

CYC-Online

e-journal of the International Child and Youth Care Network (CYC-Net)



**A Journal for those who live or work
with Children and Young People**

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Did You Get It?

James Freeman

Did you read last month's *CYC-Online*? It was a special issue on "young people who have changed us" guest edited by friend of CYC-Net Grant Charles who explains that he came into this field by accident, but in his words "It did feel like home when I got there".

I found each of the stories shared in the issue thought provoking and inspiring. In this space this month I'd like to share a few excerpts that really stood out as I encountered them. I encourage you to read them through thoughtfully. Each one is worth taking time for reflection and seeing how it may resonate with you or what internal response it may create.

If slow or deep reading and reflection is new to you, I encourage you to take a look at the column *Hesitations* by Hans Skott-Myhre in this issue. In that spirit there may be something in one of more of these highlights for you to find.

"I realized I would always be the student, always needing to be open minded and learning far more from the young person than they might ever learn from me." – Tina

"Activity-based programming and being with the young people was creating a connection and subsequently safety within our relationship...I was connecting, engaging and recklessly meddling in their pain-based behaviour." – Ernie



“Change is constant and usually reciprocal within a relationship that warps and woofs its way along until it is time, a general sense of readiness, and/or the arbitrary factors of age or charges force the issue of separation bringing it to a close.” – Garth

“Professionals need to stop taking credit when things go right and blaming youth when things go wrong.” – Jenny

“I didn’t realize that, in my work I had stumbled blindly into working with youth relationally.” – Andy

“Relational practice doesn’t always mean all the warm, fuzzy things we often talk about it meaning. It’s not all moments of connection and insight. Sometimes the relationship becomes a canvas for a much more disturbing and painful painting, all sharp angles and angry colors. And maybe the piece I carry the most from my short relationship with Dave: he brought home for me that the moment in front of me (or between you and me, here, right now) is just one moment. It is partial, it is impermanent, and it is powerful. But it’s just one moment.” – Ben

“I wanted her to know I did not think of her as a threat – just as a person in pain...if there was any hope, it lay in the area of relationship – trusting relationship. Trust the person, not the door locks.” – Thom



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“Power is naturally fearful and we protect ourselves first before allowing any power to be distributed to others.” – Jack

“I have some hope that there was, even at that time, someone working in some capacity on the streets of Halifax with the aim of engaging young people like Lola, and providing opportunities for Lola to consider her life differently.” – Kiaras

Each of these has a context of course. Maybe isolated or highlighted here these thoughts stand out in a way different from the flow of the larger writing. Perhaps some might be appropriate to write down and post as a reminder somewhere in your daily work. Maybe some will prompt you to go back and read something missed last month. What we pick and what resonates with each of us likely says a lot about ourselves as well.

This month, as always, we’re excited to bring another issue of CYC-Online to you and readers around the world. Thanks for reading and reflecting with us.



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2 - 4 July 2019

The National Executive Committee of the South African National Association of Child Care Workers (NACCW) and the Board of Governors of CYC-Net are proud to announce details of the 22nd NACCW Biennial Conference and the 4th CYC-Net World Conference to be held in Durban, South Africa. Conference delegates can look forward to a spirited professional experience blending diverse child and youth care work experiences from across the globe in engagements on practice, programs and child and youth care work policy in a city renowned for summer days all year round!

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Last Minute Registration until 15 June 2019

R 2400

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Accommodation

Hostel accommodation has been secured at the Coastlands Hotel and Convention Centre - Durban. Accommodation is shared by 4 people in a room and includes a bathroom and kitchenette. Transport will be provided to and from the conference venue.

Guesthouses and hotel accommodation is available in the vicinity of the ICC.

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Keynote Speakers

Dr. Kiaras Gharabaghi



A renowned academic, researcher and thought leader in work with vulnerable and at risk children and the families, Kiaras believes that being present with young people, making moments meaningful, and working in the life-space of children, families and communities is much more than an intervention; it is a way of being in the world that promotes democracy...

Cornelius Williams



Cornelius Williams is Associate Director and global Chief of Child Protection for UNICEF's Programme Division. He has over 25 years of experience in managing child protection programmes in Western, Eastern and Southern Africa with UNICEF and Save the Children.

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First Aid for the Soul (Part 1 of 3)

Andreas Krüger

Editor's Note

This excerpt (part one of three) is from First Aid for the Soul: Trauma Self-Help for Young People by Dr. Andreas Krüger and translated by David West (2013). We met Andreas at the second World CYC Conference in Vienna, Austria and were impressed with his efforts to speak plainly to children affected by trauma. This three-part series is an excerpt from the opening of his book.

For more information on the book, visit

<https://www.amazon.de/Powerbook-Erste-Hilfe-f%C3%BCr-Seele/dp/398142820X>

and

https://www.amazon.de/Powerbook-First-Soul-Andreas-Krueger/dp/3981428218/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1532459700&sr=1&keywords=powerbook+englisch+krueger

I'm going to introduce some young people who will tell you something about themselves. About injuries to their soul and about healing. I don't use their real names and I present their stories in such a way that the real people I know won't recognize themselves. But they all have characteristics which are shared by many young people I know. And so,



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when they speak, it's almost as if it's all these young people speaking or thinking.

I'm going to begin with Kevin and Jenny, two really nice people. Maybe they're even like you in some ways. And that's what this book is all about. That maybe you'll see yourself here and there in the stories I present and then understand better what I'm writing about. Some things work pretty well for Jenny and Kevin, and some things don't work at all. And then neither really know how they should go on.

A few words about Jenny

Jenny loves dancing. She loves all kinds of music. The main thing is that she can dance to it. She also likes dancing on her own. Then she can totally lose herself and just feel free. She can immerse herself in another world, in a world she'd like to be most of all, a long way from the whole drudge of everyday life. Jenny likes wearing bright and colourful clothes that people notice. But sometimes, when she feels like it, she wears tatty black clothes. She wants to shock people then. They shouldn't think everything's totally OK just because she's on really good form occasionally.

And there's also another side to Jenny. She's also got a quiet side – sometimes she hardly says a word. She's a good listener (but can also chat forever with her friends). She can always suggest something to talk about when her best friend doesn't know anymore. She doesn't know yet what she wants to do with her life, but she already knows exactly what she doesn't want to do: 'Get up at six, always the same every day, some crappy job with crappy people I can't stand'. She wants to do something with her friends. Something creative or something with people. Or maybe just dance.



And now to Kevin

Kevin also likes music. But more the hard stuff. Loud music. Dancing is not really his thing. He likes wandering the town centre with his mates and sometimes they go out into the countryside, too. Always in search of new impressions, new people. He wants to get to know the world. Sometimes he just goes running off. When he's completely out of breath – that's when he feels absolutely free. Kevin loves riding on the underground for hours, going nowhere in particular. Then he puts the headphones to his MP4-player on and lets himself be taken over by the music. He listens to his music and his friends' music.

Kevin's always there for his mates. He makes fantastic playlists on the computer that his friends can't wait to get their hands on. Because the songs always go together perfectly. He's got a real ear for that.

Kevin thinks a lot about things. He likes doing that. Thinking about God and everything under the sun. He can totally lose himself in his thoughts. The other day he thought just about wealth for an hour. At the end of the day, everyone wants to be rich. But what does that mean – being rich? A million in your bank account – is that all? Is he himself rich? Such thoughts come to him often when he's travelling the underground. The thoughts that come out of his head he wants to use in his job one day. This brain should not rust when he's earning money. And, like Jenny, he wants to work with 'good people', people who've got something about them. People who want to get hold of their lives and the world around them and change something – like he wants to.

Obstacles on the journey

Kevin and Jenny would really like to enjoy life even more. They've got enough life in them. If only there wasn't something really troubling them the whole time. Of course, there are the grown-ups with their rules,



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regulations and demands. Nobody can be bothered with that. But with Kevin and Jenny there's something different. Something that sits deep inside them – and that's what's troubling them.

Jenny is just a bundle of nerves. She chews on her fingernails the whole time, which looks totally stupid. The others are always asking her why. But she doesn't even know herself. Her legs and feet are always shaking and moving, and not only when she's dancing. She finds it difficult to concentrate at school because she can't get to sleep at night and then has really awful nightmares. She doesn't know whether she's going to make it into the next school year. Sometimes she thinks she's just too stupid. And she knows that if she has to resit the year, she'll lose all her friends.

Kevin's also got his problems. Really, he's a nice, friendly person – he even protects others who are weaker than him. But sometimes he just goes berserk and lashes out. Then he loses control of himself – over some little thing that doesn't go to plan. And every now and again things get broken. Like when he threw his MP4-player against the wall because of something stupid. Then he had no music in his ears for two months. That was a pain in the arse, until his friend gave him his old MP4-player. And he's also got problems at school: Kevin is easily distracted. He's often frustrated. He's not stupid, but he just can't cope with the stuff that's taught in lessons. Sometimes he's really in a world of his own, and can't remember afterwards what's just been said. That really frightens him. And also the nightmares that he has from time to time frighten him. He's embarrassed about them. It's hardly cool and hardly normal to have nightmares, is it?

In search of causes

Kevin and Jenny both suffered a lot early on in life. Their souls suffered – took a real hammering, so to say. That's important for me to mention here.



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And that does not happen without traces being left behind. Their souls were injured. And my experience tells me that the problems that Jenny and Kevin are having now are to do with emotional injury. Most people with such problems are ashamed or think they're maybe not quite right in the head. That's why they prefer keeping the stuff to themselves. And most grown-ups have little idea where problems such as Jenny's and Kevin's come from. Better to keep these things to yourself – that's what both Jenny and Kevin always thought, until they eventually understood everything better. It takes a while to understand that everything is linked. The bad stuff in the past and their problems today. You don't believe me? Then see what you think after you have read the next few pages.

This book is concerned with emotional injuries and emotional healing, with what we call 'trauma healing'. When someone has caused you great harm. Physically. Emotionally. Then maybe your ability to trust other people, to allow yourself to love deeply, to be happy – maybe all this has been lost or damaged. Or when fate suddenly takes from you people you loved. Or when invisible wounds burden your life and make it difficult for you to be happy. Or a serious physical illness casts its shadow over your soul. Then maybe there is a corner of your soul where there are only dark clouds. Maybe you know such problems as Jenny and Kevin have from your own experience.

The first part of this book is about helping you to understand yourself better. To get out of the loneliness that has maybe nested inside you since those terribly stressful events in the past. Maybe you've got a

complicated inner life that nobody can imagine, unless they were there as well. I promise you greater certainty about what's going on inside you, and that you will understand yourself better. Just as I get the flu if I stand out in the cold and the rain for two hours in a t-shirt and a pair of shorts with no shoes on, so appear symptoms in the mind after extreme stress.



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Signs of illness such as a cough and runny nose with the flu on the one hand; and signs of emotional trauma on the other. These you can learn to recognize.

Maybe you're like Jenny – often nervous, can't sleep, find it difficult to concentrate. Or maybe you're like Kevin – go berserk and lash out for no real reason. And maybe memories or feelings from the past simply roll over you like a gigantic wave.

Maybe you haven't thought yet that everything could be connected with your awful experiences in the past – that this is how your soul shows its wounds. Maybe you're ashamed of some of the things happening inside you. Perhaps you blame yourself for some of the things that happened.

I can quite safely guarantee one thing, though: despite your difficulties, you are 'normal'. What happened to you – that will have been 'mad' and not normal at all ...

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Thinking About Relational Thinking

Jack Phelan

I wrote in January about the importance of conveying a message in our relationships with youth and families that is focused on their value, not our goodness. Basically, when the practitioner becomes the focus of the good feelings generated by relational work, it is easy to have all the positive energy erased when the relationship inevitably ends. Many practitioners express frustration with efforts to continue their connections with youth and families after leaving a program, because their investment in creating positive connections will be lost and forgotten, since the positive messages are reliant on the practitioner's presence.

Experienced Child and Youth Care practitioners realize the value in effective relational practice, it can transform the belief system and logic about life that keeps youth and families trapped in destructive patterns of interacting with others. When people have experienced serious abuse and neglect in their lives, it creates a self-protective, mistrustful view of getting close to others which severely limits any ability to care about others or feel truly cared about by others. The experience of building a safe and satisfying connection with a caring adult builds their ability to reach out to others and believe in their own personal worth.

There are many books and articles about attachment, empathy, social logic, and moral reasoning, which describe the negative results of not being capable of caring for others or believing that one is worthy of being



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cared about. Delivering a caring message and demonstrating care for others is an intrinsic part of the Child and Youth Care approach. Most, if not all, of the people who become Child and Youth Care practitioners describe their focus as being care providers in some manner. There is a recent interest in developing this caring attitude more fully and practitioners are now discussing love and loving behaviors as a major ingredient of our work.

So, I want to talk about how we think about relational work. How one thinks about what he is doing is more relevant than what he is doing. We can jump in and just start to act like we care without examining our beliefs or intentions, which I think is problematic. We can also simply assume that every -thing we are doing is a caring behavior without having any context to examine other possibilities. The mere action of doing Child and Youth Care practice can create the assumption that we are expressing care and concern for other people because that is the job description.

To narrow our focus a bit, I would like to eliminate some non-relational practice from our discussion. There is a great deal of Child and Youth Care behavior that is clearly not relationally based. For example, new practitioners must acquire the ability to build a safe environment for themselves and others before they can engage in useful relational practice, which typically takes about a year of experience. Then there are practitioners who avoid relational approaches for a variety of reasons, who adhere to behavioral approaches which help to distance themselves from any personal connections with the youth and families. Practitioners who maintain a thick personal boundary between themselves and the youth/families deliberately avoid being affected by the dynamics of relational practice.

Relational practitioners understand the need to care for youth and families and to allow themselves to be cared about. How we think about



these issues is an important area for consideration. I would like to explore a few possibilities that can be problematic.

The fact that we are being paid to care for people is a huge elephant in the room. Every Child and Youth Care practitioner has heard the retort “You are only doing this because you are getting paid for it!”, and we can easily ignore the very powerful belief being expressed, which is that “You don’t really care about me”. Practitioners who believe that they are perceived as caring merely because they are meeting the requirements of a job description are totally missing the point. People will only feel cared about when you go beyond the usual job expectations and demonstrate extra effort and concern for them. This flies in the face of the attitude that some practitioners express, “they don’t pay me enough to do that”.

I will focus on those Child and Youth Care practitioners who have both the desire and the ability to do relational work at this point. How one thinks about what he is doing is a key piece here. When the goal is to create a connection where we both care about each other and value our connection, there are still variables based on the practitioner’s intentions. When my intention in this relationship is to get you to care about me because I want to be liked and valued by you, there can be serious limitations built into this process. It is important for the youth or family member to begin to care about and value the connection, because this will expand their social awareness and empathy, which will build the ability to care for others. The experience of being cared about by the CYC practitioner will also, and very importantly, create a belief that I deserve to be cared about, which is the basis of being able to care about others. The primary focus needs to be the latter, that the youth/family member believes that they deserve to be cared about. With the focus of the relationship on the valuing of the Child and Youth Care practitioner and his



(extraordinary) ability to care, when the relationship is inevitably ended, the youth/family member will only feel the loss, not a new belief in self-worth.

Recent CYC research in adult thinking stages (see Modlin, 2015) describes a socialized thinking style that places major importance on how one is perceived by others as a measure of self-worth. Child and Youth Care practitioners at this stage describe the purpose of relational work as being liked by others. If I believe I am effective when youth/family members like me, I will work on building relationships where people value me, ignoring the eventual poor results that may occur when the connection ends.

I will continue to explore this issue next month.

Reference

Modlin, H. (2015). Child and youth care through a constructive developmental lens. *Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care*, 14(1). Retrieved from https://www.celcis.org/files/6714/3410/7458/2015_Vol_14_1_Modlin_Child_and_Youth_Care_Through.pdf

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Hesitations

Hans Skott-Myhre

My students and I were discussing Mark Krueger's remarkable book *Sketches* the other day. We were pulling quotes and close reading them. That is to say, we were reading Krueger together to see what we could uncover by looking for as many meanings as we could find in what he wrote. I suppose you might say that we were digging into the text in order to get deeper into how he thought about the work we already do and how his writing might inform us about the work we might do if we let his words transform us.

To do a close reading is to challenge the idea that a superficial skimming of the classics in our field, like a writer/philosopher/practitioner such as Kruger, can be understood easily at the surface level of our understanding of who we are and what we do. Unfortunately, I am afraid that too many of us take the fast food approach to the rich and complex literature available to us in our field. We are looking for the quickest way to ingest the information with as minimal a cost in time or effort as possible. For at least some of us, we engage our field as a set of technical exercises that can be learned at the surface of human engagement. We just want to be successful at modifying other people's behavior without too much of the messiness of young people's struggles rubbing off on our own sense of order and self-control.

So, we get through our associates or bachelor's degree by engaging as little as possible in the complexities of encountering young people. We disparage theory and tell ourselves it is all about practice. We think of our



time at school instrumentally. What will a degree get me in the job market? How will a certificate assist my job search? What is the quickest and most efficient route to get through school so I get out there and change young people's lives? These are certainly understandable concerns in a socially anxious time when job security and living wages are at best worrisome. And, of course (at least for students here in North America) educations are not inexpensive. Our education system tends to lead us into debt. So, thinking about our degrees as a kind of financial calculus may seem pretty logical at the end of the day.

However, while this kind of calculation makes sense, at some level, in terms of warding off the possibility of financial impoverishment, it simultaneously runs the risk of impoverishing the field of Child and Youth Care itself. In a number of different forums recently, I have heard students discuss various programs they might attend to get a degree in some variation of Child and Youth Care work. While much of the conversation went along the lines I have sketched above, there was another subtext that troubled me. In their comparisons of programs, a number of students stated that the coursework at the associates and bachelor level was repetitive. They questioned why they had to learn the same material in both degrees. While it is certainly possible that there is duplication across programs, I would argue that it might just as well be true that the complaints were rooted in a superficial reading of the material on offer.

I have taught roughly the same class on CYC every semester for nearly twenty years. We do a very similar set of readings and discuss many of the same ideas and practices. The readings have changed a bit over time, but we still cover the classics over and over. I suppose I should be annoyed about the repetition year after year. But I am not. The reason why I am not is that I find that no reading or discussion is ever the same. I learn something new and notice something I had missed every time I get the



chance to read together with my students. And my students keep uncovering new understandings and insights I hadn't considered.

To me, this is the heart of what we do in CYC. Not just in the classroom, where we can do close readings and find remarkable and surprising insights in texts we have read many times, but also in our engagement with young people. You see, I think we can read young people in much the same way we approach a text. This is Krueger's profound insight in *Sketches*. That revisiting our experiences over and over in the light of new experiences will keep our work fresh and new.

There is a tendency to short cut our readings of young people and see them as problems to be solved, diagnoses to be determined, sets of behaviors to be modified, failures to be rectified and so on. These surface readings of the young people we encounter in our work, robs us of the depth and complexity of human struggles and impacts our ability to function as thoughtful and nuanced practitioners. We lose out on the ways in which our work can enrich us as dynamic and creative human beings.



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As Gharabaghi has pointed out in these pages, self-care is best found in the work itself as an act of imagination. When we nurture our ability to think, as well as to act, we deepen our repertoire of practice possibilities. When we close read a text or a Child and Youth Care interaction in the field of practice, we begin to take into account, in serious ways, the social and historical contexts of every single encounter. We begin to understand the ways that our work is filled with inherent contradictions and antagonisms that reflect the histories of struggle that we all share. Our work has the capacity to take on the relations of force, domination, and subjugation in any given historical moment.

Krueger understood this in ways that were both deeply personal and allowed him to think in profound ways about the actualities of encounter. In the close reading my student's and I were doing of his work *Sketches*, a couple of my students selected the following quote to unpack:

There was something I could not quite capture, a stare, a moment of hesitation, an emotion, etc. I referred to this as the existential hum, or that something that called to me, a feeling or an image I could not grasp. A rumble I could hear just beneath, or above, my capacity to understand it. (p. 27)

It was a moment in Krueger I had somehow passed by in my numerous readings of the text. However, when my students isolated it and brought our attention to it, I was a bit in awe. I was taken with the quote in terms of both practice and theory as well as at the level of living wisdom founded in years of encounter with young people.

In the passage, Krueger is discussing, as he often did, the importance of rhythm in our work. He was writing in such a way as to weave time together between his own youth and the work he was doing with young people. Struggling with the ability to capture the movement of young people and workers in words, he seeks to find a way to understand the



elements that constitute “walking the talk.” How do words reflect the internal rhythms of our lives and how do those internal rhythms play out in external encounters between workers and young people?

As I was reflecting on this, I was reminded of a lesson I learned a number of years ago about the importance of rhythm in understanding culture. The gist of the idea is that culture is not simply a set of practices or beliefs. It is also a deeply seated physical sense of rhythm. In my class I often show an old music video by the folk rock artist Melanie. In it she is performing for a predominately older white audience in Holland¹. The song she is singing was her hit at the time, “Candles in the Rain.” On stage with her is the Edwin Hawkin’s singers, an African American gospel group, famous in their own right for their performance of the song “Oh Happy Day.”

I ask my students to watch the video and see if they can tell me what it can teach us about working multiculturally. The answers tend to run along the lines of racial difference, age of the white audience (older) and the nominally multicultural group on stage (younger), mix of musical styles (folk rock and gospel), and so on. While all of these are certainly accurate and interesting, I tell my class, they don’t really offer us any clues about how we might approach cross cultural work. I put the video on again and direct their attention to the latter part of the performance where the Edwin Hawkin’s singers begin to clap in gospel rhythm and the audience joins in. I stop the video there and ask them what they see. There is generally silence and then someone will say that the audience and the musicians are out of sync with their clapping. I ask them if they can tell me what is wrong and after a few tries someone notices that the gospel group is clapping on the second and fourth beat, while the audience is clapping on the first and

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZ52lk9wzI>



third beat. I ask them to reflect on what kinds of music have the rhythm of the audience and we quickly come up with European forms of music such as classical and American country music. When we think about what forms of music have emphasis on the two and four beats we come up with soul, blues and gospel. I ask my student to wonder if there is the possibility that culture is a rhythm that is expressed in the ways we move, talk, and think? Is there a historical rhythm to a people? What happens when two groups with distinctly different rhythms come into contact with one another? Is some level of innate discomfort rhythmic? If so, how do manage this as workers?

In Krueger's quote, he is asking us to pay attention to just such rhythmic junctures and disjunctures in our work. In his attention to hesitation, hums, and rumbles, his inquiry is evocative of the world of sound and even music. However, unlike the way we traditionally listen to music, by hearing the notes played, he is more attentive to the gaps and overtones that lie above, beneath and in between the notes. He seems to pointing to a limit in our ability to fully capture the movement that occurs in our work. When he says "there is something I couldn't quite capture", I would suggest he is gesturing to what Garfat has called the "space between" and Kathleen Skott-Myhre has called "liminal space." That something in our encounters we can't quite get to and yet that is somehow at the heart of good practice.

Krueger says that it happens in microsecond of a stare that catches our attention while restraining a youth. A kind of moment, when time stops and there is a hesitation before things resume. A space that is indicative of something not quite yet. Krueger calls it the existential hum. In referencing existentialism, he may well be indicating the idea that behind, underneath and between the world as we know it, is the actual world of existence that exceeds any capacity of articulation. The world before we have divided it up



into this thing and that. What the phenomenologists call the things in and of themselves. The rumble of living force.

The impressionist composer Claude Debussy is reputed to have said that music is the space between the notes; that it is the opening between notes that allows music to resonate, reverberate and reach their full measure of expression. Krueger tells us that in his work and in his attempts to describe his work, there is “something that called to me, a feeling or an image I could not grasp”. Such a sense of something relationally important and very possibly essential is crucial to the best kind of Child and Youth Care work. To open ourselves to that kind of work requires a very carefully attuned sensibility. One has to look very carefully, without looking directly. One has to hear very acutely without focusing on a particular sound. One has to feel fully, but always intuitively in order to really get a hint of what Krueger was struggling to tell us.

If we are serious about doing this work relationally, then it is the space created by a hesitation, an emotion, or a stare that holds the capacity for depth, rather than superficial relational engagement. It has the possibility of opening our relationships in the way that Debussy describes the capacity of the space between the notes. That is to say, perhaps we could hesitate and not rush into defining the meaning of a young person’s stare. Maybe, we could resist the temptation to immediately name an emotion. Is it possible that we could hold the space open and not know for a minute, so we could hear the rumble and hum of existence and creative capacity that comes between the moments of our lives? Debussy tells us that space of that kind allows for a certain kind of resonance and reverberation that allows for a full measure of expression.

It is Spinoza, and Deleuze following Spinoza, who proclaim that the highest ethics is that of living expression. Such expression, they tell us is to be found in the collisions between bodies in motion. If they have that at all



right, then Kruger's admonition to seek that which can't be articulated but emerges in a moment of hesitation, may open onto Debussy's full measure. For me this is at the heart of what we do as Child and Youth Care workers. It is not to be found in the realm of defining young people and their behaviors, nor the imperatives and rules of the institutions in which we labor. The beauty of close reading masters like Mark Krueger, is to be found in the depth of mystery that is the human condition we have the privilege to encounter in the work we do.

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Child & Youth Care Practice

Collected Wisdom for New Practitioners



Patricia Kostouros and Michelle Briegel

Editors

After the Tragedy in New Zealand: A Brief Children's Rights Response

Tara Collins

1. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.

United Nations (1989), Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 2

Children's rights are regularly invoked in relation to understanding and guiding international humanitarian responses affecting children and youth due to the number of natural and other crises around the world. Unfortunately, such crises happen far too often including for example, the devastating cyclone in March that has been adversely affecting young people and others in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi (See UNICEF, 2019).



But how do children's rights help us in supporting young people affected by such a tragedy as in Christchurch, New Zealand? UNICEF International's website doesn't provide any guidance. In fact, at the time of writing ten days after the terror attack, it doesn't even provide a press release to identify this key international organization's reaction to this tragedy. Thankfully, the country's Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern has delivered inspiring leadership to her country through such responses as: directly supporting the victims in various ways; refusing to name the perpetrator to prevent his notoriety; wearing a headscarf in solidarity; instigating a ban on military-style semi-automatic guns; and most recently announcing a royal commission to identify lessons about the terror attack. She shows that leadership cannot be simply concerned about lamenting the incident but must actually carry out actions. But what about the rest of us: What should we do, if anything?

How to make sense of this tragedy? To be honest, I don't know whether we can. But Kiaras Gharabaghi (2019) pointed out in his January 2019 CYC-Online column how 2018 was influenced by the problems of white supremacy and related violence. Unfortunately, the pattern is continuing again this year.

So there is choice in how we respond to the New Zealand attack. Do we pretend that it didn't happen with the young people with whom we engaged? We should not, especially after recalling James Freeman's (2019) words in January's CYC-Net editorial following the traumas from shootings and wildfires in California. He reminds us that: "the experience of consecutive, overwhelming events has a cumulative effect" (p. 5) upon young people. The New Zealand horror could be another trauma affecting the young people with whom we work or in our lives. However much we may wish it to be so, we cannot pretend that it didn't happen. We need to remember the young people affected, not only in New Zealand.



How do children's rights help our follow-up in working with young people? In this brief, and by no means comprehensive offering, I offer the following observations.

This attack is an important example about how a global event has local implications affecting so many of us, some more than others. We should not avoid discussing such developments with young people with the misguided justification that we need to protect them. Protection does not mean avoiding or ignoring issues because we need to face these issues, no matter how undesirable or tragic, due to children's right to participate (Collins, 2017). We need to talk about, inform and engage young people, who will likely learn about such events from others. Through our interactions, we should see if there are any teachable moments with young people and be open to and learn from young people as well.

As another example of how hate and discrimination can lead to horrifying violence, the Christchurch tragedy primarily raises questions about the roles and scope of hate groups in the world. It demands that we name and fight against hate and intolerance in our society in order to respect and uphold the specific right of children and youth in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) to non-discrimination (as quoted above). What can we do beyond simply agreeing with this provision in order to actively support it? Have we reflected ourselves about our own worldviews and efforts that may influence non-discrimination in our practices? Do we speak out when we hear problematic words from those around us, no matter who they are? In terms of additional responses, among other recommendations, Gharabaghi (2019) reminds us of the necessity of seeking "community solutions that are local in scope but informed by the global knowledge and wisdom resources we have accumulated, and that engage young and old people not merely in



participatory, but indeed in community-driven, social change based on community expertise” (p. 18).

We should also consider the CRC’s aims of education in article 29(1), which provides not only for the full development of the child (and respect for the natural environment), but also for:

(b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms...;

(c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;

(d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin”.

In light of these provisions, it would be beneficial for us not simply to consider such educational priorities as the responsibilities of parents or schools but also all of us in our interactions and efforts with, and on behalf of young people. The violent incident (and others) highlights the urgent need to end the scapegoating and othering of individuals and groups, reflecting a lack of interconnections amongst people. We should ensure that we are being, interpreting and doing (Freeman & Garfat, 2014; Garfat, Freeman, Gharabaghi, & Fulcher, 2018) in ways that include respectful and consistent attention to foster understanding of, and connections with the



diverse groups in society. Then, we would be better supporting individual and collective respect of CRC article 30, which outlines the rights of “ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin...in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practice his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.”

The CRC’s provision for the aims of education should also lead to re-examination of how we think about identity in our respective societies and the mistakes that are made in upholding it, including by the perpetrator in New Zealand. In his accessible and important work, Kwame Anthony Appiah (2018) explains that contemporary understandings of sources of identity do not necessarily reflect the complications and realities of many people, outlining: “the multiple mistakes we make about our broader cultural identities, not least the very idea of the West. [T]hey’re manifest in the temptation to imagine that people’s origins make them either inheritors of, or outsiders to, Western civilization” (p. xv). Appiah argues that we need to understand these identities better “if we can hope to reconfigure them, and free ourselves from mistakes about them that are often a couple of hundred years old” (p. xvi).

Due to their active and present roles, CYCs are present and in the moment with young people. There is only one moment and it may never come again (as my Irish grandmother used to say), so we have to seize it. I suggest that whenever and wherever we can, we engage in conversation with young people and others about what is needed to respond appropriately, “ensure the presence of voices we have long neglected, pushed aside, delegitimized, or excluded” as Gharabaghi (2019, p. 20) describes and support young people’s responses to redress discrimination.

By providing that children and youth are not forgotten, included and respected, children’s rights ensure that the world remembers that young



people are part of humanity. It is essential that we all do more not only supporting children and youth in their lives but so that they, as well as adults, can live “*without discrimination of any kind*” in accordance with the Convention.

In closing, Appiah (2018) reflects upon the seven billion human beings on our “small, warming planet. The cosmopolitan impulse that draws on our common humanity is no longer a luxury; it has become a necessity” (p. 219).

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Thinking about Interventions in Child & Youth Care

Kiaras Gharabaghi

The term 'intervention' is a contested term in our field. For some, it reflects the whole point of having a field in the first place. If we don't intervene in young peoples' sometimes problematic behaviours, or more generally their lives, what is the point of us being there? Intervention is simply the term we use to describe how we bring about, or at least promote, change for the better. Sometimes it may refer to the actions we take to prevent terrible things from happening, including suicide, self harm, abuse, injury, and so on. At other times, it refers to aspects of behaviour management, or more generally the way in which we intervene in conflict between peers, or between a young person and an adult. In all of these cases, we use the term 'intervention' to indicate that we are doing something intentional with a specific goal or outcome in mind.

For others, the term intervention is symptomatic of imposing our 'expert' view, which is culturally and racially specific, on young people who cannot always defend themselves. Intervention in this context really means control, normative hegemony, and perpetuating power structures in which young people (and often their families and their communities) don't fare well. It is a barrier to participation, youth-centered or youth-driven activity, and it mitigates opportunities for young people to develop a strong sense



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of self, a sense of personal autonomy. Change within this frame is conceptualized differently. It is not us who change young people. Only young people can change themselves, their circumstances and their decisions. Our job is to be with them, provide wisdom where appropriate, coach, guide and advise, but not to impose or enforce things.

These differences in how we think about intervention are reflected in how we teach or train new practitioners. Some child and youth care programs offer courses that are called Intervention Strategies, Advanced Interventions or Therapeutic Interventions. Other programs avoid these kinds of course titles altogether, believing these to act against other priorities, such as youth engagement, youth voice, youth participation and child & youth rights more generally. It seems to me that while some of these issues may require much more in-depth discussion and debate in order to move toward resolution, at the very least we ought to ask some questions about what sort of dimensions of our practice may usefully be exposed to the idea of intervention, whether we use that term or not. Doing this, I think, allows us to consider a wide range of challenging questions our field has been grappling with lately, including the very broad question of what Child and Youth Care practice is, what its limits might be, and whether it can be inclusive of activities and contexts that have for many years fallen outside of orthodox constructions of the field.

To start this conversation, I want to contemplate the term intervention, as it might translate to practice, within at least three different dimensions. As a first dimension, I want to consider the '*what*' of intervention; what are we intervening in?

An obvious response, reflecting many decades of institutional care, is that we are intervening in behaviour, and with it, in the way in which young people present themselves to the world – their families, their communities and the institutions where their lives unfold. In so doing, we are prescribing



correct behaviour and intervening in wrong behaviour. This process, without a doubt, is fraught with problems, particularly when we are intervening with young people whose lived experiences in no way reflect our own. All of the issues of oppression we sometimes discuss, including racism, ableism, gender normativity and others are at the heart of this conceptualization. As long as we think of the 'what' as behaviour and all that goes with it, we are very likely to perpetuate a wide range of much more broad-based injustices. So what else could we be intervening in? Well, I think we could intervene in how young people encounter the obstacle course of their life. In some cases, this means that we assist young people to navigate past the obstacles they might encounter, such as avoiding suspensions in school, charges through criminal justice, or addictions through excessive drug consumption. In other cases, it might be about lending a hand to help young people climb over their obstacles, by teaching, showing and role modeling self regulation in spite of mental health challenges, mindfulness in spite of trauma, patience in the face of anger, empathy in the face of targeted abuse.

Of course, the obstacle course of young people is rarely entirely unique to one young person. Structural issues of racism, for example, are experienced by many of the young people we encounter, even if the specific experiences of each young person might be unique. So the 'what' we intervene in has to also include those broader and more structural issues, such as advocacy on behalf of young people facing disadvantages because of their race or gender or disability; activism in partnership with young people to create systemic change; and research with young people to document the problem and to produce alternative, more inclusive and just ways of dealing with social dilemmas or issues.



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The second dimension of intervention worth thinking about is the 'how' of intervention. What are appropriate and meaningful ways of intervention that take account both of our need to resolve acute crises in which young people may be at risk of irreversible harm, and also our mandate to allow, indeed promote, young people addressing their personal and broader social dynamics themselves? This seems to me requires us to step back in time a little and to recall some of the earliest ideas that gave rise to child and youth care in the first place. One such idea is that intervening as the expert is probably not a good plan. We can see in the work of Krueger, Maier, Fewster and so many others a clear focus on what we today might refer to as self-determination, or youth-driven activity. But more than that, we can also see a focus on understanding; an approach to non-judgmental observation, listening and following rather than expert-like problem-solving. Of course, we would be wise to not limit ourselves to the Eurocentric version of stepping back. We can learn a great deal from other peoples and other communities who have never really practiced anything other than stepping back, seeking understanding by patiently observing, and by allowing things to unfold. Indigenous communities often are the forefront of this kind of community practice; the use of circular forms, in communities and in narratives and stories, serves to optimize community capacity to observe without intervention, to be present without trespassing, to be engaged without hierarchy or imposition.

Intervention in this context is not limited to passive activity. Quite to the contrary, as we seek to understand, we can also challenge young people on their perspectives, their rationales, and their behaviours. "Help me understand how what you are doing right now fits with how I have come to experience you"? This form of intervention, sometimes seen as too lenient or too forgiving is in fact closely tied to accountability. It merely recognizes that accountability is not a one-way proposition, but includes both the



young person (or group of youth) and the practitioners (or group of practitioners). And it may even include the systems and the institutions in which practitioner(s) and young person(s) encounter each other.

The third and final dimension of intervention I want to consider this month (there are more dimensions, of course) is the 'when' of intervention. In institutional settings such as schools, hospitals or residential care, the 'when' of intervention is readily defined – it is intervention all of the time; in fact, the routines, the aesthetic and the rules of the setting all form part of the intervention. This kind of 24/7 intervention context is problematic. I suspect that as practitioners, we struggle to see that problematic because we do not of course experience such intervention as 24/7 activity; we go home eventually, where we encounter the freedoms associated with non-intervention, with self-determination, and with choices and independent decision-making. For young people, when intervention is the order of the day, embedded in all social interaction and even in the task of being alone, it becomes enormously challenging to become; to become a human being, a subject of one's own Self, an actor with agency. The 'when' of intervention must be much more sporadic - the exception to the rule. It must become a unique act of forcing a relationship to its limit of trust and connectivity. Intervening as a young person picks up a gun is a good thing; intervening in the act of suicide, or after the consumption of an opioid is also a good thing. But intervening in challenging behaviours, in decisions that may cause problems down the road, in emotions that may reflect sadness, anger or alienation is not always a good thing. And intervening in conflict is almost never a good thing except when it may save someone from serious injury or death. If we really are committed to a practice that honours the idea of young people as people with agency, with a sense of Self and with a growing sense of autonomy, patience rather than intervention is called for. Risk is a necessary part of this. Without patience and without risk, we may



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circumvent terrible things from happening today, but we will accomplish very little with respect to strengthening the processes by which young people *become*.

These are just three dimensions of interventions we might consider. There are so many more. The point of this short essay is not to argue that intervention is a bad thing; it is instead to challenge practitioners to really think through the *what*, the *how* and the *when* of intervention, and the consequences of thinking of intervention in excessively instrumental and utilitarian ways. Furthermore, we may have to reconsider what we teach in our child and youth care programs. It seems to me that we are in fact promoting an instrumental version of intervention most of the time. When we do this, we abandon not only our commitment to young people to avoid being the expert (a commitment not shared by many other professionals), but also our ability to see beyond the moment and recognize that our skills, our capacities, our collective resources could accomplish so much more than stop a particular behaviour. With young people, we can not only get through diverse obstacle courses that will benefit individuals, but we can climb over obstacles or simply destroy them by intervening more thoughtfully, less imposingly, and without mitigating the necessary and important journey of young people toward a sense of Self and autonomy that fits for them.

To the extent that 'intervention' has become a presumed truism of child and youth care practice, I think the kind of nuanced consideration of intervention I have presented here (incomplete and underdeveloped as it may be) might help us get past the uneasiness with which we have approached issues of professional identification boundaries, and inclusion. If we look to the way in which all sorts of people practice with young people, individually or in communities, by honouring a much more complex approach to intervention, we will surely open our arms to the



communities of practice that we have so far overlooked. The youth worker in a complicated neighbourhood, the soccer coach of a Black Youth soccer team, the Elder helping young people find traces of their identities, the women performing unpaid labour in keeping their youth engaged in their communities, the refugee bringing theatre and performance arts to young people in the park – perhaps these are the child and youth care practitioners who can help us all move forward!

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The National Executive Committee of the South African National Association of Child Care Workers (NACCW) and the Board of Governors of CYC-Net are proud to announce details of the 22nd NACCW Biennial Conference and the 4th CYC-Net World Conference to be held in Durban, South Africa. Conference delegates can look forward to a spirited professional experience blending diverse child and youth care work experiences from across the globe in engagements on practice, programs and child and youth care work policy in a city renowned for summer days all year round!

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Early Bird Registration until 30 April 2019	R 1800	R2250	\$140	\$175
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Last Minute Registration until 15 June 2019	R 2400	R3000	\$180	\$225

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Hostel accommodation has been secured at the Coastlands Hotel and Convention Centre - Durban. Accommodation is shared by 4 people in a room and includes a bathroom and kitchenette. Transport will be provided to and from the conference venue.

Guesthouses and hotel accommodation is available in the vicinity of the ICC.

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Keynote Speakers

Dr. Kiaras Gharabaghi

A renowned academic, researcher and thought leader in work with vulnerable and at risk children and the families, Kiaras believes that being present with young people, making moments meaningful, and working in the life-space of children, families and communities is much more than an intervention; it is a way of being in the world that promotes democracy...



Cornelius Williams

Cornelius Williams is Associate Director and global Chief of Child Protection for UNICEF's Programme Division. He has over 25 years of experience in managing child protection programmes in Western, Eastern and Southern Africa with UNICEF and Save the Children.



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Issues of Equality and Justice Affect us All

Okpara Rice

This column was originally published, in part, in The Gazette on February 9, 2019 after Okpara Rice spoke on a panel at the second annual Iowa Ideas Conference on the topic of protecting Iowa's kids. The original post may be viewed at <https://www.thegazette.com/okpara-rice-criminal-justice-reform-youth-cedar-rapids-20190209>

As a black executive raising two biracial sons, issues of social justice and equality are a personal passion of mine. Growing up in Chicago, I experienced firsthand the effects of inequality in a public school system, a system that didn't care, a system that showed a lack of support for both those struggling with addiction and for their families, and a system that led young black men more easily into incarceration than into college. Many of us have lived complicated lives and have not given up hope. I, too, choose to stay engaged in the fight to ensure all families have the opportunities to thrive.

I have to say at the outset, I am not an expert in criminal justice reform. However, I pride myself on being someone who works to be aware of the issues that face not only our community but also our nation. I have witnessed and read countless stories of how the scales of justice are unequal. I have participated in many roundtables and worked with groups that are trying to address disparities in multiple systems. There are no easy solutions or quick fixes. Sometimes these conversations make us uneasy



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and uncomfortable. It is hard to address issues of bias in the systems we rely on as a nation. It makes us uncomfortable to think that the playing field is indeed not equal and difficult to own that we as a society don't always live up to our rhetoric.

I am a person of optimism. I have lived in various parts of the country and have engaged in these conversations with diverse groups. What makes our community different is that we actually listen to each other. When I was considering moving here, I was told about the historic "Iowa nice," and it has lived up to its billing. In my work at Tanager Place, a child and family service organization in Iowa, I have the unique opportunity to meet many types of people. I get to hear their concerns, their fears, their hopes and their pain. I have had many conversations that have left me with much hope and optimism for our shared future; I smile as I write this. We are a community that cares about each other; however, sometimes we need to engage in conversations that may be uncomfortable but are crucial — conversations that push us out of our personal comfort zones.

The national headlines in the United States talk about historic tribalism as a country. I challenge that concept. Issues of fairness, equality, bias and justice affect us all. We all have a vested interest in making sure that our community lives up to the promises of our nation. Our local law enforcement and school districts have actively been engaged in addressing these issues, as have many community members and local politicians from all types of political persuasions. I know we can continue to have these conversations. We can debate differences, and we can strive to make sure the playing field is level for all.

To that end, I am excited to share two special resources that I believe can spark very valuable conversations across our communities and circles of influence.



First, Adam Foss delivered a 2016 TED Talk titled “A Prosecutor's Vision for a Better Justice System” (Foss, 2016). Adam is a black American working as a district attorney prosecutor in Boston, Massachusetts. In his sixteen-minute talk he transparently shares his early motives in graduating law school and entering the field of criminal prosecution. He also shares the impact of seeing individual stories and how it drove him into seeking change within the criminal justice system. The immense power he held as a prosecutor drove him to wonder if there were better ways to handle the lives of young people at risk of establishing criminal histories. The introduction to his talk on the TED website poses this question:

When a kid commits a crime, the US justice system has a choice: prosecute to the full extent of the law, or take a step back and ask if saddling young people with criminal records is the right thing to do every time. (Foss, 2016)



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As you watch you'll see his vision for justice system reform that replaces punishment with opportunity that seeks to better people's lives. The video has over two million views and you can view it at:

https://www.ted.com/talks/adam_foss_a_prosecutor_s_vision_for_a_better_justice_system

Second, the documentary 'Uncommon Allies' is a powerful story of how one mother's tragedy resulted in her working with the police department to address violence in her community. In 2011 Rosilyn Temple lost her twenty-six-year-old son when he was murdered in his apartment. The documentary synopsis explains:

To this day, [Temple's] homicide remains unsolved. Uncommon Allies shows how Rosilyn, in the wake and devastation of her son's murder, turned a personal search for justice into a life changing community call to action. At a time when widespread distrust of law enforcement is at a heightened level, Uncommon Allies explores Rosilyn's role in effectively bridging the gap between grieving communities and the police department at every homicide scene in the Kansas City, MO area. Rosilyn's passion, leadership, and dedication are helping to improve police-community relations, and she has become a local hero and beacon of strength for her community. (Brick, 2018)

Race, police work, and community action are complex issues which this documentary doesn't shy from in any form. You can view the documentary trailer at <https://vimeo.com/239574961> and read more about the film at <https://uncommonallies.com>. You can also learn more about Rosilyn Temple's work in Kansas City at <http://www.kcmothersincharge.org>



I believe these resources provide an opportunity for all of us to reflect on issues of equality, and I know they will create valuable conversations across our field. I encourage you to lend your voice to the conversations. Collectively, we are the change that can improve equality for all.

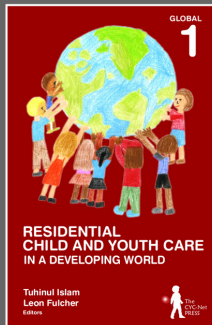
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Patricia Kostouros and Michelle Briegel

Editors

Don't Believe What We Tell You

Doug Magnuson and Priscilla Healey

A few of us who are analyzing data from sex workers (see www.understandingsexwork.ca) were criticized because we questioned the claims that most or all women in sex work/prostitution are trafficked and that prostitution can only be understood as the product of capitalist patriarchy. The author of the criticism cited many studies “proving” the association of trafficking and prostitution. This is excellent, because we can look up these studies, and we did. Turns out that most of these “studies” had no data, and those that did had terrible data. Never mind, she says, because we should not believe sex workers when they tell us they are not trafficked; by definition if they are receiving money for sex they are trafficked. In other words, her data is really opinions from other people who believe the same thing, and if we or other researchers have data that contradicts her view, it is not to be believed. Hers is a beautiful occult science.

She wants us to adhere to her particular “ism.” As Bob Marley and the Wailers sang, “I’m so tired of your isms and schisms.” Instead, Dr. Sibylle Artz, our colleague at the University of Victoria, asks her students to look into the history of ideas that they are taught, including the empirical evidence and also the history of the idea itself. This is a great exercise, because it refocuses attention away from “believing” in or “adhering” to an



idea to thinking about the merits of an idea. In professional education, like CYC, youthwork, and social work, this is admirable.

An entire CYC curriculum could be constructed on the principle of inquiry. Until that fantasy of ours happens, here are a few practical ideas for thinking about the merits of what you are taught. These can be applied in classroom settings about research and theory, but they are applicable to practice settings ad practitioners as well.

- You do not have to believe stuff you are told. It really is that simple. We can try ideas on for size, but that is different than believing in them. Students and practitioners are far more interesting when they think for themselves.
- An idea that comes from Howard Becker and other qualitative research experts is looking for counter examples to accepted wisdom. If they do not exist, we might wonder if the idea is too simplistic. For example, we are often told that the foster care system is terrible, that being in care is terrible, or that group homes are terrible. It is fairly difficult to find research and evaluation that includes data about excellent foster care or excellent group care. Perhaps the real situation is more complicated and more diverse.



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- In theory and research about ideas and practice, can you find any actual children and youth? There are some debates in education, social work, and CYC in which the debate has taken on a life of its own such that actual young people—and data from and about them—are missing.
- Are there enough examples to be credible? One prominent journal now requires papers that are reports on qualitative data to have at least 28 participants. Why exactly 28? I do not know, but they are rightly concerned about the legitimacy of idiosyncratic, convenience samples with small numbers on which authors are basing sweeping practice and theory changes.
- A quick reminder about the first paragraph of this essay! Remember to check whether there is any evidence at all for an idea, or if writers/instructors are simply citing each other citing each other.
- Is the data data or is it opinion? Doug was interviewed recently for someone's study, and the opinions he offered are being called "data" by that researcher. They were opinions, and calling them data does not make them data or justify taking Doug's opinions seriously. Many studies are really collections of opinions.
- Are the right things being compared? Often academic ideas are justified by a logical fallacy called the *false analogy*. Children in care are compared to middle class children. Information about substance users who are sex workers is assumed to be true of the population of sex workers. Early research about the most marginalized, GLBT populations was assumed to be true of the entire GLBT population.
- Finally, has the idea ever been tried? Can we find any example of its implementation, in practice and in evaluation/research? If so, what



happened, and what worked and did not? Many ideas are intuitively attractive but do not really work.

We want to avoid creating our own occult science, hermetically sealed to protect ourselves from contradictory ideas and from threats to our egos. Exploring and learning from the world around us is far more interesting and far more fun.

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Racialized Students as Educational Tools in Child & Youth Care Post-Secondary Education

Alawiya Hassan and Kiaras Gharabaghi

Discussions in the field of child and youth care in North America have increasingly focused on issues of race and racism, gender identity, abilities and disabilities and other factors that position individuals in particular ways and particular spaces. These are welcome, and one might argue long overdue, directions for our field. Faced with service systems that feature disproportionate representation of racialized young people, their families and communities in those sectors that one might consider coercive (child welfare and youth justice), and underrepresentation in those sectors that are voluntary and often proactively and supportively structured (child and youth mental health), a continued silence on issues of race and racism clearly has become unsustainable, ethically bankrupt, and very likely compromises the quality of practice our field can aspire to. It is encouraging that just last year, the 25 Characteristics of Relational Child and Youth Care Practice were re-written to reflect, even if inadequately, this move towards a more inclusive and critical articulation of what our field is about (see <https://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/oct2018.pdf>).



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One question that emerges from these discussions is how they are reflected in the pedagogical approaches of those teaching in and about the field of child and youth care. One aspect of this question queries the issue of who is teaching about these issues and themes; as it turns out, very often it is the lone racialized faculty member in a School or program who is charged with 'taking care of the diversity stuff'. But increasingly (we hope), white instructors are taking up the challenge of ensuring that they teach about these emerging trends in the field; but they are doing so without a broader discussion about how one might teach in this context. As it turns out, well-intentioned approaches sometimes perpetuate the very dynamics that are being explored from our new found 'enlightened' perspectives.

In an effort to contribute to discussions and reflections on pedagogical approaches that meaningfully move toward inclusive and critically-informed classrooms, we thought it would be good to start somewhere, recognizing that there could have been many other starting points and that such starting points probably cannot be considered outside of a much more complex web of social injustice driven by racism. Alawiya, in her role as a graduate student in the School of Child & Youth Care at Ryerson University, initiated and led our joined process of reflecting on the concept of racialized people as educational tools. As a result, much of what we want to contribute is her narrative and critical analysis, but we will, at the end, speak also to the inherent contradiction embedded in having Alawiya help us (and me) think through these issues.

* * *

For some time now, I (Alawiya) have been thinking about the implications of using CYC students as 'educational tools' in the classroom



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setting. What I mean by 'educational tool' is the feeling experienced by many racialized people that there is an expectation on the part of instructors (and sometimes classmates) to constantly educate our oppressors on the various forms of oppression that we experience. This creates a power dynamic that, in turn, provides an opening for whiteness to challenge and even change our experiences of racism, ultimately rendering these experiences untrue, our stories invalid, imagined and exaggerated. Furthermore, being used as 'educational tools' allows for whiteness to continue to be protected and for white privilege to gain strength. Therefore, racism continues to manifest in the classroom as a result of racialized students being made to feel responsible for resolving the problem. For this reason, the use of racialized students as 'educational tools' needs to be challenged.

As a black student in academia for over five years, I have learned that simply naming racism and how it makes its appearances in various spaces is quite easy for myself and racialized people. However, doing so can also be damaging, particularly when there is an expectation, perhaps even a reliance on racialized students to do the work of teaching that properly should be done by instructors. Expecting racialized students to educate white people about racism is racism. It can even be unsafe because it is unclear how far an individual is in their understanding of their own racial identity. It is also unsafe because what might be spoken by the racialized individual can put them at risk for comments from white people that seek to challenge their ideas, stories, or concepts of race. Finally, it is unsafe because we often need to 'sell' our stories to white people, and we recognize that on a first telling of our stories, many white people listening question the legitimacy of what we are talking about. Perhaps this is the case because our stories interfere with the unconscious celebration of



white privilege, and expose such privilege as a symptom of inequity for which white people bear responsibility.

I have felt unsafe many times in academic spaces where race is the topic. Once a white professor expressed to me that she wished I had been in her class so that I could have offered insight on racial issues to her students. The professor also said, “as a black woman, you would have benefited the class greatly”. The assumption that I would even feel safe to discuss such a topic is an issue because I may not have felt safe and instead experienced anxiety that I may not have been received well by students. Even the assumption that I identified primarily as a black woman is problematic. What if I did not even identify as black and instead identified as African-Canadian or just plain African? Identifying as African also creates very specific experiences for me because racism in Africa is not the same as in North America. Additionally, I have many friends that refuse to call themselves black even if the rest of the world sees them as nothing else but that. I have friends that identify as persons of colour. It is presumptuous to think that I can be representative of all black folks. My racial experiences may not necessarily resonate with another racialized peer. Also, there is the issue of intersectionality that was not even considered. My religious practice is Islam (which the professor is aware of) and there are many Muslims who do not identify as black. Thus, white identifying CYC professors need to be mindful of race issues and stop making assumptions about how a racialized person identifies.

Over my years in CYC classroom settings, I have observed many strategies used by white instructors and students to silence our stories. These are not always malignant strategies; instead, I think they are born out of white privilege. For example, one statement I receive often is along the lines of, “I have a black partner so I’m not racist”. Yes, I understand you have a black partner but that does not mean one is not racist; however, it



serves as a silencing strategy. It is a way of distancing the problem of racism from the whiteness present in the moment, and othering the problem away from Self. For a racialized person, these kinds of responses feel like an all too casual acknowledgment of a problem while at the same time representing an abdication of responsibility for that problem. The move on the part of white instructors and white students to protect or insulate themselves from the very possibility of being racist renders our stories told in that space and at that moment essentially irrelevant. We are told, in no uncertain terms, that we are preaching to the choir. By silencing our stories we are made to feel our voice is not important.

Silence can, in some instances serve as a form of resistance. I know some racialized friends who intentionally use silence in classrooms when issues of race arise because it forces the conversation to change course. It does this because the expectation on the part of white instructors and students that racialized people will speak to the issues is not met. These moments are always powerful, as a classroom that declared itself as inclusive and open suddenly becomes awkward and closed. But there is little learning associated with such awkwardness. Ultimately, as a racialized person I feel the moment as one of resistance, but I am conscious that nothing has really changed.

One element of the problem of using racialized students as educational tools relates to the issue of consent. Who has given white people the right to assume racialized students will offer insight on racial matters in class? This assumption, which I have experienced as widespread and almost taken for granted, comes in the way of much more critical and meaningful discussions about race and racism in CYC classrooms. Clearly what is missing is a discussion, led by a white instructor, about how a classroom might move forward with discussions on race and racism, who will have what sort of role, and what kinds of expectations students (all students)



may have that reflect unconscious biases, white privilege, or, on the flip side, deep anxiety and a feeling of lack of safety. Such a discussion can lead to an engagement of consent as a requirement for proceeding with the process of learning and exploration.

Using racialized students as educational tools in classroom settings in CYC academia perpetuates white privilege. The idea that an oppressor expects a student to educate them on racism is a form of privilege because whiteness assumes that racialized students will speak, and white people will be able to 'piggyback' on the information provided. Additionally, this is a form of privilege because it means white people refuse to learn about race issues unless it is discussed in the classroom setting; they no longer need to find research or read on racial issues because the expectation is that racialized students will do it for them. Why not have racism discussions in classrooms from a white student's experience, why must it consistently be racialized students? When whiteness is recognized as part of racism and is discussed from a white person's perspective, it challenges the comfort that white people experience daily due to their white privilege. Moreover, discussing racism from the perspective of whiteness/white people allows for the social positioning of white people to be challenged because white people will need to think about how their social position impacts racial issues. The dialogue created from such discussions of the oppressor and oppressed is a way in which white folks are sharing the responsibility of educating themselves about racism. This will challenge existing dialogues of racism in the CYC classroom.

* * *

It is not adequate to put racism on the agenda in classroom discussions. How we discuss racism, and who leads that discussion, is of significant



consequence to racialized students and to white students too. The temptation to rely on racialized students to share their wisdom and experience on racism perpetuates the very dynamics this process is meant to mitigate. It places the burden of change on racialized students. Perhaps more importantly, it absolves white students and white instructors from engaging racism based on their own social location and their white privilege. Sometimes this may appear as counter-intuitive – instructors often report that racialized students are eager to discuss racism in class, and far from the instructor imposing themselves and creating expectations, racialized students carry on these discussion on their own accord. From a pedagogic perspective, however, it is not good enough to simply allow these dynamics to unfold. In every other context and with respect to any other learning theme, instructors take the lead and guide discussions. There is no reason why in the context of race and racism, we suddenly sit back and rely on the wisdom and experience of precisely those students whose experiences of racism are the outcome of the institutional and social processes that have benefitted white people for a very long time.

We, Alawiya and Kiaras, decided to share this dialogue/paper with the broader CYC community because we felt it is important to ensure that we have a pedagogic discussion about race and racism alongside the substantive discussions about how race and racism impact in the field of child and youth care. We do not believe that race and racism can be taught in politically neutral ways. The pedagogy is itself a representation of race and racism in child and youth care. Therefore, it is important that we engage on these kinds of questions.

Of course, there is a certain irony embedded in who is carrying this dialogue. It is very much Alawiya identifying as a racialized person, who initiated it, wrote about it as part of her course work, and invited me to engage further. In my engagement with Alawiya I am also learning from



her, inadvertently putting her in the position of the 'educational tool'. We hope that what we are presenting is recognized as a shared reflection; in many ways, the contradictions embedded within this reflection serve to strengthen the argument that we ought to be talking more about pedagogic approaches to engaging these issues in the classroom.

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Nonverbal Miscommunication

Lisa Spencer

I am a parent of two children with disabilities and medical histories. I advocate for their needs and continue to learn and grow alongside them. The love I have for my children inspires me to expand my knowledge and challenge perspectives. However, I want to be clear that I am not claiming to be an expert. My perspective is limited in comparison to the diverse experiences and social locations of young people. I only recognize that I am a peripheral advocate and so it is my responsibility to listen.

I want to explore the concept of miscommunication. As a Child and Youth Care practitioner I converse with youth, but how often do we understand each other? How often am I open to what young people have to say through verbal or nonverbal means? Is it possible that my internal dialogue impedes my ability to communicate? I try to keep my body language open and relaxed, but what about my facial expressions? There will be times that I am confused, upset, frustrated, annoyed, thoughtful, or happy. I may not always be effective in controlling the outward expression of my internal state. If I can accept this of myself, is it not fair to say the same of youth? The complex interplay between verbal script, body language, and facial expressions may send a mixed message that is exacerbated by unmatched responses. This is miscommunication.



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The following poem is my own and, although my experiences take root within communication and disabilities, it is not intended to represent a specific group or profession. Instead, this poem is a vehicle for reflection.

Internal Dialogues of Miscommunication

These behaviours are problematic
I struggle to see how
Flapping, spinning and making noises serves a purpose.
Can't you see that
People are staring?
I'm confused as to why
You are so different
All I will say is this:
I cannot read your thoughts.
I feel I need to remind you that
Appropriate behaviour
Will help, but you seem obsessed with
Doing something distracting
Like doodling or humming.
I focus on little things that I can control,
When I am overwhelmed
Sometimes you frustrate me
And I will admit
We are not connecting
It appears
I am repeating myself and
You are not listening.
Sometimes



It feels like
I am hitting my head against the wall.
I am so frustrated
Maybe I'm just not understanding
Have you considered that
You may be sending the wrong message
I want you to know that
I am just doing what I've always done in these situations
Even though it doesn't always translate.
You are trying your best
And
I'm just trying to interact with you
Help me understand.

The structure of this poem is intentional and represents various components of a communication event. First, the words are centered to represent the message being transmitted from adult to child through the internal dialogue. The sentences are broken to illustrate incomplete or fragmented thought patterns that can lead to miscommunication between adult and child. The poem reads from top to bottom to represent the power that the adult has when they direct their thoughts down to the child. Finally, the poem depicts the adult's internal struggle and learning process. The adult makes assumptions regarding the child's behaviour and state of mind. The adult blames the child for not complying with their preconceived notions of what the child needs or wants. The adult recognizes their own frustration and admits they may respond from a state of stress in a way which impedes their ability to understand the child. The adult tries to justify their thought process by reassuring their self that this is what is always done regardless of success. Finally, the adult admits they



may have the best of intentions, but they are not connecting to the child without including the child in the process. Since this dialogue is internalized, the child is unaware of what the adult is thinking. However, I believe it is possible that the frustration and desperation could be involuntarily transmitted and interpreted—or misinterpreted by the child. I believe the child could internalize these emotions through facial expressions and body language regardless of what verbal script the adult provides in this moment. This is a one-sided conversation that leads to miscommunication and perhaps a missed opportunity for connection.

Again, I would like to reiterate that this poem is meant for reflection. I am not the adult in this poem, but there are elements that encapsulate my learning journey. I have shown this poem to a few readers who could relate to some of these assumptions as well. So how do I minimize the risk of miscommunication with young people? I can ask for clarification. But what about youth who cannot provide clarity? Perhaps I can return to the root of the problem. Perhaps I can start at the bottom and recognize that I need *help to understand*. Perhaps I consider their perspective of the *same situation*. Perhaps all I need to do is *flip the script*.

Please re-read the poem from bottom to top.

This second reading, from the bottom to the top reveals the internal dialogue of the child. The child reacts in desperation. The child becomes defensive of their own actions. The child admits frustration with the adult and may even show aggression if their thoughts of hitting the wall become externalized. The child justifies their actions and even casts blame. Finally, the child accepts that this is who they are regardless of the adult's intentions. Both perspectives give hints to indicate the other's external behaviour in response to their body language or facial expressions in this process. Both perspectives use the same language to illustrate mirrored reactions. The adult who was once ignorant to the child's needs ends by



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asking for help. The child who was once willing to understand ends by questioning the adult's intentions. This shows that miscommunication is messy with a potential to lead to conflict and confrontation.

Therefore, I intend to listen to verbal cues, body language, and facial expressions. I will remain open and honest. I will recognize that my interpretations may not reflect the external behaviours or internal dialogues of the child. I will make my intentions clear, but only after I consult with the child. I will do my best to minimize miscommunication with youth. This is a complex process, but imagine what could happen if I keep my thoughts inside?

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Us Too: The Impact of Social Media on Youth in the Post #MeToo World

Jenna Timmons

The #MeToo movement started long before the hashtag, by a youth worker over a decade ago. Tarana Burke worked predominantly with children of colour, and shares the heartbreaking story of how the movement started on her webpage (see [here](#)). Prominent in the media and in many newsfeeds are stories of sexual assault and violence against women and girls. These stories are often too familiar for those in the child and youth care field. Burke's webpage shows a montage of images of female children, and women, with wide smiles. Under each photo is the startling message "Me too". These women and girls are part of the one in three women in Canada (SACHA, n.d), with the words "me too" forced upon them. Individuals who identify as gender diverse, transgender women, lesbian, bisexual or two-spirited face a disproportionately high rate of sexual violence when compared to heterosexual or cisgender women¹ (Bucik, 2016).

¹ The terms female, girl, women/woman is meant to represent those who identify as female, including those who are members of the LGBTQ+ community, and cisgender women, while recognizing that those from marginalized communities face a higher rate of violence.

The self is at the core of child and youth work and being able to use aspects of the self in our relationships with youth is fundamental (Burns & Vachon, n.d). We come with stories and experiences. One in three of female workers comes carrying “me too” with them. While working in a Violence Against Women shelter as a child and youth counsellor, my co-worker shared a powerful story about a five-year-old girl, that had been meeting with her. Through their sessions the girl had said nothing about the trauma she had suffered at the hands of her mother’s boyfriend. She spoke about her dolls, and coloured bright pictures. Until one day when her mother and her were sitting in the office she asked the counsellor, “Was there hurt in your house too”? My co-worker admitted she was a little taken aback. The girl had put words to what was happening in her house, and knowing that this was an opportunity to help this girl, to show her she wasn’t alone, responded with, “Yes”. The little girl began to cry. And then the three women, one small, cried together. They cried for each other and for themselves. The bond was braided after this conversation, after the moment of self-disclosure and through ultimately the showing of empathy and love. The little girl began to feel safe.



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When the hashtag #Metoo went viral, a shared history became present with women all over the world beginning to tell their stories. The use of social media as a space of activism and protest isn't something new, but it took on a new and heightened presence. Youth are more connected than any other generation (for example, nearly 100% of Canadian youth aged 15-24 use the internet daily and more than three quarters use the internet to follow news and current affairs). The role of the internet and social media plays an important role in the lives of youth with half of youth aged 16-24 participating in real time discussion on the internet (Statistics Canada, 2018; Sexual Assault Centre Hamilton Area, n.d.). The views expressed on the internet and through social media play a role in shaping the views of young people on society and themselves. These views are often linked to what and how they witness and participate on social media platforms.

The New York Times reported that 43% of middle school students experience sexual harassment, with one third of teenagers reporting experiencing relationship abuse (Lu, 2018). Embedded in much of Western society is the norm of toxic masculinity. Males are sometimes meant to be dominate, while showing little emotion. Misogyny is naturalised. "Boys will be boys," is often heard to excuse boys and men of their behaviour. Children learn these ideas at a young age, for example, little girls learning that it is flattering for a boy to hit them or touch them without consent by adults who say "It's because he likes you". The danger of being a man in this day is discussed widely and the focus is on men as victims of women who accuse them. Society puts male affection and attention on a pedestal, as a goal for women to work towards and achieve, often with self-worth attached to achieving this goal.

People make seemingly ingenious products, like anti-rape nail polish where women can dip her finger into her drink to see if it has been drugged. There doesn't seem to be a sense of horror over the need for



something like this, but a quiet acceptance this is the world we live in -- ell-meaning, but ultimately misguided, placing the responsibility of preventing sexual assault onto those against whom it is perpetrated. Women are told they are responsible to prevent themselves from being victims of sexual assault in a number of ways, including through the way they act, dress, time of day they go out, who they go out with, and how vigilant they are.

The majority of women speaking out when the hashtag #Metoo went viral were women over the age of 20 (Whittington, 2017) but that doesn't mean there isn't a large group of children and youth quietly whispering, "Us too"! Part of our responsibility is to listen for these whispers, and assist in giving these children and youth safer spaces to disclose this information while providing them with support. We can support youth in navigating a world where toxic masculinity and rape culture is present throughout our media. The youth I have worked with can readily discuss examples of victim blaming, slut shaming, rape jokes, demeaning sexualisation of women and the celebration of male sexual conquests. As one youth said, "It's everywhere". Even the popular musician Drake writes in his number one song, *Hotline Bling*: "Ever since I left the city you been wearing less and going out more". A number of women reacted to this song and @KelseyMacAdams wrote, "Ever since he left the city Drake's been bitching about what some girl who is no longer interested in him chooses to do with her life" (Walters, 2015).

Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat can be seen as platforms for misogyny. The socialcultural landscape has history as a white, male dominated space (Banet-Wieser, Miltner, 2016) with women viewed as encroaching on the safety of this male space. Popular memes and conversation perpetuate misogyny. A meme can be defined as an idea, behaviour, or style that spreads from person to person within a



culture, often with the aim of conveying a particular theme, or meaning. Women are being seen as unable to “take a joke”. Violence against women and girls is normalized and validated. Chemley (2013), for example, uses this image to make this point:



Youth are often left on their own to navigate this landscape with an older generation who didn't grow up with the pressure of social media, and creating an online presence and persona. This is a way that youth identify, and this form of the self for youth needs to be explored by families and those who work with children and youth. Core values and beliefs are expressed through social media posts. The normalization of these messages provides pressure for young men to keep up with society's "norm", and for young women to lose self-esteem and self-worth. We can aid in guiding conversations with youth and families, providing education, and understanding on what it is like to be a person in a social media space. Values and beliefs can be explored, and a new understanding of how this kind of violence affects those it is perpetrated against can be gained. The use of the self in these discussions is ultimately natural and essential for the youth and the worker to feel a connection to the medium, and each other.



Social media platforms can also be a place of empowerment for youth. Through these platforms female youth are able to reach out to other youth and women. There are private female groups, where a female can go and express her frustration with the patriarchy, or how she had been slut shamed. They are places to share their stories, and to receive validation, even if it is from a group of strangers. It is also a place to share public service announcements about what men to stay away from on online dating apps as a way of trying to create a safer community and for women and female youth to support each other.

The #Metoo movement showed that this support and community can come out of the confidential groups, voices can be heard, and that social media can be a place of political activism. It created a space for those who were ready to join the conversation, and created opportunity for those who were not yet ready. We can provide safer places to have these conversations about rape culture and violence against women and girls. We need to be able to have hard and in-depth conversations about toxic masculinity, and how the use of social media can be both a place of hurt and a space of activism. A place to be seen and heard, and a place to watch and listen. The question remains: Are we ready for these difficult conversations? Are we prepared to make ourselves vulnerable while supporting those we work with, and will this bring us closer together? Are we ready to say “me too”, too?

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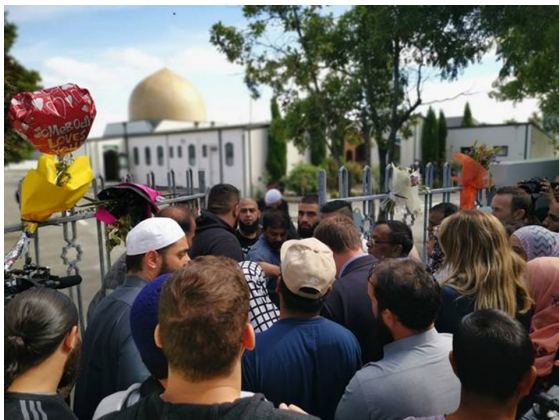


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Postcard from Leon Fulcher

From New Zealand, at a Time of Grieving

Kia Ora Koutou,
colleagues.
Thanks to so
many of you who have
sent personal
messages of
remembering about
the terror that
unfolded here on
Friday, 15 March as
mid-day prayers
began at Christchurch
Mosques near Hagley
Park – as the



Re-opening of the Al Noor Mosque, near Hagley Park in Christchurch, a week after the terror

Bangladesh Cricket Team were arriving at the mosque before the Third and Final Test Match against New Zealand the following day. Fifty worshippers were assassinated while others remain in critical condition.

It is difficult for me to feel empathy for people whose lives are driven by hate for anyone, or any group of people. I find it hard to think about the extent to which hate can and does become a driving force of motivation in some people's lives. The past week has galvanised us as a peoples in New Zealand to say *"No to Racism and Hate!"*



Every New Zealander will remember where they were when they first heard of this latest news of Christchurch terror – after two earthquakes – this time it was an historic hate crime carried out in the name of white supremacy.

Local people passing by the two mosques when they were about to be, and were being attacked were heroes, as were the rural policemen who rammed the escape car. The other first responders were amazing, as were those who staffed the Canterbury health service response. Without these people, things could have been worse.

Almost immediately, the cry *They R Us!* began rippling out from the centre of white supremacy terror, across the city of Christchurch, to other South Island and then North Island cities and towns the length and breadth of New Zealand. Within three days, new gun legislation was announced, removing high calibre semi-automatic rifles.



The Ides of March are etched forever in the hearts, minds and souls of all New Zealanders



Brave Heroes and First Responders helped chase and capture the terrorist and saved lives

[5 -]

It is a tradition in New Zealand that we acknowledge and offer our condolences to the families of those who have passed away. The Maori tradition of *Tangihanga* is well established and recognises burial rituals. Traditionally, followers of Islam are expected to bury their dead within 24 hours, but the Imam may offer dispensations.

New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern offered leadership and national support for new immigrant families as well as long-standing New Zealand families – all grieving for loved ones. Prime Minister Ardern joined with cross party leadership to the call for a Royal Commission of Enquiry into *What Happened and Why it Happened?*

One is mindful of how both Maori and Islamic immigrants New Zealanders have experienced white supremacy racism. During the late 19th Century, Maori villages, animals and peoples were killed and driven off their lands for reasons justified only in the eyes of white settlers and their commercial enforcers during different times in New Zealand history. Remember *Parihaka!* <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/occupation-pacifist-settlement-at-parihaka>



They R Us and we New Zealanders will not bow down in terror



As leaders, we pay our condolences with respect and dignity



New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern offered a new vision of leadership to the world

New gun registration laws will be presented to Parliament with four weeks, and it looks as though this may include registration of how many guns and of what variety each registered owner holds, and for what reasons.



We will remember...



*Hate will be undone and love will redeem us
– Imam Fouada*

New Zealand is a hugely rural and farming country where hunting is a tradition of long-stranding. However, no serious hunter – who eats what they kill – would ever use a high calibre semi-automatic rifle to shoot big game!

Just after the massacre, Imam Fouada reminded us: ***Hate will be undone and love will redeem us!***

As we pause and remember Christchurch, try to Make Your Place a Hate and White Supremacy-Free World.

May the Peace be upon you.



And New Zealand is all the stronger through our being here

Information

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Leon Fulcher – Transformation, New Zealand

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In general:

- Submissions should be no longer than 2500 words
- The style of a paper is up to the author
- We prefer APA formatting for referencing
- We are willing to work with first-time authors to help them get published
- We accept previously published papers as long as copyright permission is assured
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