008; Kempson, 2007; van der Kolk, 2006). Studies show that trauma-sensitive yoga can be an effective intervention for people who have experienced trauma. This report will investigate some oppressive societal issues Indigenous Peoples face today, how yoga can be used as a tool to benefit one's mental health and give an overview of experiences teaching Trauma Centre Trauma-Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY) within Indigenous agencies and communities.

### **Societal Oppression and Indigenous Peoples**

Many Canadians take pride in identifying as Canadian. They see Canada as a progressive country that adheres to the basic human rights of all of its citizens. Due to a continued colonialist history, Indigenous social issues must be taken into consideration to ensure a sustainable future for Indigenous communities.

### **Colonialist history and intergenerational trauma.**

To have a broader understanding of the issue of the overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples in government care, one has to acknowledge the history of Indigenous Peoples and the effects of colonization. Blackstock et al. (2004) explain that historically, Canada's Indigenous child welfare and education policies have been intertwined with assimilation practices. One example of this is the residential school system, which lasted longer than a century. The last school closed in Saskatchewan in 1996. During the most active period of the residential school system, there were 80 schools in operation (Cargo et al., 2003). While Indigenous children were attending these schools, children were not permitted to speak their own languages or practice their spiritual and cultural traditions (Blackstock et al., 2004), resulting in cultural genocide. Students were routinely restricted from communication and visits with their families and communities.

This extreme maltreatment and oppression continue to have long-lasting negative impacts on Indigenous people's mental health. This cycle of intergenerational trauma continues to exist today. In recent months, there have been findings in Canada of thousands of unmarked mass graves with student children's remains at residential school sites (Austen & Bilefsky, 2021). The genocidal tactics of the residential school system continue to have negative impacts on the mental health of Indigenous Peoples today.

There were and continue to be many other detrimental colonization practices (e.g., Cargo et al., 2003), such as placing a large number of Indigenous children in foster care along with assimilationist welfare policies that sparked the "60s Scoop." This initiative lasted about three decades, resulting in a large number of Indigenous children being placed in foster care (Cargo et al., 2003). The reasoning for these apprehensions appeared to be based upon Euro-centric values—based on unfounded beliefs that Indigenous parents could not provide a proper upbringing for their children (Cargo et al., 2003). Today, more Indigenous children are in foster care than there were in residential schools (Blackstock et al., 2004).

**Creating links between Indigenous Peoples, oppression, mental health, and suicide.** Suicide is considered one of the clearest indicators of oppression and social disruption among Indigenous communities in Canada (Kirmayer, 1994). Adelson (2005) explained that suicide in the Indigenous population directly results from a lethal mix of oppression, colonization, and intergenerational trauma. When considering Indigenous Peoples, it can be argued that "individuals suicide robs a people of their investment in the future and hope of passing on the culture to future generations" (Strickland

et al., 2006, p. 5). When considering the reasons for suicide, evidence of mental health disorders occurred in 81-95% of the cases (Kirmayer, 1994). Suicide amongst Indigenous Peoples is an emergency situation, as there is evidence of growing suicide rates in many of the Indigenous communities. Suicide accounts for approximately 38% of all deaths amongst Indigenous youths between the ages of 10-19 (Adelson, 2005).

Various studies identified risk factors specific for Indigenous Peoples. Some of the risk factors included: normalized suicidality, communication barriers, family factors, economics, federal government influence, and alcohol/substance abuse (Walls et al., 2013). A common thread throughout various types of research in relation to Indigenous Peoples appears to highlight an overarching theme of historical trauma and colonization. Alternatively, research shows that protective conditions such as strong cultural beliefs, supportive adults, friends who do well in school, and a sense of community assist in lowering the rates of suicide in this population (Strickland, 2011). In order to effectively address the increasing rate of suicide amongst Indigenous Peoples, programs must adopt an Indigenous wellness model. The model must be holistic, sustainable, and homegrown—embody what the people who will utilize it want.

Another issue facing Indigenous Peoples is the lack of sovereignty communities should have over their destiny. A study conducted in an Indigenous community with high suicide rates found the community knew the protective factors needed to reduce suicides. The community wanted, e.g., stronger cultural values and activities, economic development, tribal unity, opportunity to make contributions to the tribe (Strickland, 2011).

Research clearly showed that people in communities who are engaged in cultural reclamation programs have lower to absent suicide rates (Walls et al., 2013). In order to lower the rate of suicide amongst Indigenous Peoples, professionals need suicide prevention, mental health, and empowerment programs that are developed in collaboration with Indigenous communities. It is pivotal that these programs are based on traditions and culture with the incorporation of decolonial and holistic strategies.

### **Mental Health, Trauma and Complex Trauma**

Trauma can be defined as an event that is "extremely upsetting and at least temporarily overwhelms the individual's inner resources" (Telles et al., 2012, p.1). Although people experience trauma in different ways, it is generally characterized by the persistent re-experiencing of the traumatic event (intrusions), avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma, and

increased physiological arousal (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Although definitions vary for complex trauma (CT), the common theme of abusive interpersonal relationships runs through them. CT is defined as trauma that involves “repeated interpersonal trauma by caregivers in early life; and the emotional, behavioral, interpersonal, physiological, and cognitive functioning” (Greenson et al., 2001, p. 93). The interpersonal traumas experienced in CT could be classified as sexual, emotional, and physical abuse, neglect; loss; and witnessing domestic and community violence.

Complex trauma causes serious negative implications for human development across the lifespan. Studies showed that various developmental and cognitive aspects of human development are affected by trauma and can continue from childhood to adulthood (Williams, 2006; Gabowitz et al., 2008). Williams (2006) explained that CT could result in many mental health issues, including dissociation, arousal difficulties, anxiety, depression, and numbing. Gabowitz et al. (2008) explained that when considering adolescents in terms of behavior, trauma responses often involve acting-out, risk-taking, and self-destructive behaviors such as sexual promiscuity, substance abuse, dangerous re-enactment behavior delinquency, depression, withdrawn behaviors, and somatic complaints. From the literature, it is clear that trauma can impact all aspects of peoples’ lives.

**Trauma and its effects.** When exploring CT impacts, Nader (2011) revealed that traumatic events could interrupt brain development. Studies of neuroimages show that there is decreased functioning of the Broca’s area during exposure to trauma. This implies that verbal processing would be difficult for an individual who has experienced trauma, especially when aroused emotionally (Van der Kolk, 2000). In addition to the above, CT does not only have effects in younger age ranges, but it can also have lifelong effects such as PTSD, psychiatric disorders, chronic mental illness, and functional impairments (Gabowitz, 2008). Not only can the reactions to CT exposure last a lifetime, but its trauma symptoms can also be easily misdiagnosed.

**Incorrect diagnosis and impacts of complex trauma.** Mental health services are severely underfunded. My experience in working in this sector appears to be focused on crisis intervention instead of prevention. People who struggle with mental health issues and exhibit challenging behaviors often receive a misdiagnosis such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, anxiety, mood disorders, and eating disorders, to name a few. A misdiagnosis of CT by labeling behaviors ignores the overarching causal mechanism of CT (Gabowitz, 2008). This may result in

inappropriate mental health services, as it withholds the suitable treatment recommendations that one may need to embark on their healing journey.

PTSD directly affects the body as it can cause the impairment of the neuroendocrine systems by over activating the sympathetic nervous system and suppressing the parasympathetic nervous system; this causes an increased level of cortisol in the body and can directly result in feelings of stress and anxiety, both physically and mentally (Telles et al., 2012). If trauma and mental health issues are not taken seriously in childhood and adolescence, studies showed that the struggles people experienced may escalate and worsen during adulthood (Norton, 2011). When considering the literature and the effects CT has on the brain, it is clear that innovative therapeutic modalities are needed for people to access. Alternative therapies such as yoga are viable options.

### **Yoga in Practice**

**A brief outline of the history of yoga.** The practice of yoga has existed for thousands of years. It derives from Vedic philosophy. The principles of this philosophy are enshrined by *Patañjali*, the author of the *Yoga Sutras* (Iyengar, 2001). The yogic practice consists of eight limbs, which include universal ethical principles, self-restraint, physical forms, breathwork, quieting of the senses, concentration, meditation, and self-emancipation (Ross et al., 2013). Farhi (2005) explained that “yoga is a technology for arriving in this present moment. It is a means of waking up from our spiritual amnesia so that we can remember all that we already know” (p. 5). The practice of yoga has increased in the Western world across the past several decades (Wiener 2007). Yoga is an increasingly widely utilized therapeutic practice involving the breath, the body, and the mind.

**Yoga as an alternative therapeutic intervention.** Although creative and spiritual endeavors such as drama, music, art, and ritual have been used for centuries as healing methods, they have been highly disregarded in the professional realm of therapy until recently (Wiener, 2007). Alternative therapies such as dance, movement, art, and music therapy were adopted into Western therapy during the early 1900s (Degges-White & Davis, 2011). Therapists that utilize movement therapy attribute its benefits to the ultimate synchronization of the body and mind, which occurs when one moves their body with a particular consciousness.

Movement can be considered the primary language of the body (Halprin, 2003). When one moves the body, emotions and memories can surface. Therefore, how we move our bodies day to day tells a story about our lives and what emotions live inside of us, our habits and

patterns that serve or disable us. Therefore, when we become aware of this movement as an expression of our life experiences, body movement can become a tool for insight and change. Margolin (2014), who studied dance in relation to adolescent high school girls, revealed that:

Inner-directed movement is a sacred practice that can heal emotional wounds lodged in the body. When the body is attended with the ever-present openness to arising sensations, feelings, and images, and draw on to move and be moved from an inner wholeness, emotional and spiritual transformation occurs (p. 143).

Various theories support the healing properties of yoga with regards to Peoples' mental health. Alderian theory, for instance, states that individual psychology is an iterative theory that offers creative, socially focused, meaning-making, and growth-oriented strategies to heal (Degges-White & Davis, 2011). This theory offers a person-centered foundation as it ascertains that Peoples are unique and, therefore, have different needs. This perspective supports the practice of yoga.

Gestalt theory also supports alternative therapeutic interventions such as yoga. It outlines that "once the person in distress reconnects with his or her creativity through a deeper experiential awareness of the processes and stops resisting his or her connection to present awareness, the side effects (i.e., the client's symptoms) will begin to go away" (Degges-White & Davis, 2011, p. 134). This approach aims to foster the emergence of one's authentic being (Wiener, 2007). Yoga therapy focuses on increasing awareness and intentional interoceptive experiments to reconnect the spontaneity and interconnection of sensing, feeling, and movement.

**Yoga and mindfulness as an intervention for trauma.** The National Centre for Complementary and Alternative Medicine considers yoga a mind-body intervention (Frank et al., 2014). When utilized as a therapeutic intervention, the research illustrated that yoga could ultimately train the Peoples to increase perceived control and autonomy (Telles et al., 2012). Over the past few decades, many studies have shown that yoga has provided numerous benefits on physical, emotional, and mental health (e.g., Halsall et al., 2015; Kirkwood et al., 2005; Pilkington et al., 2005; Sherwood, 2008; Uebelacker et al., 2010). The above reigns true, especially with depression, anxiety, and PTSD (e.g., Ross et al., 2013).

Mindfulness-based practices can provide effective interventions for People experiencing a variety of mental

and physical health issues (Allen et al., 2006). The origins of the practice of mindfulness are based within Eastern philosophies, which date back to Hinduism and have large foundations in Buddhism (Baer, 2003; Folette et al., 2006). Mindfulness involves paying attention to the present experience in a nonjudgmental way (Goldsmith et al., 2014; Kabat-Zinn, 1994). By paying attention in this way, we attune to the present moment instead of being caught in external factors outside of ourselves or in our thoughts and emotions of the past or future (Huppert & Johnson, 2010). By being present, we are able to have a choice over how we respond to our day-to-day life instead of remaining on autopilot. Mindfulness, therefore, fosters an awareness of the present moment and a sense of acceptance.

Mindfulness involves the three main components of intention, attention, and attitude (Zoogman et al., 2014; Shapiro et al., 2006). When one incorporates mindfulness and trains their body to learn how to observe emotions, thoughts, and sensations in the body, they learn to remain engaged rather than dissociate. This awareness allows practitioners to invite a sense of curiosity, openness, and acceptance into clients' lives (Hofmann et al., 2010). The mechanisms of this practice (focusing one's attention, decentering, and emotional regulation) can decrease depressive and anxious rumination and result in calming and grounding effects (Huppert & Johnson, 2010; Zoogman et al., 2014).

Yoga and mindfulness are inextricably linked as yoga integrates the concept of mindfulness. During yoga practice, the key concepts of mindfulness are the basis of movement. By observing thoughts and focusing on breath during the yoga poses, practitioners continuously bring their attention back to what is happening in the present moment (Zoogman et al., 2014).

**Trauma sensitive yoga.** Trauma-sensitive yoga, which involves gentle postures, breath work, and meditation, has been shown to decrease stress, anxiety, and depression while improving coping skills and well-being and increasing trauma survivors' way of life (Butler & Waelde, 2008; Goldsmith et al., 2014). Furthermore, research (Goldsmith et al., 2014) has shown an increase in the sense of self-empowerment, self-acceptance, and self-care, as well as decreased reactivity and distress due to yoga and meditation. The physical postures of yoga poses may also allow people who experience symptomology from trauma to focus on the present moment, which develops a feeling of safety (Spinazzola et al., 2011).

There are specific styles of trauma-sensitive yoga. Trauma Centre Trauma-Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY) was researched and developed in response to trauma treatment studies conducted by the Centre for Trauma

and Embodiment located in Boston, Massachusetts. One of its main underpinnings is creating a space where participants can perhaps begin to practice making choices for their own bodies. This is done through invitational language and the language of inquiry. Using a curiosity-based mindset, this style of non-judgmental language opens up spaces for people to make choices within their own bodies if they so choose (Emerson et al., 2009).

**Neurobiological impact of yoga.** When considering brain function, recent research shows that practicing yoga poses increased brain GABA levels, which are low among people with PTSD (Spinazzola et al., 2011). Other studies illustrate that yoga works by down-regulating the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis and the sympathetic nervous system response to stress (Ross et al., 2013). The breathwork done in yoga has been shown to improve emotional regulation, modulate the sympathetic nervous system, and improve heart rate variability (Spinazzola et al., 2011). Due to the positive evidence yoga has provided in the realm of mental health, a growing number of interventions are being developed that integrate the body and the mind.

**People exposed to trauma and the therapeutic benefits of yoga.** Spinazzola et al. (2011) worked with people residing in residential treatment who experienced PTSD and showed that yoga positively impacts both the physical and mental well-being of trauma survivors. Yoga helps develop a more positive body image and helps ease the many overwhelming symptoms of PTSD. This study further revealed that yoga shows great potential. In fact, yoga,

*Plays an important role in helping shift chronically traumatized adolescents' relationship to their bodies from negligence, gross indulgence, numbing or self-harm toward the capacity to feel safe in and accepting of their bodies, to increase tolerance and regulation of painful affect states and behavior impulses, and to begin to identify, cultivate, and positively appraise physical competencies* (Spinazzola et al., 2011, p. 432).

That is, yoga can be used effectively to treat many symptoms of PTSD that people experience, such as anxiety, depression, and insomnia. In addition, studies have revealed that yoga can improve coping skills, stress management, overall quality of life, and emotional well-being (Goldsmith et al., 2014).

### **Learning Experiences from the Field**

The learnings outlined below came from my experiences counseling and facilitating TCTSY sessions during my clinical practicum at the Prince George Friendship Centre's Native Healing Centre and working as a counselor within Indigenous communities in Western Canada.

### **Trauma Centre Trauma-Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY)**

In the lectures I attended for TCTSY yoga training, my main learning was that one of the main components of complex trauma is the withholding of choice from the survivor. I learned that the purpose of trauma-informed yoga is to provide a safe place for people to start practicing choices and practicing a connection to their body in the present moment. When teaching trauma-informed yoga, I realized I must remember never to tell the people in my classes what to do. I must always offer the yoga forms as options and give people optional choices within the forms.

Sometimes it is difficult in yoga class to gauge whether or not clients are benefitting from the classes. When teaching TCTSY yoga classes at the Native Healing Centre, feedback from clients offered me some reflection. During yoga with the adult group I co-facilitated, some of the group members did not feel comfortable participating. I learned that it is essential to give people the option to participate in yoga, as it may not be a fit for everyone.

One of the adults in the group that participated in a yoga session disclosed that it was the most relaxed she had felt in a very long time. During my practicum, I also led a yoga group for teens. Some of the peoples' caregivers mentioned that the people started doing yoga at home and taught the caregivers how to do the forms. It became clear to me that some of the participants resonated with the practice of yoga and viewed it as a valuable intervention.

### **Anti-Oppressive Practices and Strength-Based Practice Teachings**

During my practicum and work with Indigenous communities in the field, I have learned that anti-oppressive practice is an imperative underpinning of ethical Social Work practice within Indigenous communities and Indigenous organizations. Dominelli explains that "oppression takes place in the social arena in the form of interactions between people. Consequently, oppression is socially constructed through people's actions with and behaviors towards others" (2002, p.9). I learned that as the larger society's model is oppressive, it is important to hold a space where people can have the freedom to define their own lives and make their own choices. I learned that it is important to carry this teaching in relationship with people from the micro to the macro level both nationally and internationally.

During my practicum, I did research on the strengths-based model and realized that historically, social work professionals saw their role as finding problems with their clients. At the basis of traditional models of social work is the belief that people need help because they have a problem to be fixed (Hammond, 2010). The problem-

solving approach saw problems as part of the human condition; this approach argued that people's inability to deal with problems was due to "the motivation to work on the problem in appropriate ways; the capacity to work on the problem in appropriate ways; the opportunity, whether of ways or means, to meet or mitigate the problem" (Early & Glen Maye, 2000, p. 121). This theory isolates and labels the client as having a problem (Hammond, 2010). The strengths-based practice model was developed to counteract the traditional model. This perspective argues that social workers must not view clients in terms of their deficits (Heinonen & Spearman, 2010).

During supervision with J. Mortenson, she questioned my use of the word "late." We discussed the social construct of time and the barriers that clients may face in getting to NHC in order to uphold strengths-based practice models. In my supervision sessions with Erin Anderlini, the strengths-based practice was a common theme that was discussed. When working with children in individual sessions, E. Anderlini stressed the importance of including the client's family as a way to reflect a strengths-based approach. She emphasized building on the family's strengths of what they already have in place.

The NHC does a great job keeping strengths-based practice at the core of their interactions with clients. For example, in order to track sessions with clients, counselors use a tool called a "Resiliency Map". This map is client-led and indicates the client's strengths and supports in all aspects of their life, such as school, friends, and family. These conversations and teachings added to my knowledge of strengths-based practice and inevitably enriched my personal practice.

### **Decolonization Teachings**

I learned that using decolonization practices in counseling and facilitating TCTSY is extremely important when practicing in Indigenous communities. In order for counselors to embody a decolonization practice, they must understand the historical and present-day traumas faced by Indigenous people (McKenna & Woods, 2012). Equipped with the knowledge of colonization, counselors must be cautious not to take a pan-Indigenous approach. They must remember that although colonization is a common experience, not everyone's experience is identical (Cox, 2008).

In addition, decolonization practice means looking to culture to guide a counselor's practice. My experience in this realm was interesting as I was a non-Indigenous person doing a practicum at an Indigenous agency. Although I have worked with and attended ceremonies in different Indigenous cultures, by no means do I hold

traditional knowledge? In order to meet the needs of future clients, if they express a desire to bring culture into their counseling sessions, I must be guided by their knowledge and by the traditional knowledge of Elders at the particular agency or community where I work.

Dr. Yellow Bird explains that decolonization begins "from the assumption that Indigenous Peoples have the power, strength, and intelligence to develop culturally specific decolonization strategies to pursue our own strategies of liberation" (2005, p.1). It is essential to keep this teaching at the crux of practice when working in Indigenous communities. As a non-Indigenous counselor working within Indigenous communities, I must ensure that the power is kept in the hands of the community. Ideas for mental health and wellness must come from the community instead of coming from a colonial top-down approach.

When working within Indigenous communities, TCTSY sessions and workshops are often requested. When they are requested, I ensure to involve the community in all the planning stages to ensure that proper cultural protocol is followed. Of course, every community is different, so it is important to enquire what the specific community or individual would like for their session. For example, some communities may want an Elder or a cultural healer present; some may want mental health supports available; some may like a prayer or opening done before a session and a closing at the end. To ensure that power is shared, an anti-oppressive and decolonial model is followed. It is important to enquire, collaborate and follow community lead.

### **Practical Implications**

Throughout my experiences in the field, I learned that it is essential to understand the potential effects that colonization and genocide have had on the lives of the people I will be working with. It is imperative for me to remain cognizant of intergenerational trauma as a potential risk factor but to also remember the resiliency and strength of the people with whom I will work.

As I do not have Indigenous heritage, it is important for me to recognize this and ask questions as needed when working in this area. When appropriate, it is essential to consult with traditional knowledge holders. In order to uphold a decolonial mindset, I must learn about the unique cultures of the people I work with. I must always remain curious and uphold a strengths-based approach.

### **Conclusion**

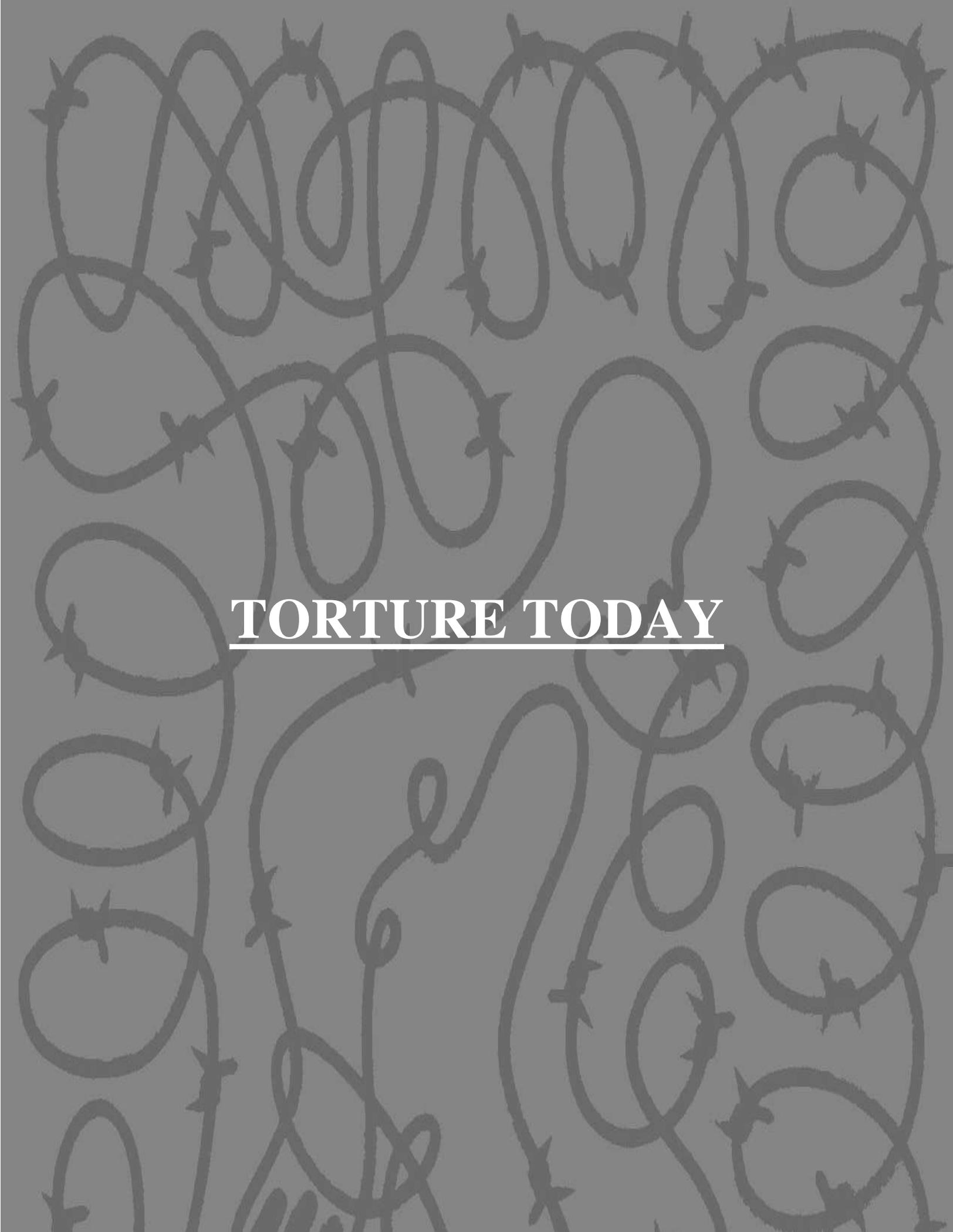
The literature review gave an overview of relevant information regarding continued societal oppression, Indigenous mental health, and trauma-informed yoga. Lastly, it outlined my major learnings facilitating TCTSY

during my practicum and work within Indigenous communities. The literature review pointed out a grave disparity between the health determinant statistics of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. Through this disparity, it is clear that Indigenous Peoples face systemic oppression on a daily basis. When considering people who have experienced trauma, alternatives to talk therapy must be developed and offered as potential therapeutic options, as talk therapy isn't a viable option for all. Through my experiences working with Indigenous communities, it is clear that TCTSY could potentially provide an effective alternative therapeutic option.

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**TORTURE TODAY**

# World Refugee Day

Refugee day reminds me of countless family separations  
Of borders that were more valued than human lives  
It reminds me of numerous tragedies, losses, and displacements  
Uncertainty, denial, the supremacy of one nation over another  
Privilege, the children and women that were drowned on their way to a safer country  
It reminds me of my people who sold out their belongings to make it to safe countries  
Not many of them made it to their final destinations as they pictured in their minds  
Some lost their lives, some were deported, and maybe a few lucky ones reached to so-called final destinations  
Whenever I hear the word refugee, I recall the stories of people who were trapped in refugee camps with limited service  
A young mother who had to leave her husband and her children's miles away  
A family member who is yearning for a reunion with their loved ones  
Of refugees who willingly shared her/his story to empower and enrich other people lives  
The people and communities coming together to make the world a better place  
Looking forward to a day where discriminatory policy is removed from the system

The laws and rules that politicians came up with for specific religion and race  
The cherry-picking systems  
The ongoing disasters  
The detention centers  
The surplus amount of money put towards deportation  
I remember six years innocent stylish, Nida, five years Baharakarimi, three Afghanistan refugees who were raped in Iran  
The people who have been in refugee camps for years without any clear decision  
The people who felt like they were refugees in their Own Homelands  
Because they look different, speak a different language, and practice a different religion  
On the other hand, refugee day reminds me of resiliency, strength, perseverance, hard work, patience  
Of people who spoke up on behalf of other refugees to question the favoritism in the system  
Of refugees who made history in sports, science, and parliament despite the limited service  
No one is forced to flee their countries for the better future  
No one is compelled to leave their families and loved ones behind in the hope of a brighter future

## **Fatima Haidari**

*This poem is dedicated to all refugees and Hazara Refugees who escaped Hazara Genocide from Afghanistan and Pakistan. Yet, they have been trapped in refugee camps for years with no to very limited human rights because they are not seen as vulnerable enough to be resettled.*



# The View from Sheikh Jarrah: Accounts from East Jerusalem and Palestine during 2021

**Kirsty Le Grice**

This paper is the personal account of an expat living in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah during the escalating violence that led to a war in May 2021. It explains the context that caused tensions to boil over and what I witnessed happening in the area during that time.

Throughout this paper, I draw on my first-hand experiences as a resident of Sheikh Jarrah and also from conversations with neighbors, friends, and colleagues, news stories, and social media – all of which shaped my experience. My observations are limited to the factual account of an observer, and this paper does not attempt an analysis or conclusions about the significance of events.

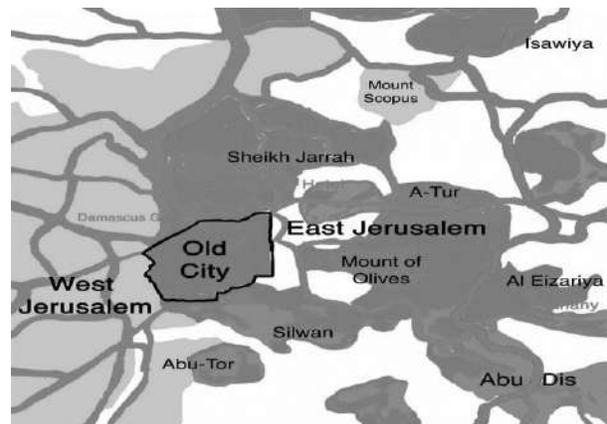
Sheikh Jarrah hit global headlines earlier this year, as problems in East Jerusalem spiraled out of control and resulted in an 11-day war between Israel and Hamas. This political party rules the Gaza strip part of the Palestinian territories.

International news stories<sup>1</sup> may have moved on since the bombing stopped. Still, the problems here are just as grave as ever, and many fear that more violence and the unnecessary loss of life are inevitable unless a dramatic change takes place.

Sheikh Jarrah is an affluent neighborhood in East Jerusalem that sits little more than a kilometer from Jerusalem's Old City. It is home to wealthy Palestinian families, and most of the diplomatic missions have their consulates here. I have lived in the area for over two years now. I have observed daily the injustice and inequality that prevails as a result of the Israeli occupation.

The geography is complicated and needs some explanation. Technically, East Jerusalem is part of the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs), but the Palestinian Authority (PA) has no jurisdiction here, and a single Israeli city municipality governs both the East and the West side of the city albeit with considerable differences in investment. In the Palestinian parts of the city, there is poor street lighting, potholes in the roads,

uneven sidewalks, and rubbish collection centres around open skips on the street.



The complicated governance arrangements cause deeper problems that prevent change. A recent example of which, was seen during 2021 in the plans for Palestinian elections. The PA President Mahmoud Abbas, who has served for more than 15 years, announced he would hold the first elections since 2005 in May 2021. Abbas claimed, however, that Israel was preventing plans for Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem to vote, and he canceled the elections. To exclude Jerusalem residents would set a precedent that East Jerusalem was no longer part of Palestine. However, for many Palestinians, canceling the elections was a bitter disappointment that robbed them of the hope of change.

After more than a year of Covid-19 restrictions, tensions that had lain largely dormant during 2020 bubbled up voraciously in Spring 2021, and Ramadan celebrations gave an outlet for these frustrations. During Ramadan, it is customary for Muslims to travel to Jerusalem in large numbers to pray at the Al Aqsa Mosque compound and to celebrate in the city in ways that the police try to control, such as by gathering after the fast is broken in the evenings and on Friday afternoons after the lunchtime prayers.

<sup>1</sup> [Israel-Gaza: A conflict on pause as both sides claim victory - BBC](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-57218428) [https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-57218428 News](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/15/world/middleeast/israel-palestinian-gaza-war.html); <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/15/world/middleeast/israel-palestinian-gaza-war.html>



Palestinians are well used to having all aspects of their lives controlled and restricted. Still, these everyday injustices become more poignant during Ramadan when they impact the expression of religious faith.

Damascus Gate has always been a natural focal point for crowds to gather after the fast is broken in the evening, but at the start of Ramadan (which fell on April 12th this year), the area was fenced off to prevent people from gathering there. Violent clashes occurred over several nights, with reports that far-right Jewish extremists were coming to the area to fight with Palestinians. Several videos circulated on social media of Jews being assaulted by Palestinians, and religious tensions escalated dramatically in a matter of days.

The police liberally used tear gas, skunk spray, stun grenades, and rubber-coated bullets during these clashes to disperse crowds. On April 22<sup>nd</sup> alone, over 100 casualties were reported in the city, but thankfully, no one was killed. The next morning, Sheikh Jarrah was unrecognizable to me. Huge rocks lay strewn across the roads, several skips were still smoking, and the horrible smell of the unique Israeli invention - skunk spray - hung in the air.

I was fascinated (and a little horrified) to learn that this secret mix, supposedly organic, could linger for months and had been used by Israel as a punishment as well as a crowd dispersal technique. It has been used liberally by Israeli forces in Palestinian areas since 2008 and appears to cause maximum disruption without any long-term medical effects<sup>2</sup>. After that day, the large white skunk lorry with its huge jet sprays became a common sight in Sheikh Jarrah, and friends saw it being used liberally without any apparent provocation or violence from protestors. Despite not being physically dangerous, it felt inhumane and an attack on human dignity.

The mood on the streets had changed, and there was a heavy police presence everywhere. Israeli police were always heavily armed and were often in full riot gear, but

now they had taken up position on every street corner, with guns poised. People eyed each other suspiciously, and I now felt less confident to walk on the streets, afraid of being mistaken for an Israeli settler and attacked. Around this time, the epicenter of tension moved from the Old City up to a street in Sheikh Jarrah.

Back in 1956, 28 Palestinian families that had been forced from their homes in Jaffa and other areas had been provided with houses in Sheikh Jarrah by the United Nations Refugee organization (UNRWA). These families now faced the imminent threat of eviction from their homes for over 50 years.

The legal case for their eviction hinged on the fact that they were never given owners' rights over the UNRWA housing, and Jewish families were now claiming historic rights to the land. The case had dragged on for years but had reached crunch time for six families who were nearly at the end of the legal challenge process. On a guided walk of the area to learn about the issue, we were told that the last time Palestinian families were evicted to make way for Israeli settlers, they had lived for six months on the sidewalk opposite their house. It was only the approaching winter and the threat of violence from the gun-wielding occupiers that forced them to move on. We stood under the fig tree that was their home for half a year, awe-struck at the injustice.

From the start of May 2021, nightly protests took place in the area. They always started when the Ramadan fast was broken around 7.30 pm, and at this time, sirens started wailing, and the loud bang of stun grenades would reverberate around the neighborhood without fail.

Something new was happening in Jerusalem that those who lived through it felt different from previous uprisings. Young people were self-organizing and were taking to the streets in large numbers to call for justice. There was a vacuum of political leadership, and the grassroots were driving events.

Social media had moved on dramatically since the last time there was a major uprising (the 'second intifada' between 2000-2005). Events were now being captured live on Tok-Tok, Instagram, and Twitter and streamed worldwide. The [#savesheikhjarrah](https://www.instagram.com/savesheikhjarrah) hashtag started to go viral and gained attention around the world. Several young people like the twins Mohammed and Muna El-Kurd, whose family home sat at the centre of the eviction case in Sheikh Jarrah, became local celebrities with an international media following.

During this time, the police tolerance for peaceful protest seemed to evaporate. Every night, the protests that started peacefully ended in reports of people being deliberately

<sup>2</sup> [Who, What, Why: What is skunk water? - BBC News](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-34227609), <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-34227609>

hit with stun grenades as they tried to run away and people losing their eyes to rubber bullets. Hundreds were injured.

On May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021, we drove through the area around 7.30 pm, and the first people we saw were a group of young women, aged around 18, who were identically and conservatively dressed in what looked like a school uniform. They all wore white headscarves and long coats, and they were singing. Meanwhile, a few feet away, police stood shoulder to shoulder in full riot gear. Were these young women posing a threat that needed such a violent response?

By May 10<sup>th</sup>, the violence and instability reached a new level. Throughout the day, the police had been trying to prevent Muslims from praying at the Al Aqsa Mosque, which led to clashes within the Holy compound and at several sites across the city. It was Jerusalem Day, and Israel was preparing for a nationalist show of strength. The day marked the 'reunification of Jerusalem when Israel occupied the East (Palestinian) side in 1967. It was a humiliating display in normal years where Israeli Nationalists were invited to march through the Old City waving flags. I was incredulous that plans for the march to enter through Damascus Gate and head towards the Al Aqsa compound had been given consent to proceed by Israeli authorities despite their highly inflammatory nature.

Streets started being closed around lunchtime, and we were told to collect our kids early from school and to stay indoors for the afternoon. At 6 pm, violence and rioting were still quite widespread, but something very unexpected happened. Sirens started sounding across Jerusalem to signal that the city was under the attack of rocket fire. All new buildings in Israel must have an 'earthquake proof' room, and most older ones have identified stairwells or other safe places for emergencies.

Hamas was firing the rockets out of Gaza. Hamas has been the ruling political party in Gaza since they won the elections in 2006. This has caused division within Palestine as the political party Fatah rules the West Bank areas. The EU, the UK, and several other countries have designated Hamas as a terrorist organization using violence. For many people, that is the only sentence they need to hear to make their minds up about who the aggressor was in this situation. Those seeking to defend Hamas might say that it has little option than to resort to force to draw international attention to the severity of the situation within Gaza and across Palestine.

Gaza is essentially an open-air prison where over two million people have been locked into an area that is only 365 square kilometers big, making it the third most densely populated place in the world. All people and

supplies in and out are strictly controlled by Israel, resulting in a severe humanitarian crisis.

Israel is very well trained in intercepting rocket fire and of the six rockets fired on Jerusalem on May 10<sup>th</sup>, only one landed, in the nearby town of Abu Ghosh, 14km outside of Jerusalem. Over the next 11 days, Israel began a bombardment of Gaza, and Hamas continued to fire thousands of rockets into Israel. Tel Aviv came under frequent rocket fire, and serious disruption was caused across the country.

The war lasted for 11 days, and in Gaza, 242 Palestinians, including 66 children, were killed. At least 129 of those killed were found to be civilians. In Israel, 12 people were killed, of which two were children, and all but one was civilians.

During this time, whenever I spoke to my Palestinian friends and colleagues, I asked them how they felt. Inevitably, there was a range of emotions, but one of the strongest amongst those I spoke to was anger. They felt that Hamas' intervention had lost them the moral high ground and helped the Israeli state to justify its response. News reporting focused on Hamas as a terrorist group, giving weight to Israel's argument that they were acting in justifiable self-defense. Some people I spoke to were pleased that Hamas was finally standing up for them and creating fear within Israel, but even those pleased saw this as a small compensation for the hardships they continued to suffer under Israeli occupation. Everyone felt devastated that the Palestinians in Gaza would be made to pay the highest price. The high level of civilian fatalities added to Israel's delayed commitment to a cease-fire was evidence of this.

Another highly unexpected thing that happened during the 11-day war was that Israel was on the brink of a full-scale civil war. As well as Palestinians in the West Bank coming out to protest in solidarity with Gaza, people gathered in protests across Israel. Sometimes this has taken the form of Arab Israelis (Palestinians by another name) protesting that they were treated as second-class citizens within Israel or unprovoked religious attacks on Jews and Muslims. Violence was especially high around Haifa and Akko, where there is a large Muslim population.

Social media was awash with videos of a stabbing here, a lynching there, and a person shot dead, a mass riot, shops and buildings being torched, and it felt dangerously out of control. Almost everyone I spoke to during this time, both within the local Palestinian community and the international residents, felt afraid to speak their native language in public, with some preferring not to leave their house. There was a feeling that Israel was so focused

on maintaining the 'war' with Gaza that they had taken their eye off the ball in maintaining order elsewhere.



In Sheikh Jarrah, events had become more serious. After Ramadan ended on May 12th, the protests started gathering earlier in the day, and on Friday, May 14th it was reported that armed Israeli settlers were arriving by the busload in the neighborhood and were marauding around brandishing their weapons. The police had also started using live ammunition at this time, and a car-rammage incident in Sheikh Jarrah led to the driver being shot dead at the scene.

People became deeply depressed about the hatred that had surfaced and the deep wounds that had been allowed to fester. No one was confident that the police would take action against the settlers, and the situation felt lawless and out of control. This had been the experience of Palestinians for decades, and the tragedy for them was greater because the international community, the UK, the countries of the EU – those same people like myself, with the nice apartments in Sheikh Jarrah - did not do enough to challenge this.

On April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Human Rights Watch had issued a 213-page report which examined Israel's treatment of Palestinians and concluded that there was strong evidence that Israel was committing crimes against humanity of apartheid and persecution<sup>3</sup>. This was most severe in the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem. It was not the first time the term 'apartheid'

had been coined to describe the situation here. Still, the detailed report<sup>4</sup> gave a thorough analysis of the legitimacy of the claim by providing a legal and evidence-based case compiled over many years.

All eyes had been on President Joe Biden and the new US administration<sup>5</sup> to condemn Israel's excessive use of force, but they instead meekly endorsed the approach. Most of my friends living in Sheikh Jarrah, some who worked for diplomatic missions or other NGOs, felt helpless and ashamed that their governments were not doing more. It was so painfully clear to those of us on the ground that this was not a 'fair' war, that these were not two sides of a conflict, but instead the tightening noose of an occupation that politicians around the world chose not to stop. Their politicians back home cared more about preserving diplomatic relations with Israel than they did about challenging inequality, and that has been a bitter pill to swallow.

When the cease-fire with Gaza came on May 21st, it was hollow. More innocent people had been senselessly murdered, and Palestinians were no closer to securing their freedom. The hope that this would be the catalyst to break the cycle of oppression seeped away as the following weeks and months passed. Sheikh Jarrah has been much calmer on the ground, but all of the conditions that caused unrest to remain and the future of the families at the centre of the eviction cases remains unresolved. It is also not unique with 85 families from the nearby Palestinian village of Silwan, just outside the Old City walls also facing calls to leave or demolish their homes.

As 2021 marches on, those that have seen the devastating injustice of the Israeli occupation of Palestine first-hand wonder how the world can continue to turn a blind eye to such blatant human rights abuses. It is clear that the story is not over yet and will not be over until everyone living within Jerusalem, Israel, and Palestine can enjoy the same rights to live free from oppression.

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<sup>3</sup> [Abusive Israeli Policies Constitute Crimes of Apartheid, Persecution | Human Rights Watch \(hrw.org\)](https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/04/27/abusive-israeli-policies-constitute-crimes-apartheid-persecution), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/04/27/abusive-israeli-policies-constitute-crimes-apartheid-persecution>

<sup>4</sup> [Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution | HRW](https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution>

<sup>5</sup> [Joe Biden feels political ground shift as Israel-Gaza conflict rages on | Biden administration | The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/may/16/joe-biden-feels-political-ground-shift-as-israel-gaza-conflict-rages-on), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/may/16/joe-biden-feels-political-ground-shift-as-israel-gaza-conflict-rages-on>

## **Victims of Christchurch Mosques Tragedy**

**Hanif Quazi**

Our Martyrs, Our Heroes, our thoughts are with the victim families of the Christchurch tragedy. They are passing through extreme grief and sorrow this week. Those injured have untold stories of extreme hardship and uncertainty. Allah (SWT) may bestow Thy grace and may grant them Shifa (Health) and Taskeen-e-Qalb (peace of mind). Alhamdulillah (Thanks to Almighty Allah) that we are believers. Whatever happens, it happens only with the leave of Allah (SWT).

To illustrate the belief, I wish to relate the following historical facts about Masjid Al-Noor in Christchurch. I am personally a witness, but the story is strictly about Our Martyrs, Our Heroes.

In 1982, when the project of Masjid Al-Noor was conceived, there were only four families and one bachelor Muslim residing permanently in Christchurch. The rest of the 267 Muslims (1981 Census of Population) were students at the University of Canterbury and Lincoln College. Two Saudi Trainee Medical Doctors worked at Christchurch Hospital. One of the doctors was very resourceful, raising donations for the project in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The small Muslim Community



collected \$700,000 to build a state-of-the-art Masjid at the rims of Hagley Park in the heart of the city, which the Late Dr. Mohammad Ali Kittani, Director-General IFSTAD, used to call Christ-Church-Mosque. While granting permission, The Riccarton Borough Council debated the Fajr Azan (dawn prayer call) with loudspeakers and obtained the neighbors' consent.



I went around asking permission from neighbors in the street behind Plot No. 101 on Deans Ave. All the neighbors were very graceful, especially an elderly lady saying, 'I am looking forward to the day, the Dome and Minaret of the mosque will brighten the horizons of my house.' To the members of the Borough, we conveyed that we will not call to prayers from the Minaret using the loudspeaker till the whole of Riccarton become Muslim. The Christchurch press published a feature article, 'City Mosque will promote understanding of Islam' (January 30, 1985, Fig.1). More than 200 members of the public turned up to plant a Maple tree symbolizing great blessings and a peaceful retreat (Fig.2).

The terrorist dashed our dreams. The whole society is in pain and is grieving. But the 'Call to prayer' was relayed on loudspeaker from the podium in front of Masjid Al-Noor that was heard by the entire world. On reflection, the destiny of 'Azan-Call to prayers' from Masjid Al-Noor to be heard across the globe was inscribed in 1982. The victims sacrificed their lives for the glorious call of 'Allah o Akbar' (Allah is Great). May Allah (SWT) accept

the sacrifices of the victims with may lighten the pains of the injured and may help their families to endure the sufferings (Aameen).

For the Muslim Community, our role model and our guide are our beloved Prophet (SWA). We would plead with our brothers and sisters in Islam to heed the Holy Quran's teaching, Surah Al-Nahl, 16: 125-128.

[Call thou to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and good admonition, and dispute with them in a better way. Surely thy Lord knows very well those who have gone astray from His way, and He knows very well those who are guided. And if you chastise, chastise even as you have been chastised; yet assuredly, if you are patient, it is better for those patients. And be patient yet is thy patience only with the help of Allah. And do not sorrow for them, nor be thou straitened for what they devise. Surely Allah is with those who are God-fearing and good doers.] Our Martyrs, our heroes, will on the Day of Judgment be rocking on the throne of dignity in the presence of Allah (SWT) - Surah Yasin verse 55. Insha Allah.



## Inside with Eldra Jackson III

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### Leila Johnson

Currently, the United States incarcerates more people per capita than any other country in the world (Statista, 2021). In mid-2020, there were 1.8 million people confined to a jail or prison in the United States (Kang-Brown, et al 2021). This is triple (Calabrese, 2010) the number of people since the 1980s and includes a staggering 775% increase in the number of women (Sentencing Project, 2018). The rise of incarcerated people begins with disproportionate police contact with African Americans (Sentencing Project, 2018). The ongoing systemic racism and dehumanization inside the criminal justice system fuels recidivism.<sup>1</sup> These practices traumatize individuals and their families and need to be seen as a collective issue. As Mika' ilDeVeaux, Sociologist at the City University of New York, argues, prisons are a site for trauma, and "the condition of a person returning to their communities should be of great public concern because the environment in which people are confined affects the psychological condition in which they return" (DeVeaux, 2013).

The following interview reflects on the personal experiences and recovery of Eldra Jackson III, who served 24 years of a life sentence, recognizing that incarceration is perhaps, by its design, not just traumatic but a system of torture. Mr. Jackson is now the Co-Executive Director of a non-profit organization that helps empower system-impacted people, leading change from within and providing opportunities for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people to heal and serve themselves and others. They are committed to reducing recidivism and all forms of violence - physical, emotional, and psychological - within the American prison system and their communities through peer-to-peer support.

Trigger Warning: This contribution is transparent and discusses certain opinions and experiences of prison life; some language and content may not be suitable for all readers.

**Voices Against Torture:**<sup>2</sup>Hello, Eldra. It's a great honor and pleasure to connect with you today; thank you.

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<sup>1</sup>*recidivism*: a tendency to relapse into a previous condition or mode of behavior *especially*: relapse into criminal behavior. Recidivism means literally "a falling back" and usually implies "into bad habits." It comes from the Latin word *recidivus*, which means "recurring," Cited by *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/recidivism>. Accessed 4 Aug. 2021

<sup>2</sup> Leila Johnson is a Member Editorial Board VAT

**Eldra Jackson III:** Most welcome, thank you.

**VAT:** Ok, let's get right to it. One understanding of torture can be thought of as "violence against you by the very institutions that are supposed to protect you (schools, hospitals, police, military) because of who you are" (VAST, 2021). How would you say that the prison system at large falls into this definition?

**EJ:** Torture in the American and Californian prison system begins with segregation. It starts with forcing the idea that people are different. They perpetuate the division with rules and guidelines. Literally, the administration uses the term classification. You are classified. And in that classification, it's sort of like a cattle auction. You go through and, you know, classified by age, by background, by race, by county of origin. And you're placed into cells or communities based on those categories. If you're black, you go over here. If you're white, you go over there. If you're Hispanic, you go over there. If you're anything other than those three, like Indigenous Peoples, East Indians, or Asiatic descent, you are labeled *Other*. There are only four labels. It's Black, White, Hispanic, and Other. And those are the labels that you carry for the duration. And it can be deadly for me, you, or anybody else. If you fail to adhere to these classifications if you fail to adhere to this system, it doesn't matter where you come from, what your background is — you could have been raised in the most communal *Pollyanna-ishShangri-La* on the face of the planet — but once you walk into the prison system, you are re-introduced to racism, and you have to participate in this system that is reinforced by the system. It's about dehumanizing you and the other. That is the beginning of torture.

Then the isolation tactics. One is already isolated from society. It's supposed to be 23 hours in *the hole*<sup>3</sup> but often goes more than 24 hours—even 3-4 days of not getting out to have a shower. Pelican Bay State Prison, the supermax<sup>4</sup> facility in California, utilizes intense sensory deprivation; windows are fogged over, you can't tell if it's daylight or nighttime—this is also a form of torture.

**VAT:** Why can't you see outside the windows?

**EJ:** Depending on the level of prison that you're at. If you're in administrative segregation issue or some supermax prison, then there's a window in the back of the cell that is maybe four inches by four feet, and it's frosted over from the outside. There's like white paint or something on the outside of the window. Looking out of that window, it always looks the same, whether it's midnight or it's high noon. And then everything on the interior of these maximum-security buildings faces inside, so you don't see outside.

Correctional authorities have studied prisoners of war and war techniques, such as the Viet Cong, in their sensory deprivation tactics and techniques that they used to abuse. You know, you've got folks that have been in isolation in these administrative segregation units or SHUs<sup>5</sup> for decades. People are in these security housing units suffering from sensory deprivation, where they don't see the sun, and their human interaction is slim to none for 20, 30, 40 years.

A lot of those folks are doing life, but not everybody. So, you have folks that are released directly from that environment. There's no step-down. There's no reintegration. You walk out of prison, and that's what you walk into society from—so now the sun is beaming, is shining down on you. You haven't seen it in 10, 15, 20 years. You're around crowds of people, you know, expected to show up to appointments, get on a bus, you know, going to Wal-Mart, buy your toiletries and things like that. And folks are suffering from now sensory overload. You know, from all of the voices, all of the people, all of the jostling around and bumping into you. And it can be ...horrendous.

For somebody to be thrust into something like that all of a sudden, told and expected to conform and function in a way that is acceptable, without the knowledge or the skillset or having time to decompress would be like taking a caveman, out of the deepest, darkest caves of the Caucasus Mountains from way back in 2000 B.C. and then thrusting them into Burning Man.

**VAT:** Were you in the hole more than once?

**EJ:** Yes, I was in the hole several times. Multiple occasions.

**VAT:** How did you survive that?

**EJ:** I knew it was a system that was designed to break people. I watched people break, folks who reached their breaking points and who turned into other people or committed suicide. I was always somebody who was too stubborn to be broken, or at least that's what I believed. You know, I had the mental capacity to convince myself, to not allow myself to be broken, not like this. And so, a coping mechanism that I utilized was to steel myself against that, to learn to detach in a way from certain parts of my own humanity. To be able to not just survive but thrive, I learned to cut off my feelings—don't care about things, don't feel certain things, let certain things go. Be able to just be cold. Any sort of longing or desire, those are the sorts of things that can be crushed; those are the sorts of fires that can be extinguished or used against you.

So, it was best to either not have those things or to hide and bury those things away so deeply that there was no flicker for anybody on the outside to catch the glimmer and grab hold. So, what I did, I guess, as I say it out loud, is I learned to exist right there on edge, not quite dead, but not quite alive, kind of like in a holding pattern of the underworld.

**VAT:** What I hear you say is, you recognized different parts of yourself, and it sounds like it was an empowering and conscious choice on what you brought forward?

**EJ:** Which parts can handle this, and which parts may not be able to handle this.

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<sup>3</sup>*The hole*: few prison systems use the term “solitary confinement,” instead referring to it as “punitive segregation,” “administrative segregation,” “disciplinary segregation” or, also known as “the hole” because its location is often under the prison’s first floor, Solitary Watch, <https://solitarywatch.org/facts/faq/>

<sup>4</sup> *supermax*: at least 44 states and the federal system now have supermax prisons, which are generally composed solely of solitary confinement cells, Solitary Watch, <https://solitarywatch.org/facts/faq/>

<sup>5</sup> *SHUs*: in California, long-term solitary confinement units are referred to as Security Housing Units (SHUs), Solitary Watch, <https://solitarywatch.org/facts/faq/>

**VAT:** I've also heard you mention how you practiced a kind of mindfulness, exteroception awareness based on the movements of the prison and as a way of figuring out the time?

**EJ:** They have three watches; the first watch begins at 10:00 p.m., second begins at 6:00 a.m., third begins at 2:00 p.m. And you can tell when they're getting ready to switch watches because you can hear the buzz of the door open and then the guy or girl in the gun tower letting their relief in. And then you can hear, you know, the weight of the belts and all of the equipment that they're using, changing it and swapping it out, checking the guns and releasing a live round from the chamber of the rifle to make certain that it's ready to go. You can tell when the officers are walking down the tier, passing out mail, whether they've done this before or just after the count. Everybody in the state is getting locked down at the same time because they have a 5:00 p.m. count that has to clear in each prison statewide.

What you got to do is watch the movements of the prison, watch the movements of the guards, watch the movements of this little ecosystem, and that informs. When the guards walk, I know, *OK, they just passed down the mail*. They came on at 2:00 p.m. for the third watch; they've got to come to get debriefed on what happened on the first two watches. Then they get everything together and unlock the slots. It's 2:45 pm. They'll come back around, open up the slots and pass out the mail. We got 30 minutes to do whatever you need to do before they hit the tier again because they'll be back at four o'clock count. Boom, they're done until count clears statewide, and then you hear a horn go up boom. Anywhere between 4:45 pm and 5 p.m. If the horn doesn't go off between 4:45 and 5 pm, that means somewhere in the state, and the count is fucked up. That horn won't go up until all of the nearly 40 prisons and camps across the state have cleared and everything has been called into a central location in Sacramento. Boom, that horn goes up. OK, now they're getting ready to start letting people out to go to work, go to chow halls, and things like that.

**VAT:** You've spoken to me before of another form of assault being utilized in prisons based on food restrictions.

**EJ:** Another form of assaulting the senses is what we call *the dog food diet*. This is something that's promoted and perpetuated by the system. It comes in like a dog food bowl and is just enough to keep an individual alive. The mash-up is like a loaf, I want to say meatloaf, but that's not what it is. You know, if you were to serve a dog meal out of a can, that's what it looks like. It's supposed to have

all of your nutrients blended up into it. And it's served twice a day, once in the morning, once in the evening, as long as you are on the dog food diet — anywhere from 72 hours to over a week. They send medical personnel around to check your vitals. So, if it's supposed to have all of the nutrients to keep me alive, and to keep me functioning, and to keep me healthy, why do you need to check my blood pressure and check my heart rate on a regular basis around the clock?

I still don't know why they do that, but what that tells me is that something here is amiss. Something about this can hurt me, and they know this —they don't go around checking anybody else's vitals while they're having breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Why is it that someone who's on this dog food diet has to have their vitals checked on a regular eight-hour cadence by medical personnel?

**VAT:** So, just to be clear, this dog food diet is actually used as a way of punishment and control?

**EJ:** Yes. A particular form of discipline. And they're very forthcoming; *if we don't like X, Y or Z now we're going to punish you and give you this shit*. Yes, you piss them off because you committed some act, you broke some rule violation — and usually, it has something to do with an alleged assault, or you did something to tick off the wrong officer. If somebody in power deemed you to be particularly disruptive, *we're finding you guilty* — and as a part of your punishment, you will lose this sensory privilege.

They're not just doing this with people over 18; I've seen this in juvenile halls. This goes on in youth prisons and detention facilities as well. I started doing time when I was 14 years old. I've seen this punishment from juvenile hall all the way up through the CDC [California Department of Corrections].

**VAT:** BJ Miller, the renowned palliative care physician, who has served as an Executive Director of the San Francisco's *Zen Hospice Project*, once said, "as long as we have our senses, we can still feel human." As you know, I just supported my mother's end-of-life, and in that experience, I witnessed the ultimate breakdown and loss of her senses and the challenging process of having fewer and fewer choices....*death*. And now, as I pause on what you just said, these institutions by this perspective — the lack of humanism, the extreme lack of choice-making, and by controlling the felt experience of the senses are indeed ways of inflicting a kind of death upon a person.

**EJ:** If this model is built on depriving one of their senses, what is that doing to the feeling of being human? If I'm depriving you of the ability to connect to your human senses and all of the auditory and other feeling sensations that go along with being human; if I place you in a position or a system that is designed to deprive you of that, then I'm in essence depriving you of your humanness.

**VAT:** I've heard stories where all of a sudden someone will be told they have to pack up and move to another part of the prison, losing his/her established community and, again, the locus of control feeling far outside of oneself. How can these ongoing experiences not reinforce trauma?

**EJ:** I don't know how it cannot. I'll give you the term, and you can put it with this piece, living in a correctional setting puts a lot of people in a state of *battle readiness*. Always ready to do battle, and that battle is not always physical. Just what you were describing, *pack your stuff, now you're moving over here. OK, time to go. Time to move. Get your stuff. Let's go*—everybody has a method for packing their stuff on the fly. There's always a state of, *it's going down, and I'm ready for it when it happens*, always in a perpetual state of preparing for war.

**VAT:** Can you talk to us about the strip search and how it may also reinforce trauma?

**EJ:** OK, the strip search. If you're talking about stripping someone of their dignity, this is it. You hear the term *safety and security of the institution*—that's a catch-all phrase that pretty much gives permission for the safety and security of the institution to do anything, *carte blanche*, anything goes. And strip search is a big part of safety and security.

It is, of course, on the books to make certain that contraband is not moving, contraband is not being introduced into the facility, not being trafficked around. So, their job is to look for weapons, injuries and not following some sort of altercation. And what happens in a strip search? You get all the way down until you're butt-ass naked. And it doesn't matter if it's 110 degrees outside or in some prisons where the snow can be 3-4 feet deep. If something happens, that disturbs the safety and security of the institution, under the burning sun or in the snow, or in torrential rain, you strip it down.

I've experienced all of them. And in the process of the strip down, you have officers standing in front of you giving instructions, you know, *raise your arms, wiggle your fingers*. They are looking at the armpits and, in your mouth, lift up your tongue, grab your junk turn it around, and raise the bottom of your feet. So, they can see you don't have anything in your toes or taped to the bottom of your feet. You got to do three deep knee bends; bend over, grab your cheeks, spread them open, and cut a deep cough. They want your sphincter-like opening-up, you know, they got flashlights, and they're looking in. And you can be in an all-male prison, but you got women guards, they're around. They're not supposed to conduct the actual strip search of the opposite sex, but they are there.

If you have a particularly brutal individual, a sadistic officer that you're dealing with, and I've seen it happen, they'll strip search you in a particular order. I've seen the guard tell folks intentionally, grab your junk, you know, *grab your scrotum, grab your penis, raise it up*. Now you've done that; then they'll tell you, *OK, now run your hands through your mouth...there you go*. I've seen folks do it, and I've seen other folks buck against it and be like, *man, fuck you, I'm not doing that*. And now you've got a confrontation here. You are getting ready to get beat down with Billy clubs and shit like that, hog-tied handcuffs on your wrists behind your back, handcuffs on your ankles, picked up like a piece of luggage, and taken somewhere because I don't want my dick in my mouth.

**VAT:** According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article. 25), everyone has the right to dignity and wellness.<sup>6</sup>

**EJ:** Yes, ma'am.

**VAT:** In your own healing and recovery, do you recall a single moment that was like a whole-body-yes, *this is happening?*

**EJ:** There was a single wave that washed over me, like a sinking-in, into the bosom of spirit, which allowed for knowing who I am that wasn't based on ego. And I was open to learning it.

This moment came while inside a *Circle* for the very first time and graced with the opportunity to witness humans holding space for one another without judgment getting in the way. These were humans that society had already given up on as hopeless and incorrigible, labeled killers

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<sup>6</sup> *right to wellness*: The [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees/article/2018/12/mental-health-rights) (OHCHR) declares that “the [right to health](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees/article/2018/12/mental-health-rights) is a fundamental part of our human rights and of our understanding of a life in dignity,” The Relationship between Human Rights and Mental Health, <https://www.apa.org/international/pi/2018/12/mental-health-rights>

and convicts, and they were willing to let me be exactly who I was, in my own space and time to figure out my shit. They showed me what real freedom was.

**VAT:** Wow, that is vivid. Certainly, not everyone notices that wave, and not all people are ready. I do find it curious the stories of how the world heals and how communities and individuals do it. You know, *what does that look like?* Personally speaking, sometimes, when I'm invested in a particular outcome or idea, I get frustrated, and my response is, well, that's their choice, and there's nothing more I can do. But you're saying there's still something you can do — you can be present with them. That's a real powerful offering; would you like to speak more to that?

**EJ:** Certainly, you're asking about me speaking to being with someone where they're at, in spite of how my ego may judge them. You know, this person should be doing this or should not be doing that and or wanting them to get what I judge as healing. Everyone has the right to be where they are at.

This is about the availability of holding space for an individual to experience freedom. And to experience their right to that freedom and to experience what it is to be loved, nurtured for exactly who they are. Not because of what they have, not because of what they can be or should be, or any expectations just because of who you are right now in this moment. That's what I'm learning and attempting to practice. That's what love is. Love is not conditional. It's unconditional. And it is not something that I, as a human am always able to give to another person. But I definitely want to strive for being with another person and having them know that at least at this moment with me, who you are is perfect. We can just be together right here in this moment. I think everybody at some level wants that and desires that. I definitely believe that everyone deserves that.

**VAT:** And the irony is, would you not say, where nothing needs to change is where does healing happen?

**EJ:** That is where healing can begin to occur because there's a safe space to be, to stop fighting and to stop defending and to take a breath and just fucking breathe. The hope is to lean into what's possible and start to look around and assess, *ok, is this working for me or not?* And when I get to that place where I'm able to settle and rest and assess what is and what is not working for me, then I can start to look at trauma, and I can start to look at the possibility of developing a different relationship with that trauma— which is moving into a space of healing. But if I'm always frantic and running around, holding tight, fighting and defending, there's no space for that connection.

**VAT:** You've also talked about how *not* meeting someone where they're at or how coercing someone into change can also reinforce trauma and can, on some level, even feel torturous.

**EJ:** Yeah, if I'm trying to have interaction and you are consistently telling me how to be, what I should be, what I am not doing correctly, what I need to be doing, and how I need to be doing it —moments like that can be very stressful on my mental state. That's very stressful on my emotional state because, again, I'm always on guard. It can be just like someone who is being physically beaten. You know, always waiting for that next blow, not a physical blow but an emotional or verbal blow. A mental blow or energetic blow can be torturing because now it's ingrained in me that this is coming. I'm living in a constant state of fear. I'm constricted. And that's doing something to me on a cellular level, which is affecting my lymphatic system. If I'm in a constant state of fleeing or fighting, that's not healthy. Resulting in no space for me to be in a relationship with myself, with the truth of Self. So, I don't have the space and or the time to be who I am. I don't have a landing spot.

**VAT:** I've heard you and other folks associated with your organization use the term “hurt people, hurt people.” I find that to be an incredibly systemic statement. It reminds me also of similar language from a former teacher of mine, Dr. Bessel van der Kolk, who wrote in his book, *The Body Keeps the Score*,

“ I wish I could separate trauma from politics, but as long as we continue to live in denial and treat only trauma while ignoring its origins, we are bound to fail. In today's world, your ZIP code, even more than your genetic code, determines whether you will lead a safe and healthy life. People's income, family structure, housing, employment, and educational opportunities not only affect their risk of developing traumatic stress but also their access to effective help to address it. Poverty, unemployment, inferior schools, social isolation, widespread availability of guns, and substandard housing all are breeding grounds for trauma. Trauma breeds further trauma; hurt people hurt other people.”

**EJ:** It says it all right there. It's very apparent that trauma is trauma, but I don't like to try to qualify trauma and say that trauma in Beverly Hills is different or less than or better than, you know, trauma, in South Central Los Angeles. Or that trauma on the south side of Chicago is different than trauma on the other side of Michigan Avenue because the hurt is hurt.

With that being said, the reality is that in the environment in which the trauma is experienced, the response to the trauma is different. The availability of resources to address the trauma is different. The public perception of the trauma is different. What is put in the news media about the trauma is covered in a different light? And that in and of itself is traumatic, not only for the folks who are receiving the trauma, but us collectively as a society because it informs our perceptions about people. It informs how we deal with people, how we think about people, and how we talk to people. That can serve to re-traumatize us all over again.

If you have an individual who looks like me, you know, black folks, African Americans, however they choose to identify themselves, they're portrayed in the news media that is of an animal, you know, always engaged in black-on-black crime and shooting and killing each other. *They don't know any better*, you know, on and on of these stereotypes. And then I hear about a school shooting, like Columbine or someplace else; they may be white or hear about a case of someone going into a house and killing his entire family. It's tragic. And there's a very different tone, *how did this happen? How did we miss the signs?* There's a very different picture that's painted. No one talks about how black-on-black violence is portrayed in the news media vs white violence? Why is it no big thing in the news media about white-on-white violence? Why is black-on-black violence a big thing? We are traumatizing these communities all over again and dehumanizing them while they are already dealing with tragedy and hurt and pain. And culturally, that affects us all, that traumatizes us all, black, white, whatever your background. It traumatizes us because it creates separation. It creates a space where we don't see one another as humans. We lose the opportunity to see the light in all of us and lose the opportunity to see the commonality in all of us.

**VAT:** If the likelihood of a trauma diagnosis can be linked to your Zip code, so can then the healing. Tarana Burke, the American activist dubbed, *The Silence Breaker*, who started the #MeToo Movement, has said, "The people who are experiencing, who are closest to the pain, who are closest to the trauma, who are closest to the experience, their oppression, whatever it is, should be at the forefront of creating solutions." Can you give us a take-away about the power of peer-to-peer support?

**EJ:** I call it peer-to-peer healing. To sit in *Circle*, I must have the willingness to be vulnerable. Go do therapy and pay \$600 per hour if that's what you want, but in *Circle*, you must be willing to be vulnerable. In peer engagement, the space is created for *engagement* and empathy on the basis of equality. We are not separate,

we are *in this together*, and the pain I have recognizes and can hold the pain you have; and the light I have recognizes the light in you.

**VAT:** That's *the work*.

**EJ:** That's the work.

**More information, talks, and ways to engage can be found at the following links:**

**The Work:** [www.youtube.com/watch?v=cca5QWdSTMQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cca5QWdSTMQ)

**Peer-to-Peer:** *Inside Circle* has a pen pal program that links people on the outside to incarcerated persons throughout California. This peer-to-peer exchange program is centered on mutuality and reciprocity — forming trusted confidants, sharing stories, and "checking in" by hand. As participants, everyone is both *giver*, the talker, and the *receiver*, the listener, and encouraged to do so without judgment. When inmates receive mail, it is a message to the prison staff and other prisoners that they have support and are not forgotten. This can be a valuable way of reducing violence in prison (Inside Circle, 2021). More on how it works: [www.insidecircle.org](http://www.insidecircle.org)

**Ted Talk:** [www.go.ted.com/eldrajackson](https://www.go.ted.com/eldrajackson)

**Eldra's Story:** [www.topic.com/video-eldra-s-story](https://www.topic.com/video-eldra-s-story)

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Inside Circle, 2021, *The Lost Art of Letter Writing*, <https://insidecircle.org/penpal-program/>

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Statista Research Department, Jun 2, 2021, <https://www.statista.com/aboutus/our-research-commitment>

Vancouver Association of Survivors of Torture (VAST), 2021

## Films of Interest-The Work\*

### Bartleby Simpson

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*Documentary cinema has always relied on trust and between filmmaker and subject, and when dealing with issues of trauma that reliance is underlined even further.*

*A recent example of this is The Work, a feature-length documentary covering a four-day healing session in California State Prison, Sacramento, also known as New Folsom Prison; in this case one in which men from the general public join incarcerated participants in an intensive program of group therapy.*

*We are led into the experience by three 'outsiders', who have all signed up for the session for their own reasons: Charles, a bartender and father who carries grief for the imprisoned father he never knew; Chris, a young museum associate who quietly struggles with indecision in many areas of his life; and Brian, a teacher's assistant who by his own admission has a fast-rising judgmental temper.*

*What ultimately drove them to seek out this program at a maximum-security prison is never fully stated, and it is a strength of the film that those deeper reasons are largely left unsaid. For once we arrive in the simple, grey open room at the heart of the penitentiary, where virtually all of the film takes place, the unexpected dynamic of this therapy takes shape.*

*After introductions by a handful of trained facilitators, the 'outsiders' choose two of the approximately 60 participating inmates as their guides for the duration of the program.*

*The inmates come from different ethnic backgrounds and associations (included are Rick, a former member of the Aryan Brotherhood, and "Vegas", formerly of the Bloods gang in Los Angeles), but they have all agreed to put differences aside in honor of the work that they are about to engage in.*

*Over the course of the film McLeary's camera allows us to bear witness to an extraordinary level of vulnerability and commitment to the process from the participants. One inmate, Kiki, is desperate to feel anything, after years of incarceration - and heartbreakingly says that he wants to be able to cry for his dead sister, but he can't. "Vegas" steps up to him and says that he will take that journey with him. We watch Kiki as he slowly, bravely lets himself go - gradually releasing the guards, the tension, and leaving anguish and tears that erupt in waves. All the while, "Vegas" and the other participants in his circle embrace Kiki, holding him as a group.*

*Not all exchanges are as visceral, and some show the complications that remain after burying emotions for years with no outlet for their release. But all of them challenge the notions of how men construct themselves, and by the film's end - with still in the grey, flatly lit room and much work to be done - it's clear that a door has opened for everyone, even a little.*

*McLeary and his film team earned the trust of the inmates by going through the program themselves, and the closing credits note that no inmate who has been released after doing this work has returned to prison.*

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\*Jairus McLeary and Gethin Aldous

Eldra Jackson III, interviewed in the article *Inside with Eldra Jackson III* in this issue, is featured in the film.

The Orchard, 2017

**Medical & Clinical  
Sciences**



# The Stressors of Immigration and their Impact on Mental Health

Bariah Waheed

## Summary

Every year Canada welcomes approximately 300,000 immigrants and refugees onto its soil and into its arms (Jedy, 2021). Immigrants and refugees relocate in search of a brighter future, better opportunities, and a safer environment to raise their families in. The move to Canada provides many advantages, but both migration and post-migration resettlement are stressful and arduous processes that can affect an individual's mental health. This article will explore the most common stressors for new immigrants and their psychosocial impact. Each immigrant and refugee's experience is defined by unique challenges depending on age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and other personal factors. However, newcomers face some universal stressors, including issues with employment, communication, discrimination, housing, transportation, and access to services (Xue, 2007).

## Common Stressors and their Causes

Even though there is an influx of skilled workers migrating to Canada, newcomers report high unemployment rates compared with their Canadian-born counterparts due to lack of professional contacts, experience working in Canada, and familiarity with the system (TRIEC, 2017). In addition, foreign academic credentials and training are often not accepted; thus, immigrants cannot find a job that suits their level of education and experience. Consequently, they must forgo their profession and settle for odd jobs to ensure their family's survival (Sakamoto et al., 2010). Unemployment and underemployment can lead to feelings of inadequacy and hopelessness about the future and even anxiety and depression (Kirmayer et al., 2011). While securing a job in Canada is difficult, and the system does not always favor newcomers, it is very important to remain positive, patient, and persistent.

## Communication barrier impacts on Well-being

Since communication is such a vital part of everyday life, the language barrier is a major obstacle for immigrants, and it can affect their education, professional life, and

ability to socialize. This especially impacts refugees and senior immigrants who often have little to no knowledge of English or French. Many immigrants are also unfamiliar with the nonverbal communication and cultural norms practiced in Canada and can occasionally experience cultural shock once they migrate. The inability to communicate leads to feelings of shame, loneliness, and frustration and can also cause social anxiety and isolation (Kirmayer et al., 2011). The feelings of alienation and isolation are accentuated by most immigrants having had to leave their family, friends, and traditions behind. They are separated from everyone and everything that was once familiar to them, and they can have a more challenging time integrating into Canadian society. Telecommunication is a great way to keep in touch with loved ones. Since Canada is such a diverse country, interacting with people who share the same language, food, and traditions can positively impact the well-being of new immigrants. Support groups are another great way to meet people who are going through a similar process, and this can help immigrants provide support and possible solutions to each other.



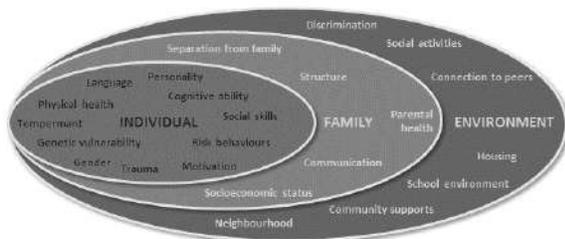
Perhaps the most devastating and dangerous problem that immigrants and refugees encounter is prejudice and racism. New and old immigrants face this problem, their future generations, and perhaps anyone else who does not fit into a certain demographic. Discriminatory acts can range from racist verbal remarks to extreme acts of

physical violence. In June 2021, 4 members of an immigrant family living in London, Ontario, were fatally run over by a 20-year-old man because he did not agree with their religious practices. The family was survived by a 9-year-old boy whose life will never be the same again, and the innocent soul will carry a lifetime of trauma, like a weeping wound on his mind (CBC, 2021).

Additionally, numerous young immigrants report bullying and discrimination in schools. No matter how big or small these acts of prejudice seem, these experiences have long-lasting psychological effects on the victims and their communities, including low self-esteem, eating disorders, anxiety, social phobia, depression, and PTSD. At the same time, therapy and support groups are essential for the recovery of the victims. The main way to address this problem is by raising awareness, diminishing prejudices, educating the ignorant, and coming together through inclusiveness as a country to prevent hate crimes and discrimination.

### Cause and Effect-Psychosomatic Perspective

There are countless other challenges that immigrants face, including housing, transportation, and access to services. These facilities may be vastly different in Canada than the immigrant's country of origin and can be a significant source of initial stress. Some of these problems can be resolved by joining support groups, learning more about the city, and contacting immigrant assistance organizations in the respective province.



Furthermore, immigrants and refugees with particular characteristics or life experiences are at a higher risk of certain mental health problems. Immigrant women are more likely to experience postpartum depression, other mood disorders, and anxiety. Refugees exposed to violence and torture are ten times more likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder and have increased cases of somatic disorders, depression, and chronic pain (Kirmayer et al., 2011). Those from a lower socioeconomic status often experience the most difficulty adjusting to the move and have increased stress and anxiety. Certain studies show that newcomer youths may be at an increased risk for conduct disorder, substance use

disorder, and depression (Kirmayer et al., 2011). Newcomers from warmer climates may also be unaware of seasonal affective disorder, which is defined by low mood during the fall and winter seasons that has been going on for two or more consecutive years (Medscape, 2019). Lastly, recent immigrants have had to deal with all the above during a global pandemic, which has resulted in an alarming rise in the mortality and unemployment rate. It has also caused mental health deterioration, resulting in even more isolation, fear, anxiety, and depression.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

Another hurdle for immigrants and refugees is that mental health is commonly overlooked and under-reported in many communities due to the stigma of psychiatric illnesses. This leads to a decline in the psychological and emotional wellbeing of newcomers, especially over time, and it can also consequently affect their physical health. It can lead to fatigue, weight changes, sleep disturbances, lack of concentration, and other conditions. The best practice is to bring awareness about the possible signs and symptoms of declining mental health and to recognize when to seek help from a professional. Additionally, mental health professionals should be aware of all the possible factors impacting newcomers, including cultural influences, language barriers, and stressors related to migration and resettlement. It is recommended to involve a translator and/ or cultural broker while managing the patients (Kirmayer et al., 2011).

In conclusion, immigration is a stressful and life-changing journey that thousands of people go through each year. It can be an extensive and demanding experience filled with many unexpected roadblocks that can impact a newcomer's mental and physical wellbeing. While Canada has many resources and opportunities for new immigrants and refugees, more accessible processes and better employment opportunities need to be. Moreover, as a country, we need to make a real change to fight against discrimination and racism. I hope this article serves as a reminder that even though our struggles are unique, we are not alone, and we are all going through this process together.

### Further Readings

The following are some helpful websites and links for new immigrants and refugees

- <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/new->

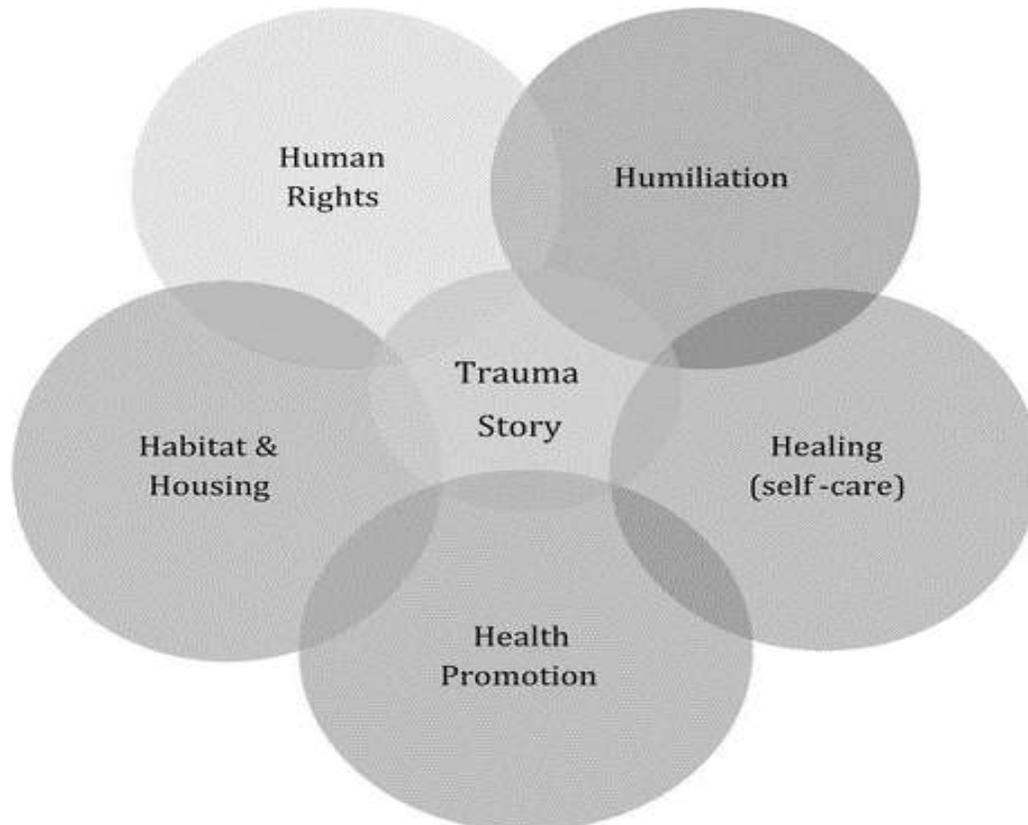
[immigrants.html?\\_ga=1.2357424.1491237168.1489091185](https://immigrants.html?_ga=1.2357424.1491237168.1489091185)

- <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/explore/charities/category/social-services/sub-category/new-to-canada/>
- <https://www.kidsnewtocanada.ca/beyond/resources>
- <https://multiculturalmentalhealth.ca/>

**Crisis Services Canada suicide prevention hotline:** 1.833.456.4566

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## The Structure of Torture-Torture as Reform

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*'We are different from the persecutors of the past... We do not destroy the heretic because he resists us; so long as he resists us, we never destroy him. We convert him, we capture his inner mind, we reshape him. We burn all evil and all illusion out of him; we bring him over to our side, not in appearance, but genuinely, heart and soul. We make him one of ourselves before we kill him'.<sup>2</sup>*

Particularly where it is associated with the more prosperous countries, or those that see themselves as bringers of civilization, torture may wear a humane, almost kindly face. It goes under euphemisms such as 'pressure,' 'shock,' 'stress,' and 'duress'; and the perpetrators themselves will see a distinction between what they do and what they consider to be torture.<sup>3</sup> However, this is as vicious a form of torture as any: it can leave people mentally and physically disabled—indeed, the practitioners acknowledge the potential to render people psychotic, in hours or days.<sup>4</sup>

The victim is typically subjected to physical punishments that do not leave obvious scars, and this means that, should the case ever come under legal scrutiny, physical evidence of torture may be lacking. However, many ways of causing extreme pain to remain possible. The subject will be tightly handcuffed and restrained, often in a way that damages nerves and muscles; he may be suspended in painful postures or forced to assume them himself, with damage to muscles and joints; he may be subjected to electric shocks.

Typically, he will be kept in a small, dark, bed-less cell with inadequate food and variable toilet facilities so that his own filth stains the floor and dampens his clothes. He may be exposed to extreme heat or cold and perhaps forced to stare at the sun. Beatings with rifle butts and kicking with military boots can cause lasting damage; lashing on the soles of the feet can make walking painful for years. A doctor may well be present, persuading the prisoner that he is in the wrong and that all he must do is recant. The doctor may even provide medication—as a symbol of civilization, or to keep the patient alive (deaths in custody can be inconvenient), or to cause pain or disability.<sup>5,6</sup>

Techniques of psychological torture may assume prominence.<sup>7</sup> They include the following

### Disorientation

The subject may be hooded or blindfolded. He will be kept without a clock or calendar in a dark cell and deprived of sleep for days and nights on end. He may be exposed to loud noises or music beyond his endurance. He will be isolated from his fellow prisoners, at least temporarily. He may not be told where he is, even to the nearest continent. If interrogated, he may well be entirely ignorant of the subject—not even knowing what his torturers want to know or what are the grounds for release. He will be out of contact with his family, who may be dead or alive or even in the next cell.

### Degradation

Sexual torture seldom leaves scars. Enforced nakedness and sexual assaults such as the tying of weights to testicles are also common. Victims are insulted, harangued, and physically humiliated with filth and random beatings

### Debilitation

The most powerful instrument is fear, which lurks in torture complexes like a physical presence. The conditions of detention reduce the detainee's mental and physical resilience. Screams and threats are heard into the night, and inmates may be exposed to videos urging them to mend their ways. The subjects may be offered crude inducements to comply with the torturers.

### Torture as punishment

*'Torture is the inversion of the trial, a reversal of cause and effect. The slogans of the South Vietnamese torturers announce what is there and elsewhere always visible... "If you are not a Vietcong, we will beat you until you admit you are; and if you admit you are, we will beat you until you no longer dare to be one."'<sup>6</sup>*

Here, the torturers see themselves in the image of judge and avenger, meting out punishment to rebels and reprobates or those who have dared stand in their way. Frank sadism is common here, as people are beaten to

death, burned, crushed, and kept in wretched conditions—for example, naked, several to a cell, with an open latrine in the centre. This model may be adopted partly for economic reasons since it is cheaper to run than the first type, requiring less training, time, and physical space. It is common in the poorer countries of the world.

### **Torture as conquest**

*'[The native Tasmanians] had been used for slave labor and sexual pleasure, tortured and mutilated. They had been hunted like vermin, and their skin had been sold for government bounty. When the males were killed, female survivors were turned loose with the heads of their husbands tied around their necks. Males who were not killed were usually castrated. Children were clubbed to death. When the last indigenous Tasmanian male, William Lance, died in 1869, his grave was opened by a Member of the Royal Society of Tasmania, Dr. George Stokell, who made a tobacco pouch from his skin.'*<sup>8</sup>

This is the model for ethnic cleansing when populations are evicted and brutalized. It requires the fiction that there are no civilians so that women and children are enemy combatants or possessions and playthings. The mobilization of one population, or part of a population, against another means that almost anyone can become a torturer—as in Sierra Leone, where the fluctuating dominance of militias was marked by the casual drugged sadism of the child soldier.<sup>9</sup>

So far, I have referred to the victim of torture as 'he', but an experience at the Medical Foundation indicates that abuse of women is increasing whereas a few years ago the proportion of female patients was 25%, it is now closer to 40%. A remarkable account of the torture of women in Latin America was provided by Marjorie Agosin.<sup>10</sup>

### **THE REASONING OF TORTURE**

How can people do this to one another? In society, few people are actively sadistic or psychopathic. To impose one's will on another, particularly with brutality, is possible only if one views oneself as wiser or more valuable; and this notion is fostered by creeds that exalt certain groups and denigrate others. People torture in the name of ideas that, in their culture, would be held to be unassailable—democracy, freedom, Islam. What counts is the label, not the reality of these doctrines. Milgram demonstrated the power of labels when, in his experiment, men in white coats persuaded volunteers to deliver what they thought were lethal electric shocks to screaming individuals (who were acting the part). The quiet priestly authority of 'progress' outweighed the volunteers' own consciences.<sup>11</sup>

Correspondingly, the victim is casually seen as subhuman. Common metaphors are vermin and disease: women and children have been described as lice, cockroaches, cancers.<sup>12</sup> A female torturer who recently came to public attention was said by someone from her hometown to have come from a background where 'Tormenting Iraqis... would be no different from shooting a turkey' (*Daily Mirror* 7 May 2004). Although it is a statistical certainty that some of those tortured will be innocent, this is not seen as important.<sup>13</sup> Torturers may even excuse themselves on the grounds that their method of torture is more humane than the locals' system of justice.

One variety of the allegedly subhuman is the 'inhumanly dangerous'—the implacable Other, bent on destroying Us. Torture has gained certain respectability in some circles on the notion of the 'ticking bomb'; in other words, when an immense crime is imminent, people may legitimately be tortured to find out about it. But this theory rests on the following assumptions (among others):

- That it can be reliably known when a dangerous event is imminent: recent history indicates that this is not so
- That people with relevant information can be reliably identified: this too has not been the case
- That torture is a reliable method of gathering information: it is not
- That any information elicited can be acted upon decisively: this is debatable
- That someone innocent of a crime is a legitimate subject for torture: the suspect, by definition, is innocent since the crime has not yet been committed
- Those people will not seek to avenge torture
- That, under similar circumstances, those who advocate the theory would be happy to be tortured.

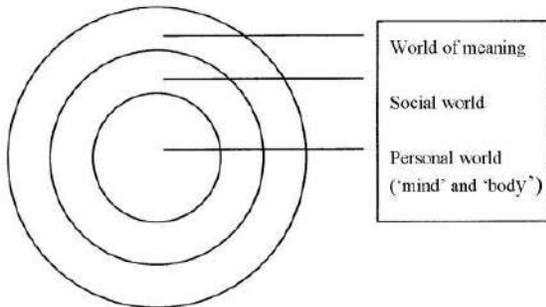
Human beings, regrettably, are easily conditioned to the notion that other sorts of people are different, inferior, intrinsically dangerous. Education is no protection against such conditioning—indeed, the leaders and propagators of political violence are commonly from among the well-educated. But an intrinsic feeling of superiority, or necessity, is not enough: the torturer must be placed in an appropriate role. Zimbardo demonstrated

the importance of this when he placed students in a mock jail, some as prisoners, others as guards. Within a few days, the experiment had to be stopped, such as the treatment meted out to the prisoners by the guards.<sup>14</sup> The torturer may see himself as a defender of humanity when all the while his conduct is dominated by brutality and corruption. In areas where torture is well established, people are swept up off the streets on suspicion or a word; bribery secures release, and maladministration results in detention or even execution of the innocent.<sup>5</sup>

Torture may be perceived as the putting of a 'question' to determine 'truth'; but the answers obtained are often highly misleading.<sup>15</sup> Commonly, however, the aim of torture is not to question but to answer—to debilitate, condemn, and spread crippling fear.<sup>16</sup> Confessions can lurch from the unlikely to the absurd,<sup>17</sup> and the torturer's empathy is often so dulled that he cannot tell the difference. Torture never serves justice.

### HEALING IN SURVIVORS OF TORTURE

Doctors are often encouraged to consider their work as applied physiology. If they do so with survivors of torture, they will fail. The needs of those individuals can be crudely represented by the diagram in [Figure 1](#).



The different worlds of torture survivors Wherever they are, survivors of torture are in exile. They are in exile from themselves: the once sharp mind may have been dulled by fear and exhaustion, to say nothing of the brain damage caused by repeated beatings (the incidence of epilepsy in survivors of torture is remarkably high). The person who once bestrode his world may be physically weak, disabled, in constant pain. Every twinge and ache may bring back memories of torture—a reminder that the torturers are still winning.

Culturally, the survivor of torture is often deeply bereaved.<sup>18</sup> 'Home' now may be a squalid, lonely room in a dangerous part of town in a new country. The basic requirements of home—companionship and safety—are not fulfilled. The survivor of torture is in a strange land whose spiritual geography he does not recognize. Moreover, the experiences of torture may have caused him to question his most basic assumptions—who is he,

who is God? The threat of deportation, and resumed torture, may loom closer as the month's pass. Even were the survivor, by good fortune, able to return to his country in safety, the home would not be the same again. Torture isolates people by their experience, their disability, and the stigma of fear. And the homeland also changes. Inhabitants of the Bosnian market town of Sanski Most told how, for years after the carnage there, the river would reveal its cargo of bones every so often.

In my own efforts at being a doctor to survivors of torture, my first priority, usually unspoken, has been to give them a 'home'. No matter where they are and what they experience in the rest of their lives, the consulting room should be a place where they can find companionship and safety and be and find themselves. Characteristically, survivors of torture have lost the ability to think with clarity and trust; unless the person can relax and open up, the basic medical and psychological history will never fully emerge.

The first act for the doctor has less to do with treatment than with witnessing. In the UK, torture survivors must present a formal argument to be granted 'leave to remain'. Usually, this will include evidence that they have been tortured. As noted earlier, physical scars are often absent, though thorough examination for soft-tissue damage, epilepsy, and psychiatric debility, among other things, may well be revealing. Helpful guidelines exist.<sup>19-21</sup> It is often reported that 'bogus asylum seekers' report torture where none has happened; what tends to go unremarked is that those who have been tortured often underreport it. Over time, a good rapport allows the unveiling of scars, physical and mental—the cigarette burn, the rape. It does not help that many immigration lawyers lack skill, attentiveness, and time and that the most damaged patients may be precisely those whose story varies the most. This should not be new to doctors: as Longmore points out in cardiology, the sounds remain the same, but the patient's story changes every time.<sup>22</sup> But still, the idea persists that a genuine story of torture is necessarily filled with accurate chronological detail. It should be borne in mind that patients with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, temporal lobe epilepsy, and certain kinds of brain damage are likely to have memory impairment.<sup>23</sup> The simple sleep deficit endemic to survivors of torture can play havoc with the mind.<sup>23</sup> Clearly, a responsible doctor must be on the lookout for inconsistencies and implausibility; but a few exaggerations by a desperate man do not constitute a tissue of lies, and a strange story may be the result of different perspectives. Time is often the great diagnostician, as false stories sound falser ever and true stories fall into place. Most importantly, the doctor is not required to be judge and jury; his task is to record the

evidence as impartially as possible and act accordingly. If communicating with a court, he should try to use language the court will understand—appropriate terminology, close reasoning, and even-numbered paragraphs.

It is often said that effective psychotherapy is impossible until the patient has been awarded 'leave to remain, but in my experience, this is not so. Psychotherapy may be crucial at this stage to allow the patient to cope with his legal and social predicament. As well as compassion and subtlety, it demands practical attention to the social situation: a patient with a social circle, accommodation and even meager benefits is in the best position to make progress. The doctor's role is to help the patient regain strength until no longer needed.

The position of the survivor of torture thus transcends simple diagnosis. Nonetheless, doctors do speak in the language of diagnoses, and the categories of PTSD and depression can often be used to describe the realities that unfold in the consulting room, however inadequately.

It has been argued that survivors of torture are not unwell but responding normatively to an absurd situation; that PTSD as a diagnosis is the result of cultural manufacture. In their home countries, these people would not consult a doctor.<sup>24</sup> This seems plausible until one considers that exactly the same could be said of depression, unquestionably a serious illness. Littlewood had pointed out that the idea of mood being 'depressed' or 'elevated' dates from the mid-18th century when linear scales became dominant in science; it is still an alien idea in many parts of the world.<sup>25</sup> Littlewood has proposed an elegant way to consider the cultural contribution to illness (Figure 2).

The cultural contribution to illness (after Littlewood)

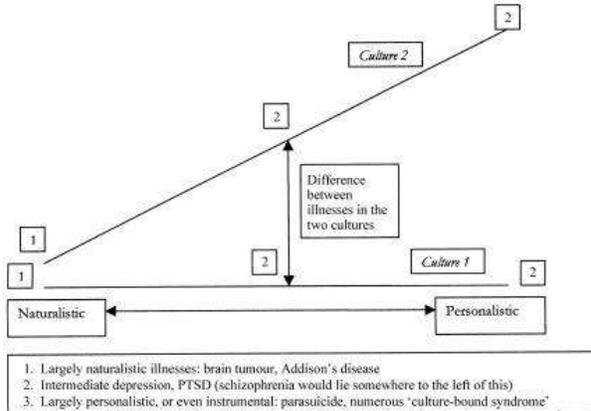
Therefore, PTSD, like depression, is in part based on universals and in part based on cultural constructs. That there is a universal component is not in doubt: elephant calves, for instance, have been reported to wake up screaming after their mothers have been killed. But patients who are survivors of torture may not initially show their suffering as distress, just as those who have experienced profound loss need not present with depression, and distress may be framed in ways other than the psychological and vastly different from PTSD. Survivors of the Rwandan genocide in Rwanda rarely used the idioms of PTSD to frame their distress.<sup>24</sup> Categories have their limits, particularly in cross-cultural work.

Where therapist and patient do not share a language, the role of the interpreter is crucial, not just linguistically but also on a cultural level. The best interpreters, with an

awareness of social structures and subtleties, are invaluable allies in treatment.

## UNEXPECTED CONSEQUENCES OF TORTURE

Survivors of torture may, over time, grow and flourish. Those selected for torture tend to be the young and fit, the articulate and energetic. As is the lot of first-generation immigrants, they may initially take on menial work, but they and their descendants are likely to enrich their adopted society.



Although psychological debility commonly flows from the experience of torture,<sup>26–28</sup> the stripping away of habit and security sometimes leads to wisdom and compassion.<sup>29</sup> Contrast this with those who inflict or condone torture. It should not be forgotten that the diagnosis of PTSD was initially developed around the narratives not of those who had undergone torture but of those who had inflicted it—Vietnam veterans haunted by their experiences and memories. Linda Grant has documented how those who oppress civilians carry the cruelty into their everyday lives, damaging themselves and those around them.<sup>32</sup> Inhumanity cannot be inflicted without being internalized. As Ariel Dorfman commented:

*'Torture does not... only corrupt those directly involved in the terrible contact between the two bodies... Torture also corrupts the whole social fabric because it prescribes a silence of what has been happening between those two bodies; it forces people to make believe that nothing, in fact, has been happening; it necessitates that we lie to ourselves about what is being done not that far, after all, from where we talk, while we munch chocolate, smile at a lover, read a book, listen to a concerto, exercise in the morning. Torture obliges us to be deaf and blind and mute... [to] close [our] eyes and ears and hearts.'*<sup>13</sup>

Any society that practices torture renders itself inherently unstable, although it may be propped up for a while by wealth. An accumulation of small cruelties leads to

decay; moreover, those labeled as the Other become the Other, neither engaging with society nor sympathetic to it. As individual doctors, we tend to shy away from involvement in the great sweep of history, but we can both limit the damage caused by torture and even atone for it to the extent that we can be human.

### Acknowledgments

I thank Helen Bamber and Roland Littlewood for their instruction and inspiration. I also thank my interpreters, particularly Gulalai Baqi, for her excellent unpaid work during my research.

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# Call for Contributions and Peer Reviewers

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Voices Against Torture - VAT journal is a semi-annual journal launched in 2020 as an organic extension of the education, advocacy, and community-building mandate of the Vancouver Association for the Survivors of Torture (VAST). VAT operates in alignment with the values and vision of the VAST community and hopes to lift the voices of torture survivors further to support resilience and dignity.

VAT aims to provide a platform for discussing torture prevention, improving awareness of and support for refugee and immigrant mental health, and highlighting global human rights concerns.

As an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary journal, VAT invites submissions from a wide range of academic disciplines and actively seeks collaboration and conversation across disciplines. This approach intends to link theory and lived experience to social change, bringing together academics, activists, educators, therapists, healers, and those directly and indirectly affected by torture.

The Journal will consist of the following sections:

- Research Articles (6,000 – 8,000 words)-our first publication will not have this section; the later publication will.
- Review Essays (<6,000 words)
- Notes from the Field (<4,000 words)
- Policy Review (<3,000 words)
- Creative Interventions and embodiment practices (1,000-3,000 words)
- Book Reviews (1,000-2,000 words)
- Letters to the editor(s)

## Submission Requirements

- Typed in English language and double spaced
- Font style: Times New Roman and Font Size:12
- Text submissions should be 500-700 words
- Manuscript only in MS-Word (\*.doc or \*.docx) format
- Image files (if any) in .jpg format, 300dpi.
- References/bibliography need to be numbered if provided with the article.
- Follow APA 7<sup>th</sup> referencing and citation style consistently.
  
- Tables and figures should be inserted within the body of the text.

## Expression of Interest for Peer-Review:

Voices Against Torture journal invites experienced peer reviewers in the area of human rights and torture to join the journal peer review panel. Since the promotion of the cause of human rights is a public good, we encourage volunteers to join the panel. Their contribution in this regard shall be formally acknowledged.

To register your interest, kindly send your detailed CV along with your expression of interest to [vrdc@vast-vancouver.ca](mailto:vrdc@vast-vancouver.ca)

The editor, however, retains the right to suggest any change in style, if required.

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Date of Publishing: Biannual: March and September

Submission: Open

Submission Deadlines: 31<sup>st</sup> December and 30<sup>th</sup> June

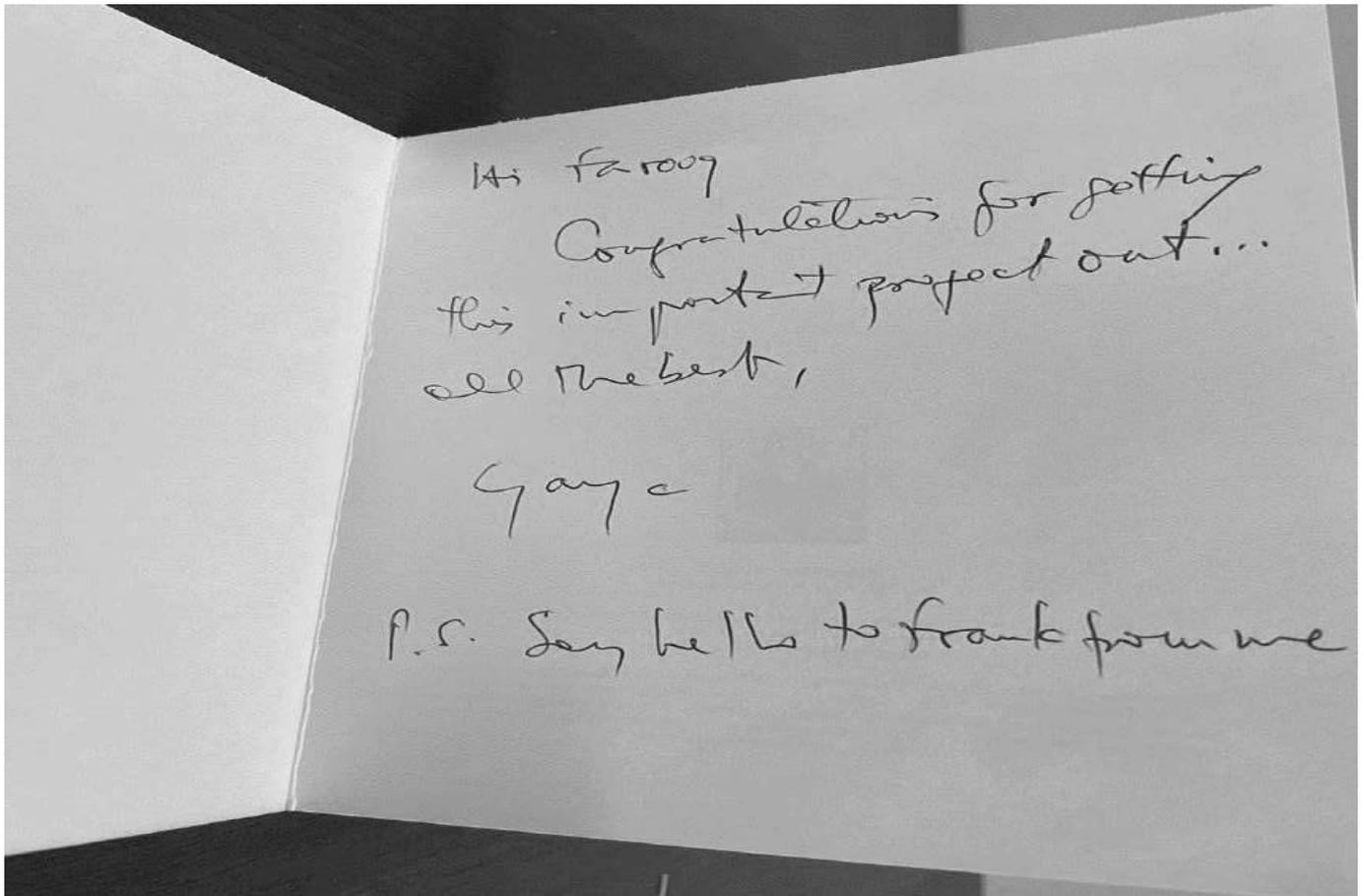
Please send your papers and feedback to the Editor-in-Chief at: [farooq@vast-vancouver.ca](mailto:farooq@vast-vancouver.ca)



*Voices Against Torture* encourages its readership to give their feedback and invite attention to the human rights violation (s) and torture-related incident (s) that they have experienced or are in their knowledge and they think those need reporting.

For this, we will request you to identify the source of information and give your complete name and address. After your consent and due scrutiny, we will be glad to publish your letters in the journal's next issue.

Please send your feedback to the Editor in in chief at: [farooq@vast-vancouver.ca](mailto:farooq@vast-vancouver.ca)



## **FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

### **International Webinar: Rights-Based Planning and Programming for Civil Society Organizations**

Date – TBD

Voices Against Torture – Vancouver

### **Intersessional Seminars on the contribution of the Human Rights Council to the prevention of Human Rights Violations**

[OHCHR | HRC Intersessional seminars on the prevention of human rights violations](#)

### **2021 Mental Health Awareness Calendar**

[2021 Mental Health Awareness Events Calendar--SacWellness.com](#)

### **8<sup>th</sup> International Virtual Conference-Mental Health and Productivity**

21-22 October 2021

[www.conference.nip.edu.pk](http://www.conference.nip.edu.pk)

### **Trauma-Sensitive Yoga Foundational Training January 2022 Live And Online**

[Foundational Trainings — TCTSY - Trauma Center Trauma-Sensitive Yoga \(traumasensitivelyoga.com\)](#)

### **TCTSY Remote 20-hour Training, January 2022**

<https://iwtherapies.com/jan-2022-remote-training/>

### **Lifecycles Self-Assessment: Understanding Capacity, October 5, 9:00 am - 1:00 pm**

[Lifecycles Self-Assessment: Understanding Capacity](#)

## **Help Eliminate Torture: S.O.S. Appeal**

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Dear Patrons and Friends,

We, the Members of the Editorial Board of the Journal on VAT (Voices Against Torture- a newly incepted policy research communication organ of Vancouver Association of Torture Survivors (VAST), are gravely concerned over the worsening and deepening state of Torture in many parts of the world- Prohibition of Torture Index 2019-20 (Statista- <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1131048/prohibition-of-torture-index-in-cis-by-country/>).

As rightly maintained by World Organization against Torture, "Nothing can justify Torture under any circumstances (OMCT- <https://www.omct.org/>), for it is tantamount to imprisoning both mind and souls. And not only that Torture leaves a lasting scar on the bodies and the minds of its victim(s), but as its psycho-social sequel, it also becomes a weeping wound for generations. In the recent past, an exodus of refugees (UNHCR -<https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html> ), from many countries; and violence perpetrated against women (BBC- <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-53014211> ) and neglect and abuse of the elderly during the Contagion COVID pandemic (AGE Platform Europe- <https://www.age-platform.eu/press-releases/elder-abuse-has-been-rise-during-covid-19-pandemic-it-high-time-take-it-seriously> ) signifies the emergent need to help arrest torture becoming endemic, as stipulated in humanitarian and human rights law, which has unfortunately taken a contagious proportion.

In this backdrop, the emergent need for evidence-based/ informed policymaking & advocacy around human rights; and rehabilitation & mainstreaming of torture victims needs hardly any emphasis. VAST, being mindful of this emergent need to cultivate respect for human rights as an underpinning factor for human security and containment of Torture worldwide, has chosen to reach out to the global stakeholders through VAT Journal.

Alongside VAT Journal, we plan to hold international & regional workshop(s) via both in-person and online platforms. With this initiative, we aim to help spread awareness in trauma recovery and further educate in civil society, academia, and the public sector to help develop Human Rights advocates and empower practitioners to help lead from the front lines of eradicating Torture from our world.

We at VAT Journal Editorial Board, through these lines, seek the support of the international community to join their heads and hands in this noble and emergent cause for the public good.

*Sincerely yours,*

VAT Editorial Board Members:

Dr. Farooq Mehdi, Dr. Fizza Sabir, Dr. Wajid Pirzada, Leila Jonson, Dr. Patrick Swanzy,  
Dr. Rubina Hanif, Dr. Poulomee Datta, Dr. Grant Charles, Mohammad Abu Srour

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