

CYC-Online

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

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Becoming Who We Thought We Were

Heather Modlin

I started writing this editorial in May and the following was going to be my first paragraph:

When I was asked to write this editorial I was intent on not writing anything about COVID-19. But that really proved to be impossible, given how the pandemic has shaped my life – and the lives of everyone around the globe – for almost three months. What else is there to write about?

What else is there to write about, indeed?

On May 25, 2020 George Floyd was killed by the police in Minneapolis, Minnesota during an arrest for allegedly using a counterfeit bill. This event gave rise to a wave of protests around the world decrying police brutality towards people of colour. The protests, while triggered by the death of George Floyd, are about decades of systemic racism, colonization, inequality and oppression.

Advocates have been speaking out for years about police surveillance and mistreatment of black people. George Floyd was not the first (and won't be the last) racialized person to be killed by the police in North



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America. Why did it take witnessing his murder to galvanize the world into action?

One of the things that made this situation unique is that it was caught on video, in real time, and what we were seeing and experiencing was indisputable. There was no way to spin it. It also followed on the heels of several other striking illustrations of racism in the United States – the murders of Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor, the Central Park video from Christian Cooper. All these events happening in such close succession to each other perhaps contributed to a domino effect of societal awakening.

I have always considered myself to be anti-racist, anti-discriminatory, and committed to equality and social justice. It took this situation for me to fully understand and accept my role, as a white person, in sustaining the racist and colonial structures that give rise to this type of atrocity. It pains me to admit this. But self-reflection, painful as it may be, is necessary if I am going to move forward as an ally to those who are racialized, marginalized and disenfranchised. The level of discomfort I have been feeling since George Floyd was murdered is nothing compared to the discomfort felt by Black, Indigenous and people of Colour every day.

There is a psychological concept called cognitive dissonance that suggests we have an innate aversion to holding contradictory beliefs at the same time. When we learn new information or have an experience that challenges a deeply held belief, we are motivated to resolve the uncomfortable feeling this provokes. Usually, we do this in one of two ways – we change our thinking about what we have learned or experienced so that it no longer contradicts our beliefs (through denial, rationalization, minimization, or other common thinking errors) or, when the cognitive



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dissonance becomes too great for that to work, we change our beliefs and/or actions.

This is where I want to try and make a connection to child and youth care practice. Beyond the obvious – that many of the young people and families with whom we work are racialized and/or marginalized – this situation has highlighted the power of felt experience to transform our interpretation and understanding of ourselves and the world, and perhaps accelerate the cognitive dissonance process. If I, as a highly educated, intelligent professional with over 30 years of experience in a helping field and a fierce desire to not be racist, required this jolt to shift to a new way of understanding and responding to systemic racism (and clearly I am not the only one), what would it take to shift the thinking of someone who is knowingly racist? What will it take to move the entire population forward?

Education is important. Knowledge is important. Yet we know, as child and youth care practitioners, that change can occur when we have repeated experiences that are different from our previous experiences. Those of us with unearned privilege need to use our privilege to change the experiences of those who are racist and of those who are racialized.

I am not going to talk about how to be an effective ally – there are many people far more knowledgeable than I who can provide this information. I do know that it is important to keep learning and to remain diligent. When the protests are over, there will be a temptation for us white people who have been uncomfortably impacted to go back to the way things were before. To feel we have done our part and can let go of the discomfort. To minimize, rationalize and deny what we have seen and experienced. We cannot let that happen.



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This is About Who We Are, and Who We Want To Be

Okpara Rice

Current events have forced my hand, mandating I launch a family conversation I never wanted to have.

I am, of course, talking about ‘the’ talk that has taken place in many African American households throughout our country.

I had to explain to my two boys, who are biracial, why the protests are taking place and why there is so much pain. As best I could, I needed to describe why society is tearing itself apart.

I sat and listened as my wife, who is white, told our boys that in the eyes of some they are not equal.

Despite the truthfulness of her words, my heart broke. Our boys are young and still mapping their path forward into manhood.

This sad truth will now be part of their story, as it was a part of my story and my father’s story.

I had hoped to spare them from the lessons ingrained in me as a young man in Chicago, a part of a community with a tenuous relationship with local law enforcement. It was one of the reasons we chose to raise our family elsewhere. Still, I’m not so far removed that I can’t remember how powerless it felt to have a gun pointed at me. At the time, I chalked it up to the way of life on the South Side, but now I know different and I never



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wanted my children to experience it. The internet, the headlines and the computers in their pockets make protecting them from this ugly underbelly impossible.

And, even today, when I walk into professional situations with my well-earned title and hard-fought academic background, there are some who don't consider me worthy. They don't believe I am smart enough or that I have the acumen of my white counterparts.

These sentiments seethe off some people in ways that are difficult to describe, but black executives often discuss the same experience. It is something we grapple with day in and day out.

This isn't the first time, of course, our family has had discussions about race, but this time feels different. I've challenged myself to strike a positive, hopeful tone when I speak with them about these things.

This time that personal challenge felt insurmountable, given the amount of pain and urgency surrounding us all.

The reality we are grappling with is inequality, of being deemed not worthy by virtue of our skin tone.

People who look like me, people who look like my sons are not afforded the same opportunities. For us there is no level playing field. And, in order to navigate through life, we first have to admit this to ourselves. I thought I'd mastered this part of the process, bitter as it was, but I'll admit experiencing it from the perspective of a father is far more unpalatable.

It's difficult to come to terms with this not really being a fair and just society, and more difficult to acknowledge how that realization has already negatively impacted the lives and prospects of those you love. And yet all any of us need to do is pick up a book or read an article to understand how systems were developed to keep a certain segment of society disenfranchised.



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This isn't about politics or any particular political affiliation, but about who we are and who we want to be. This is about directly targeting the issues we know to be at the root of this struggle: disproportionality in education and criminal justice, unfair housing and lending practices and more. This is about courage, about stepping out of our silos and actively choosing to care for others. We allowed these systems to fester, and we have the power to end them.

Let's begin by trying to understand each other.

Don't just watch the protests on the television and make uninformed guesses about the people participating. Ask someone who doesn't look like you what they think and why they think that way. Expand your mind by considering that person's perspective.

Don't be afraid to show vulnerability and have a tough conversation. Not only will you learn more about how systems of oppression have impacted so many, but you will learn more about yourself.

Be open and honest. Be unafraid to say enough is enough. Address inequality head on with courage and conviction. Know that things can and must change, and that we'll all be better because of it.

None of this will be easy, but it is necessary. Our beautiful children as well as our children's beautiful children deserve better than knowing we knew what was wrong and didn't change it. Collective action can move mountains. We just need to care enough to fight for each other.

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Writing for *CYC-Online*

CYC-Online is a monthly journal which reflects the activities of the field of Child and Youth Care. We welcome articles, pieces, poetry, case examples and general reflections from everyone.

In general:

- Submissions should be as close as possible to 2 500 words
- The style of a paper is up to the author
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- We are willing to help first-time authors to get published
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Children's Rights Begin at Home

Tara Collins and Francisco Cornelius

When you learn about rights, you learn that they apply outside of school as well, in the home or on the street

– A young person, cited in Landon Pearson Resource Centre for the Study of Childhood and Children's Rights, 2009, p. 24.

Since many of us are isolated at home, have you thought about how children's rights are relevant?

Many adults have misconceptions about children's rights, which inhibit understanding and respect of these rights in society. There continues to be inadequate awareness-raising, education, and training to support children's rights including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child ([CRC], 1989), and implementation around the world (e.g. Collins, 2019). Schools, religious institutions, and media could offer opportunities to support children's rights awareness not only by children and youth but also parents and others in society. But not enough opportunities are being made of these institutions and their communications platforms that regularly access thousands of parents and caregivers in our countries. Given the gaps in society in order to learn about rights, we recommend that children's rights should begin at home where we can learn about, and respect rights in practice.



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Children's rights are critically important in supporting understandings of young people as human beings and respecting them. This means that children and youth are not possessions and cannot be only relegated to the private sphere outside of our concern and our responsibility. Children and youth are our collective concern. We should care about their human rights not only in our professional pursuits but also in our personal lives. We should respect and practice children's rights at home.

We recognize that not all Child and Youth Care practitioners are parents; and many of you may not have children in your homes. Nonetheless, you likely have contact with children and youth in other ways. Your personal relationships could be with your nieces, nephews, grandchildren, young neighbours, and/or young friends and/or professional pursuits. So it is possible to respect children's rights at home as an entry point to reflect upon and consider how children's rights inform our personal relationships with young people in our lives.

How can we make children's rights real in our day-to-day lives with young people, not just reflect formal legislative or constitutional provisions that may mandate and guide our professional efforts? To begin, it is important to examine how children's rights may influence how you relate to young people in your lives.

We can begin to consider how children's rights connect to our efforts at home through the three dimensions of relational Child and Youth Care (CYC) work namely Being, Interpreting, Doing (Freeman & Garfat, 2014), which relate to the well-established CYC characteristics (Garfat et al., 2018; Garfat & Fulcher, 2011). Briefly, Freeman & Garfat (2014) explain: **Being** relates to awareness and abilities to respond to moments; **Interpreting** involves both a necessary focus on others and a focus on self; and **Doing** relates to how we reflect Being and Interpreting in our actions. In essence,



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children's rights concern a spectrum of concerns including how we perceive and relate the young people in our lives, our expectations, and the language that we use with them. These in turn influence how we treat them in our actions. This piece will only offer a few thoughts for your consideration.

Being & Interpreting: Supporting Development & Relationships

Children's rights are not only concerned with how we as adults are treating children and youth, but also children's rights address how young people relate to each other. Respecting children's rights at home means helping young people to learn this respect in the moment and on an ongoing basis. Do siblings know that they cannot use power of size and strength to get their desired outcomes? If not, it is our responsibility to help them understand that. If a young person is hurting, scared, or worried, have you made it clear in both words and actions that you can be the person that they trust to listen and believe them as well as support them?

Interpreting: Focus on Tasks?

When we are busy, it is easy to focus only on the things that are yet to be completed. For instance, it is easy to think about how homework, cleaning up, teeth brushing, etc. have to be finished before the end of the night. Without a doubt, responsibilities are part of both children's and adult lives. But they should not be connected to whether a child is respected or not in our guidance to achieve these or other milestones. As a caregiver, we should recognize when a child needs to be challenged or supported differently depending upon the child, the situation and the resources available at that point in time. Relationships can get overwhelmed and even defined by such tasks.



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Doing: Discipline

Discipline is an important element in caregiving to teach the young people in our lives the differences between right and wrong. How do we respond if we are angry or frustrated with, or scared about a young person? Do we hit or slap the child or make threats to do so? Perhaps we do so because it was how we were treated when we were young, it was a mistake, or because we believe that this is how you teach a child about serious matters and prevent harm. Such violence is harmful in terms of respecting the young person, and supporting their learning and there is much evidence against corporal punishment. (See Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment, 2018 for further details.) [Positive Parenting](#) as Dr. Joan Durrant explains, is rights-respecting, well developed with valuable resources available online including here:

<https://positivedisciplineeveryday.com/parentbook/>

Interpreting: Over-Emphasising Protection & Best Interests of the Child?

As we care about young people, it is easy to want to protect them from the dangers (perceived and/or real) of the world. Without a doubt, sexual abuse, trafficking, violence including the harm commonly known as bullying, and exploitation, and other such issues are very much realities for young people around the world. Children have the right to protection. But does that mean that we must shut out the world around young people? Many young people would vociferously challenge and dispute any such attempts to restrict them in the name of protection. So, we must be careful that we do not take a paternalistic view to support their rights to protection and best interests. One way to navigate such difficulties is to engage the young person about what they think about the issue. They may



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be more knowledgeable about the issue including its benefits, risks and dangers than you think. Children's rights do not involve an exclusive adult role and priority of protection as there is much more to children's rights.

Doing: Potential Gap of the Right to Participation?

When thinking about children's rights, many people often assume that they require taking child and youth views into account. So do you ask the young people what they would like to do when contemplating a group activity for instance? Before making a family decision, how are young people involved (or not)? Respecting child and youth views is critically important in terms of respecting young people and their roles and contributions as well as supporting the effectiveness of decision-making. At the same time, young people may need to be informed about incorrect information or learn about the implications of some of their choices or potential decisions that may bring harm upon themselves or others. We have to be mindful that sometimes we have to say not what the young person wants to hear but what is needed to help them learn and grow. Children's rights recognize the roles of adults in their lives to help them navigate not only the pressures but also challenge where necessary the problematic demands of peers and institutions.

Doing: Responding to Children

Many children are struggling during this stressful time of the pandemic. How do we respond? How do we engage with young people when they are looking for our attention? Do we simply say "No" when they do something problematic or harmful? It is important to take the time to explain what the issue is. We should try our best to seize opportunities for learning when they present themselves.



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What if a young person is harming another or damaging or destroying the property of others? We should not close our eyes or minds to what we learn even if it seems easier sometimes. We have to recognize the teachable moments when they occur, whether it is feasible in the immediate moment, or must be delayed to a more calm moment to support reflection and dialogue. As adults, we have to help support young people to develop their rights to development and also prepare them for “responsible life” as CRC article 29(1)(d).

Love

Before closing, a final comment is offered about love. Love is not a human right because it is difficult to regulate how a child is loved. However, love is identified as an essential CYC characteristic and is always important. As caregivers, our responses should always be guided by love. We also recommend that we regularly remind the children and young people in our lives how much they are loved and valued.

Conclusion

Children’s rights should begin at home because every child depends on the support of others in order to grow, learn, develop and relate well with others. If we are new to considering children’s rights, we should start small in our homes and grow our understandings and practices over time through Being, Interpreting and Doing to benefit our personal relations. Children’s rights should be learned and practiced at home where young people have their first teachers and guides in life. Then, we can also better support, replicate, and model rights-respecting relationships professionally with young people.



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Anti-Black Racism and the Training Industry – Part 1

Kiaras Gharabaghi

I meant to write only one essay on this topic, but the issue required greater length to explore. This month, I am emphasizing the problem; next month, I will focus on how we might move forward in the context discussed below.

One very common response on the part of organizations and service providers to anti-Black racism ‘crises’ is the procurement of training. Everywhere one looks, child and youth serving organizations, often lagging behind other sectors, are looking to respond to the current ‘crisis’ by setting up workshops and training events designed to do two things: first, to appear responsive to the crisis within the organization and to demonstrate a willingness to engage the issues and increase the capacity to do better moving forward; and second, to appear responsive to the crisis in the community by acknowledging the need for training and advertising the investment in such training – “look, we are doing something in the face of this travesty”. Lest anyone jump to the conclusion that I am being critical of organizations and their sudden enthusiasm for training, let me assure you I am not; in fact, training appears as a priority in virtually every report ever written on this issue, whether it was written by Black activists, academics, political groups, government departments or anyone else. It is also a standard item on



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every strategic development document of all organizations in the social sector, and has been, in some form, for decades.

'Training' is a broad term that encompasses many different activities, formats and approaches. The most common one, without a doubt, is the procurement of a speaker who comes to the organization once and delivers a half-day or full day session on a particular topic. Staff attend the session, take in the information, and often speak very highly of the event itself and also of the trainer. The slides from the training are shared on the organization's internal website, and for a few days after the training, people talk about some of the points they took note of. Then everyone moves on and goes back to doing the work they actually get paid to do. Another very common approach is to send staff to a training set up elsewhere that is not specific to a particular organization, but instead allows for participation by staff from many organizations. This kind of training, whether it is organized as a one-time session or a series of sessions, modules, courses, or even as a whole program complete with certificate, results in many participants learning something at the training that they rarely can apply to their everyday work outside of becoming increasingly critical of that work and eventually leaving the organization for an organization with less obvious shortcomings in the context of anti-Black racism.

Sometimes organizations approach training in the context of anti-Black racism, or more generally in the context of equity and inclusion, as a multi-stage and multi-level process; a common feature of this approach is that the trainer is initially focused on the management group of the organization, and then moves on to provide a training session to the staff as a whole. This approach, in my more optimistic interpretation, is designed to equip managers and supervisors to provide ongoing support for staff to really absorb the training and to apply it in their work moving forward. In



my more cynical interpretation, this approach is really a control and surveillance-based approach designed to carefully manage the ways in which the organization will deal with the inputs provided by the trainer. Often, management teams, typically unintentionally but sometimes intentionally, use this approach not to learn anything new about the topic, but instead to learn how to ensure that the topic itself can be neutralized with minimal organizational or structural upheaval. Fluency in the language of anti-Black racism (and also of anti-Indigenous racism, and inclusion and anti-oppression more generally) facilitates performative allyship.

Any of these approaches create serious problems, the most painful of which are shouldered by the Black employees of the organization. For them, the experience of such training is always strange, since the training itself is little more than a description of their everyday lives. This means that the training ends up (inadvertently) constructing their lives as a phenomenon to be explored by the non-Black staff, to be exposed to their scrutiny and to be marvelled at in moments of enlightenment and performative agreement (often demonstrated by surprisingly agile head nodding). It doesn't help much that these training events often feature expressions by non-Black people (usually white people) of the pain that they experience just knowing about the pain experienced by Black people. Also unhelpful are the commitments, both personal and organizational, that are made during the training and that every Black staff member knows will be forgotten that very day at exactly 4pm, because traffic is building up and it's time to get home.

There are other problems associated with these approaches to training about anti-Black racism (regardless of how good the content of the training session is, by the way). One particularly serious problem is that the



training is often seen as having done something in response to the crisis of anti-Black racism that is flaring up in the community or the world, as it is right now. In fact, the purpose of training, at least in theory, is to prepare to do something; it is not itself an action, per se. Training is meant to build capacity to make change, to do something better, to stop doing something bad. It is never a complete action that can be counted as a response to a crisis in and of itself, but it usually is counted in exactly that way. As such, training often serves as an incredibly effective strategy to do nothing, and in particularly cynical organizations, it can even serve as a strategy to shift the blame for anti-Black racism from the management team to the staff – ‘look, we provided you with training and yet you are still doing the work as if the training never happened’. It has happened frequently that some recently hired white employee is given the sacrificial lamb role and finds herself (it is usually a female employee) surprised by comments in her performance evaluation that she has not integrated the organization’s anti-Black racism commitments discussed at the training session in April last year.

In the specific context of anti-Black racism (although it also applies in the context of anti-Indigenous racism, which is not the same as anti-Black racism but does share some similarities in organizational responses to it), these kinds of training approaches are, I would argue, not only ineffective, but actually harmful, both to Black employees and inasmuch as they actually promote anti-Black racism rather than mitigating it. Before I lay out that argument, let me say something more generally about training in child and youth serving contexts (or any organizational context).

Training, even in its limited, single session approach, is an essential component of organizational health and competence if it applies to the right kinds of issues. For example, when a child welfare system introduces



a new information management system, employees may require a training session to learn how to use the new system. When there are procedural changes in a school system, there may be a need to bring in a trainer who can explain those changes. A series of trainings might be necessary for more complex issues. For example, if an organization wants to move toward a trauma-informed model of providing care, a single session of training probably won't be enough; there will be a need to have multiple sessions that introduce the complex concepts of trauma-informed care over time, because staff cannot meaningfully absorb all of this in a single session, and often need time to see what they are learning reflected in their work. The same might be said about relational practices, or Brief Counselling, or the latest research findings about sexual abuse. Although hardly ideal, I would suggest that multiple training sessions about some kinds of identity-related or inclusion and equity related issues can also be meaningful (which is not the same as impactful, but at least it is something); for example, training on particular kinds of disability issues, autism, FASD, and even working with trans peoples.

I should also point out that the role of training can be geographically diverse. In South Africa, for example, the National Association for Child Care Workers (NACCW) has put in such enormous effort over a period of many years into developing training programs that have effectively lifted individuals with no prior exposure to child and youth care practice of any kind, often living in remote rural areas, to significant heights of competence and capacity as effective practitioners (although I should point out that the NACCW's training programs are far more complex and extensive than single-session approaches, and require an enormous logistical effort to bring to people). This training is not only useful, but, one might argue, has contributed to the process of nation building in South



Africa, has led to employment possibilities for tens of thousands of people otherwise locked out of employment markets, and has done so while still valuing and acknowledging the traditional and longstanding care experiences and wisdom of the people being trained.

Nothing happening in Canada, the UK, the USA or other Global North jurisdictions can compare to what the NACCW has accomplished. I brought it up simply to say that I am not against training; sometimes it is meaningful and impactful. But training in the context of anti-Black racism in Global North jurisdictions, especially in the context of a current crisis of anti-Black racism, is not any of these things, and I will briefly sketch out why that is.

First, anti-Black racism is not a crisis, at least not for everyone. For Black communities, anti-Black racism is just the norm, a chronic, ever present context in which to live life. The murder of George Floyd, brutal as it was, is nothing particularly unusual – the record shows that Black men in particular (but not exclusively; Black women and trans people have also been murdered in similar fashion) are being murdered, gunned down, severely injured or removed from society through incarceration by the thousands, tens of thousands, perhaps hundredth of thousands in the United States and in Canada alone. The current moment of anti-Black racism is a crisis for people who are not Black, and who overwhelmingly are white, not because of the racism itself, but because of the disruption that protests about racism cause to the normal operations of organizations and professional activities of individuals. The crisis is about the disruption of normalcy, not about racism. This frame is rather important to understand, because in the face of a crisis, the goal of training is to mitigate the crisis in order to be able to continue ‘the work’. Therefore, it matters a great deal about what the crisis actually is, and for whom it is a crisis. Current calls for



anti-Black racism training run the risk of creating capacity to manage and neutralize disruption rather than creating capacity for deep organizational and structural change that mitigates (ideally eliminates, but who are we kidding) anti-Black racism itself.

Second, it is important to note that this is hardly the first time there has been a rush for training on anti-Black racism. In fact, this has happened quite regularly since at least the 1970s, both in Canada and in the United States. But it has changed nothing at all. Or maybe it has changed something, but not in the way we might have hoped for. It may have changed the capacity of organizations to highlight their rhetorical anti-racism initiatives by producing well-crafted visions, missions, and other kinds of statements that speak to these. Drawing a parallel to the Indigenous context, note, for example, that arguably the most anti-Indigenous institutions of all time, Boards of Education in Canada, are now blaring land acknowledgements over their speaker systems every morning right after the National Anthem of Canada (which makes no reference to Indigenous peoples) is played.

But third, and most importantly, and really the crux of my argument, is this – training (based on the single session or series of sessions approaches mentioned earlier) on anti-Black racism, no matter how good or radical or well-researched, actually legitimizes anti-Black racism. Here is why.

Earlier, I gave some examples for when I think training is appropriate and useful. If you don't know how to save your work in the new child welfare information system, you need some training to learn how to do that. If you are not sure what trauma is or how to inform your work by knowledge about trauma, you can benefit from training. The reason these are good times to provide training, even in single session formats, is because it is reasonable to accept the possibility that your staff don't know



much about whatever the training is geared to address. And furthermore, it is reasonable for someone who does know something about it (the designers of the new child welfare information system, for example) to come to your organization and explain the system to your staff. But it is not reasonable at all, perhaps even borderline racist, to assume that staff or managers or organizations don't know anything about anti-Black racism. In fact, it is impossible that they don't know; they are, individually and collectively, the very reason for anti-Black racism in the first place. It is their actions, non-actions, structures, processes, institutions, assumptions, stereotypes, colonial cultures and histories and ancestries – their very being – that is at the root of anti-Black racism. The issue is not now nor has it ever been that they (this includes me, by the way) don't know – of course they know, and they have always known. Collectively, we (people who are not Black, but mostly who are white) have designed anti-Black racism; we have operationalized it; we work this system every day in everything we do. We uphold anti-Black racism for our benefit. We don't actually mind anti-Black racism all that much; especially when we can mitigate any feelings of guilt or shame by taking some initiatives to promote or support Black individuals (as opposed to communities) through scholarships, employment programs, post-secondary education support programs, etc. And then we do what is really a perverse thing: We ask someone (usually a Black person) to come and do a training (which inevitably is introductory in nature and most of us have done repeatedly but pretend to be astonished by) to explain to us the very thing we are the experts on, the founders of, the propitiators of – the thing we actively do every day. We feign surprise and exclaim with conviction “well, if I had known that, I would ...). This is akin to inviting the designers of the new child welfare information system so they can be trained on that system by the staff who have never worked



it before. How does that make any sense? Every time a Black trainer comes and explains anti-Black racism to an audience of mostly non-Black people, the idea that we are allowed to pretend to not know is legitimized. In the 21st century for anyone anywhere in the world to claim they didn't know about anti-Black racism is ethically, morally, spiritually and politically bankrupt.

Training is designed to raise the capacity to make change, to do something better or differently for better outcomes. We don't need training to do that with respect to anti-Black racism. We could make change today, in the blink of an eye. Sure, such change would not undo hundreds, perhaps thousands of years of anti-Black racism. But it would constitute a new path toward a society, or child and youth serving sector at least, that is capable of transcending not a crisis (too convenient), but a deeply embedded system of power imbalance. Instead of training, we need accountability. We need courage. We need boldness. We need innovation. We need results. We need to let go of our fear of disruption.

In Ontario alone (the Canadian province where I live and which has the highest proportion of Black community members in Canada), I would conservatively estimate that 200 new people will be hired into leadership positions in the social sector this year. They should all be Black. We could, today, legislate that no Black student be suspended or expelled from school. We could prohibit judges from incarcerating Black youth – find another solution. We could instruct child welfare agencies to form Black Oversight Councils who oversee every instance of child welfare contact with a Black family. We could raise the salaries of all professions in which Black people are overrepresented. We could create African-centered spaces in all child and youth serving institutions that are safer (not safe, but safer) than what is currently offered. We could incorporate African-centred



practices in treatment and acknowledge that there is in fact an evidence-base for doing so.

None of this requires training. We already know all of this. We even know how to do it. And we have the resources to do it. But we don't do it. Instead we invite a Black person to come and tell us about things we actually designed and that we understand all too well. We convince not only ourselves, but also our employees, our service users and the community at large that we are serious about change – just look at how courageously we participated in the training provided by this brilliant Black person. We have once again legitimized the idea that until we invested in this training, we didn't know about anti-Black racism, but now that we know since we had the training, we are better for it. Where, in that logic, is there room for transformative change?

Not to be overly dramatic, but in Canada, we have known all the same things with respect to doing something about our anti-Indigenous racism too; but instead of moving forward with innovation, boldness and clarity, we have opted, according to the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (<https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>) for 'genocide by a thousand paper cuts' instead. The 'Blanket exercise', a favourite training tool (Google it), won't change that.

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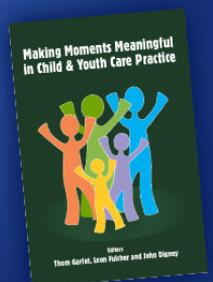
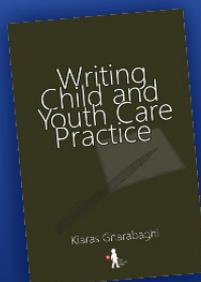
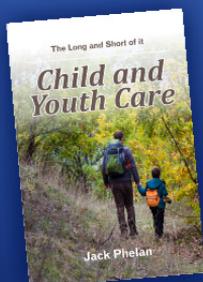
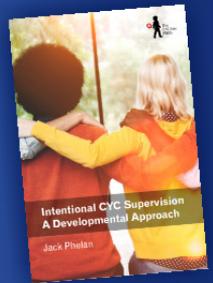
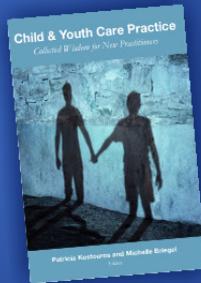
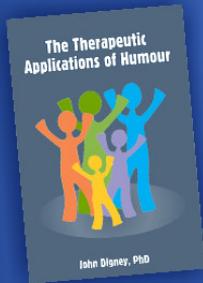
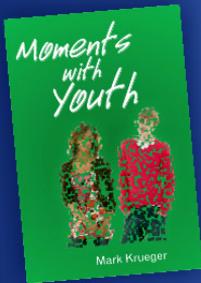
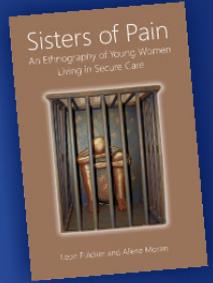
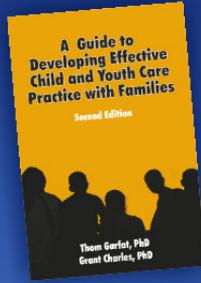
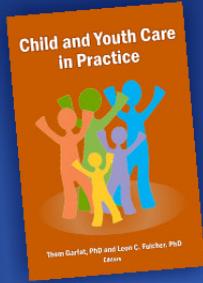
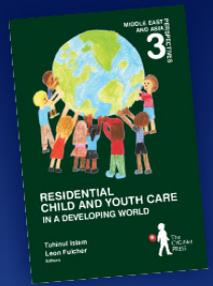
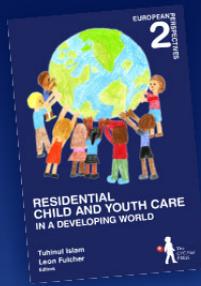
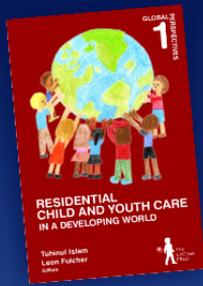
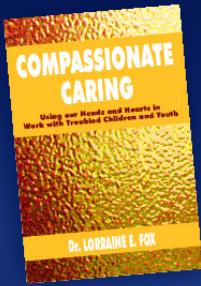
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Autism and Spirituality

Nancy Getty

The wind whispered and created music as it propelled itself all around me, lightly touching the grass and weaving its way through the branches of the tree. I sail within the wind.

Curled under a majestic tree, I was safe and felt a belonging as I listened in wonderment to the stories the tree told of what it had seen and experienced. On the ground in front of me, the ants methodically worked as a unit for their very survival. I became one of them. I was part of. I was at peace.

Recently, a parent asked me where her autistic child is when he appears as if he has gone away into a different world. I asked her if she goes to yoga or another type of meditation type class. She does. Our discussion continued until I finally said to her, where your child goes is the same place you are paying someone to teach you to go..away. Society strives to pull those on the spectrum into a world of confusion and is afraid for them when they appear so distant. Yet it is society that invests a lot of money in their quest to go to this same distant place. Personally, I consider it one of the gifts of autism to have the mind emptiness that can be naturally achieved and needed as the ASD individuals exhaustingly are forced and force themselves to interact within society. Autistic individuals are protected and embraced under the umbrella of the autism spectrum. It is the "typical" society that is standing in the storm.

Spirituality is referenced throughout history and has been translated diversely to serve humanity's thirst for answers to their yet undiscovered



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questions. To see beyond what has been scientifically proven, or accepted as true and taught as ideal, to achieve an innate awareness of reality, as to connect with all things in a harmonious reality.

Autism is considered a mystery of the mind, a neurological disorder that seemingly distances an individual into a realm of communication deficits and social blindness so that the person appears lost within a world of different perceptions and awareness.

As a child I could sense all of what was within nature and never did I feel I was observing from a different world but instead was a part of and belonged amongst the trees, the wind and the natural elements of all nonhuman living things. I could “go away,” not be here nor there, I just was. The natural wonderment and curiosity of childhood innocence allowed me to naturally and willingly succumb to all that was, without an awareness of it being an apparent experience.

As I aged and became infected with the expectations and demands of societal conformity, my connection to the natural essence and harmony of my environment began to fade. I learned about the pressure to excel within the standards and earn entitlement (privilege). I felt as though strings were being attached to a body, my body, the one that surrounded me and held me captive from truly being part of all things that were natural to me. The strings would pull me, and lead me to places where my senses would be bombarded with noise, intrusive sights and continually forcing meaningless information into my memory. Anxiety began to consume me as I was pulled further away from everything that just naturally existed for me. To fight back against the anxiety, I found and began to understand the peace I have inside that is a natural awareness that just is. It is neither timed nor prepared for, it is as if my mind and emotions just know, allowing me to release to all that is and I calm. There is



no thought, no sense of self, no awareness of environment, no sense of body or mind...just gone...mindlessness. If I am placing effort on finding a balance within, focusing on my breathing, there remains a sense of being, of mindfulness. Mindlessness is no longer possible.

To survive, I learned to refine my childhood innocence and wonderment of all things real, into an art of emotional achievement. Afraid that I would lose my cherished youthful connection and no longer be able to naturally achieve the experience and essence of awareness, I began to preserve my sense of self as I traveled within the confusing and sensory overwhelming environment of society. I learned to adapt my connection to all and discovered I could also express and remain connected with the fundamental nature of my reality, through the art of writing. I could express my thoughts and emotions and thus communicate to others who I was and still am. Where I did not fit in socially and lacked in society's standards of learning, I could effortlessly write. My perceptions, perspectives and internal self that sensed all in my environment, although I did not belong among others, through writing from my spirit, I could share. My capability to write allowed me a sense of comfort and a safe place to return to when "the world" became overwhelming. At the same time in my life, I also discovered that I could remain connected to the natural world (the non-human world) through the spirit of the horse. The horses became my teachers, my guides. I could sense each of their emotions as though they were speaking to me telepathically. I learned the language of twitches, body movements, vocal sounds and found balance and acceptance. The spirit of the horses allowed me to remain open and connected to all things as I grazed with the herd.

Temple Grandin tells of her journey as an autistic individual and how her connection and purpose in her life became apparent through her



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natural connection with cattle. She talks openly of how she could not just sense the cattle but physically and emotionally feel the spirit of the cow, as if she and the cow were as one and the same existence. Temple did not see herself as the cow, she describes how she could, and still does, experience a connection to the sensory and emotional experiences of the cattle and then would place herself into the situation that the cattle were experiencing. I, too, am able to sense and experience through the animal, through the horse.

Religion frightened me as a child. The stories that were told in church taught me how cruel the world could be. The verses that were read and repeated, I understood literally and feared the messages many expressed, "Now I lay me down to sleep...if I die before I wake." I became afraid to sleep! I also could not understand why it mattered what I wore to go to church. The itchy frills on the dresses I was required to wear irritated my skin and frustrated me. At church and during Sunday school, I questioned why they spoke about the beauty of all things natural but we should be in a building that was so unnatural and noisy with pictures and windows depicting violence and death. Why should I be praying to achieve a connection to all things when this can be better achieved by the experience of the true connection to nature itself? I felt a deeper connection once services were over and I could exchange my Sunday clothes for my blue jeans and stroll through the forest near our house. In my later years I rediscovered the value of different religious beliefs and the service it provides within different societies as people reach out for guidance and answers. I do not judge nor speak of religion as I have no right to decide or have power over another human being's choices and ideals. I instead choose to communicate through my thoughts and actions for all things, an openness, to not just practice but "to be," patient, gentle,



compassionate and altruistic. My ability to belong within all things will remain as I will not conform who I am in my existence as an autistic individual. I am content to remain transfixed on the splash of rain as it synchronizes a rhythm in the puddles, to “go away” and be neither here nor there but instead, mindless. No sense of space -- openness.

Children are taught to suppress their natural openness and are regimentally educated to believe that their perceptions of youth are mundane. In order for them to survive, they must let go of such beliefs and conform to what is accepted. In adulthood, spirituality is again sought as a connection in order to balance the feelings of a lost existence to all things. Autism is a natural link to a spiritual balance through the connection of the autistic's sensory realities of awareness. Autism is within the spiritual experience. Science is focused on discovering what appears dysfunctional in ASD when instead research should be aimed at the natural functionality and benefits of what is reality in ASD. The quest for answers to the yet discovered questions pertaining to spiritualism, may well be found in the unanswered questions and sincere understanding of Autism.

“As my mind empties of all thought and emotion, it is not recharging so much as rediscovering my own inner balance and it does not cost anything. I jokingly call it a cheap way to go on vacation from chaos.”

As a Child and Youth care worker, you will gather and become absorbed into the theories and facts of both the scientific studies and the mysterious realm of the autism spectrum. Entering with an open mind to all concepts of perception, probabilities and possibilities may lead you to an enlightenment and level of mindfulness of the questions you seek to discover understanding of. In gaining an awareness of the spirituality and individuality of the Autism Spectrum, you could go beyond the clinical



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knowledge and be guided to understand the balance of inner peace and unrest of autism.

NANCY GETTY was diagnosed as an adult and the parent of twins, both diagnosed on the autism spectrum. Nancy is the founder of A.S.P.I.E.S. – www.aspergerrus.com

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Best Interests of the Child in Brazil and Theft of Children by the State

Marcos A. B. Gonçalves and Raquel S. L. Guzzo

Introduction

There are five different ways in which a Psychologist can act when working in Brazil's Office of the Public Defender in São Paulo State. They are Screening; Engagement with those providing public services; Out-of-court disputes settlements; Rights education; and the Juridical Technical Assistant (JTA). The Juridical Technical Assistant is a role that exists in the Brazilian justice system and can be defined as the work of graduated professionals that can evaluate or intervene directly with an individual or a group of people who are on one side of a lawsuit. This is different from the expert role in the Brazilian justice system, since the expert is someone named by the judge and has no obligations with any side of the lawsuit.

We agree with Gonçalves (2015), who described the Technical Assistant as someone compromised to one person in a lawsuit, in a sense that she¹ is the one closer to that person's understandings and views. Differently from the expert, the JTA can engage in interventions with her client. Thus, as a JTA it is possible to act in regards of a lawsuit or even when preparing for a

¹ We are adopting "she" for the Psychologists in Public Defender of São Paulo State since women are more than 80% of the Psychologists working there.



lawsuit – before its existence. There are some cases where the lawsuit itself can be avoided with the use of the Psychology knowledge.

When working as a JTA, the Psychologist will have either more access to the judicial procedures documents or the professional justifications to contact the justice system. The Psychologist in Public Defender is expected to act in accordance with the principle of recognizing and reducing social inequality. The JTA working in the childhood field is commonly faced with four core problems when encountering the justice system: the removal of newborn babies; the consideration of economic and material aspects as a justification for the removal of children; the individualization of guilt on the psychological evaluations; and the lack of theoretical support and/or technical studies about those evaluations (Gonçalves, 2015).

The Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA – Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente²) is the main law in Brazil dedicated to protecting children, and it makes compulsory the prior dismissal of the familiar power made by the justice system before adoption (ECA, 1990). Inside the justice system lies the actual power to decide what is going to happen, case by case, with children in Brazil every time a dismissal of the familiar power lawsuit takes place. To the extent that the Superior Interests of the Child is often the basis for lawsuits, it is within that concept that technical arguments are built for the removal of children from families. Those technical arguments, often built by Social Workers or Psychologists working as experts, are used by the judge to decide the future of those families.

This paper summarizes the main results of PhD research carried out into how the Psychologists at Public Defender view the Best Interest of the Child concept – Superior Interesse da Criança in Portuguese as used in Brazil's justice system. The research involved collecting answers to a 27-

² We'll keep ECA for international indexing purposes.



question survey obtained from 34 Psychologists on Public Defender of São Paulo State. It's important to note that the Brazilian translation is not a literal translation from the Best Interest of the Child concept, as the official translation replaced "Best" for "Superior". The term Superior Interest of the Child (SInC) is used to mean the "Best Interest of the Child" while keeping the originality of the study and text as a Brazilian study. The objective of the present paper is to discuss the existence of an interventionist, even violent movement operated by Brazilian State on child removals, under a dynamic view on how the Superior Interest of the Child legalizes arbitrary removals.

What is the Best Interest of the Child?

The Universal Declaration of the Rights of the Child, in 1959, is the first document to bring the term Best Interests of the Child. The concept appears linked to the rights to protection, to opportunities, to physical, mental, moral, spiritual and social development, to health and to liberty and dignity condition. It also specifies the access to mandatory education, capable to promote child's general culture and gives her the basis for equal opportunities – with the final objective to make the child a useful member of society. The concept brings, as well, the right to play and recreation, with the same objective as education (UN, 1959). Despite the recognition of many different rights linked to the SInC, its linkage to a utilitarian objective is crystal clear.

Thirty years after that, in 1989, the CRC is written with a number of articles that tries to establish the basis for the operationalization of the rights of the child under a legal dynamic – bringing who, how and when it should be put in action. In many ways, it initializes the SInC concept systematization from a legal point of view. It was only with the CRC that the



child became a person possessing rights of her own, independent of the rights of the adults in her family (Cook, 2002).

Globally, there is no consensus about the concrete meaning of the concept of SInC. The lack of consensus results of a large discussion around its creation, stating that it should be big or imprecise enough to cover regional discrepancies. Nevertheless, the SInC can be recognized as a judicial concept that allows states parties, law courts and other instances to listen and achieve the well-being of the child on different decision-making procedures (Zermatten, 2005).

The Best Interest of the Child and Child Removals in Brazil

In Brazil, ECA (1990) brings the SInC concept on Article 19, saying that the limit of children institutionalization should be 24 months, except when justified for child's Best Interest. In 2017, a conservative movement changed the total time of permitted institutionalization to 18 months, in force today. This doesn't only mean that children will be for a shorter time in an institution, but it also means that original families will have less chances to defend their views and to defend their right to be with the child in a lawsuit. There were two primary motivations behind the new legislation: 1. to privilege the children up to five years old; and 2. to make international adoption easier (Cavalcante, 2017). As international adoptions have been recently *glamorized* (Maux & Dutra, 2010), we believe that making international adoption easier contributes to its *glamorization* and adds more layers of inequality to our historical process of removing child from poor people.

Usually, ECA is recognized as aligned to the CRC general principles, in which all the efforts must be taken into effect before the child can be separated from the family. Despite all the appearances, Brazil applies the



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child removal in a large scale before putting into practice other protection measures (M. I. C. Moreira, 2016).

The Views of Public Defender Psychologists about SInC and Poverty

In our research, the participants that said that the SInC was mostly the concept behind the removals were also saying that there is an intimate linkage between the SInC and poverty. It was found that the more Psychologists had access to and physically read through the lawsuits, the more consistently indicated that the justice system use the SInC as a tool for child removal from poor families. These professionals described how the lawsuit linked SInC and poverty, with many seeing: 1. elements of poverty as the basis for SInC decision-making; 2. the SInC as applied if the child was removed from poverty; 3. poverty was used as the justification for removal; and 4. neglect as a way of renaming poverty, while building the SInC concept. While the SInC policies are flexible enough to address regional differences, in the Brazilian context, Psychologists working on Public Defender Questions bring connections with the Convention on the Rights of a Child (CRC) into sharp reality. The logic pathways indicated CRC > SInC > Neglect > Poverty.

But, how is this possible? Did CRC somehow permit such action? In our view, the CRC can be used as the legal device that permits and endorses arbitrary removal, even stating the opposite on Article 16 (UN, 1989). The first concern about the SInC, appearing on Article 3 of CRC, is marking parents' obligations for a child's wellbeing, marking States' obligation to grant child protection and offering institutions to do so. The institutionalization logics appear as a starting point. Even if we consider that the Article 3 was trying to talk about the institutions on public policies



in general, why is it that the starting point to the SInC does not begin with community-oriented child relationships, neighborhood care, extended family support and other strategies? Article 2 is concerned with establishing a State duty to protect the child *from* the family – bringing the clear conflict State x Family to the center. Additionally, Article 9 and Article 20 establish the parameters of the SInC principles as the main reason that a child should be removed from her family, putting neglect as a primary reason! Thus, even if the CRC seeks to prevent arbitrary child removals, it is the CRC itself that gives Brazil's justice system all the tools for removing children from their families. This offers further evidence for the logic path of CRC > SInC > Neglect > Poverty being given administrative and legal propriety.

The Removal of Newborn Children and Their Theft by the State

The Psychologists participating in this research identified five reasons why a newborn child might be removed with greatest frequency in São Paulo State: drug use, street living, mental disorder, previous lawsuits and risk for the child. Such situations involve movement and flux as operated by the justice system. All participant responses are combined in Figure 1 to provide a visual overview and flow chart of what the Psychologists described separately.



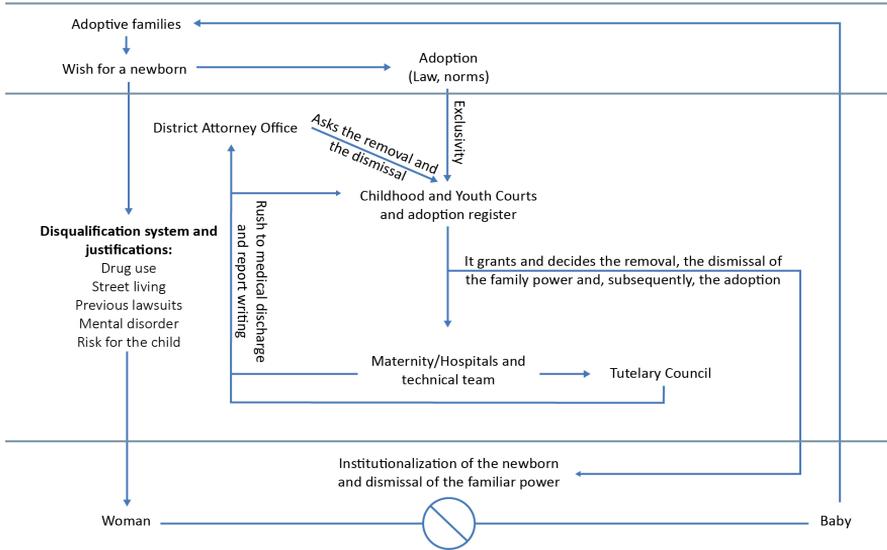
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Figure 1

Fluxes of pressure from adoption over the dismissal of the familiar power from the view of Psychologists on Public Defender, about cases of child removal of newborns from their families



From a legal perspective, the flux makes sense: all the institutions are legal; every institution is making what they are supposed to do. But what we see when everything is together is that there are two ends. In one end is the mother and the newborn baby, being separated from each other. In the other end are families willing to adopt. As adoptive families most common preferences are for newborns (CNJ, 2013), all the “protection” concepts are being built in a way that the State is allowed to do early separations of the mother and the child.



Public Defender Psychologists relate that the mother usually has no say on those lawsuits, the psychological view of eventual mental issues to the baby due to family separation is largely ignored in that process. Children are still being treated as objects and most of the time, mothers can't have their children back. We think this is about child theft committed by the State. It has a reason, often called neglect, protection, poverty, best interest. It has a way to happen, operated by a document flux from the maternity hospital to the justice system.

And as it has a regular, legal ending – the adoptive family – it closes the cycle creating a flux. If a theft starts a flux, we are also in front of a traffic of babies committed by the State, dedicated to remove children from the poor, giving them to families well-adjusted to the system (capitalism). While adoptive families are the end of the flux, their interests are often considered on the creation of the laws, establishing the ways and reasons why babies will be removed. Their most recent interest are babies between 0 and 5 years old, creating the urge for a faster dismissal of familiar power (Cavalcante, 2017; CNJ, 2013). Thus, their will became the new law (Lei da Adoção, 2017), shortening the time for dismissal of familiar power lawsuits.

Some might say these reasons are good when children are facing daily violence. We do not agree with the occurrence of any kind of violence against children, a view held as well by the participants in this research. Still, the means and the ends to many removals of Brazilian children, especially newborn removals, are evidently abusive and arbitrary.

Discussion and Actions to be Taken

Many publications makes us think that the theft and traffic of babies are a national movement and maybe an international movement (De quem é este bebê?, 2017; Rios, 2017; Schweikert, 2016). By making many



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interventions with poor families, segregating and separating their kids, the Brazilian State keeps treating them as objects. The theft of children and traffic flux are violent, disrespectful towards basic principles of Human Rights and Child's Rights Conventions as well as committing Obstetrical Violence breaks relational bonds between the mother and the baby.

As a Technical Assistant, Psychologists can intervene in family's reality before a lawsuit in order to find a community practice, a public policy or an extended family that is sufficient to protect the child. Public Defender Psychologists related their actions as making reports to the justice system, being together with families, creating an atmosphere to modify family's views about the lawsuit itself, dialoguing with professionals on public policies in order to nurture conditions that prevent child's institutionalization.

One other action that any public services Psychologists should take more notice is to ensure they are hearing the children. It is true that sometimes interventions involve newborns. I accompanied a mother going into the shelter in circumstances where the judge said that the baby should be separated from the mother. The baby couldn't say a word yet, due to her age, but as soon as the baby was taken away from the mother, both started crying out loud. A baby's voice can be heard if one notices. We encourage the creation of strategies other than family separation to deal with child and youth protection problems. Retaining colonialist practices of family separation and institutionalization need to be questioned.

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The Brian Gannon/Strathclyde Scholarship recipient



Samantha Evette Baron

I was born and grew up in Cape Town, South Africa. As the youngest of seven siblings, I grew up in a neighbourhood where if you were different from the norm you were often discarded to the margins of society. Being the youngest of seven children also presented its own challenges. I often had to work harder than the rest to keep up my older siblings. And as is common with siblings, we didn't always get along. But despite this I adored my siblings – and being the youngest I sometimes got away with a few things - like allowing her eldest sister to do my schoolwork!

The adults who raised me believed that it “takes a village to raise a child”. They invested a lot of time in disciplining and instilling the mind-set of respect for others in all that I do. Growing up, I quickly developed my own identity in relationship building with friends and family. I was always the quiet girl, the one who minds her own business. I was also more mature than the other children in my school classroom and always felt a lot of pressure to excel in extra mural activities and schoolwork.

I started working in retail while still at school, trying to make ends meet, and when I completed my schooling I didn't immediately continue with undergraduate studies. I volunteered at a local non-governmental organisation and received a small stipend for my work. While working there, I met so many different people, made lifelong connections and matured to the point that the organisation decided to invest in my post-school education. It was at this time that I applied for the NQF4 in child and youth care which was offered by NACCW (National Association of Child and Youth Care Workers) in South Africa where I gained an entirely new and passionate perspective about the field of Child and Youth Care. After completing NQF4, I enrolled for studies at university where I completed my bachelor's degree in Health Sciences and Social Services at the University of South Africa. After that, I then completed my bachelor's degree (Hon) in Child and Youth Development at Durban University of Technology. I now have over 10 years of work experience in the child and youth care field and I am currently employed by the Western Cape Government in South Africa as a Child and Youth Care Practitioner.

As I continue my work with young people and my academic journey at the MSc CYC program at the University of Strathclyde, I hope that child and youth care workers around the world will soon begin to receive the recognition and benefits they so richly deserve. The world is watching closely and the tides are now changing in Africa for a transforming child and youth care profession.

I am ecstatic and honoured to have been selected as the recipient of the Brian Gannon/Strathclyde Scholarship of 2020.

What Will We Bring?

Hans Skott-Myhre

Like many of you, I have been thinking deeply about the recent and ongoing protests against racial injustice and the calls for equity and the valuing of Black Lives. Of course, this is an old story. Black lives have been systematically de-valued since the inception of slavery and the imposition of colonial values. White privilege, with all its attendant brutality and levels of denial, has sustained itself for hundreds of years against slave revolts, revolutions, civil rights movements, and the kinds of insurrections that have been labeled riots. At the current historical moment, it looks as though such privilege might be on the edge of serious challenge, although I am only cautiously optimistic. I worry about the ways in which large multinational corporations have jumped on the bandwagon and the ways in which there have been [limited calls](#) to shift the underlying system of economic injustice. It looks to me as though, perhaps, we will see another masterful appropriation by capitalism of a serious movement for social change.

That said, the moment is full of capacity for social reform and in the U.S. an increasing consensus that racial injustice and paying tributes to the old system of slavery, as embodied in the statuary and flag of the confederacy, is unacceptable. It also encouraging to see similar refusals to honor progenitors of indigenous genocide and slavers in Canada, Britain, Belgium, among other places. I am hopeful that there is a finality among the majority of us, that the horrors of the colonial period must be acknowledged and firmly condemned. Perhaps we are ready to recognize



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that the enormity and ubiquity of acts of sheer brutality that marked the “empires” of Europe and the United States well into the current century cannot be honored as the price of “civilization.”

Of course, there will be a backlash, but I am hopeful that the overt worship of our colonial past will not be able to sustain itself on any large scale. There will be subtler versions of course, because revolutions are always ongoing and winning battles for justice does not signal the end to the war.

In his debate with [Noam Chomsky](#), Foucault listens carefully to Chomsky lay out his plan for a new society. When Chomsky is finished, Foucault responds by stating that unless we challenge and remove all of the subtle ways that society exerts power over us, efforts to build a new society will be undercut by the reconstitution of any vestiges of the old modes of power left unexamined and unchallenged. His argument is that power is not always exercised by the government or its agents. It is also distributed and applied by other elements of our society, such as apparently benign institutions like schools, psychiatry, medicine and social services. If any of these elements of distribution of the old logic of the dominant system exist within the new society, the old modes of power will find new ways to exercise themselves and corrupt any effort at building an otherwise just and equitable way of living together.

I am reminded of Foucault’s admonition in this historical moment as we hear proposals for reform through social restructuring. In particular, I am thinking of calls to radically restructure or even dismantle policing in the United States. The logic for such a call is rooted in the long history of violence by the police, particularly the murder of black men and women. Violence on the part of the police has up until recently, been attributed to a



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few “bad cops” who needed to be weeded out so the “good cops” could do their jobs.

While I am sure there are any number of officers who do their job without inflicting violence upon the people, they are called upon to protect and serve, I am equally sure that this argument misses the point. More importantly, the idea of a few bad cops is similar, in very troubling ways, to the idea that most of us are not racists. Racists are a few bad white people who tarnish the rest of us by their actions. In both cases the narrative allows for us to step aside from our own complicity in sustaining and benefitting from a system that is built on brutality and violence.

In terms of CYC, a similar narrative might be found in the justifications surrounding the systemic intrusions into communities of color and the extraction of their children into residential facilities of various kinds. It is not accidental that so many of the children we serve in CYC institutions are children from communities of color. We know, in a general kind of way, that the violence and neglect occurring in those communities is founded in systemic and intentional neglect and violence towards those communities passively sanctioned by us.

I am reminded of a conversation I had with Charles Waldegrave, the director the Family Centre in New Zealand. I had invited Charles and his colleague Kiwi Tamasase to provide training and consultation on working cross culturally within our agency. During their visit, Charles asked me why we were still doing therapy. I was taken aback. We were doing pretty socially conscious forms of individual, group, and family work and having pretty good success with reuniting families and assisting young people in making various transitions in their lives. I told Charles that I thought therapy was valuable in these ways. He then asked me a harder question. He asked me if we weren’t simply assisting people in more successfully



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adjusting to a system that was inherently traumatic for themselves and their communities. He told me that at the Family Centre they had given up on therapy, not because it didn't work, but because it did. The price of being successful as a therapist working with non-dominant communities was a certain loss of ethical vision. The Family Centre had decided that it was unethical to accommodate families to a system that brutalized them on a regular basis. Instead of doing therapy, they had moved into working with the families who came them to begin to advocate for themselves politically. Charles said that, once they were able to make some serious headway in achieving material improvements through systemic and structural change for the families who came to see for them, then maybe they would reconsider providing "therapy."

I am interested in this story in a number of different ways, but I want to focus on the idea that Charles, Kiwi and the rest of the staff at the Family Centre didn't move away from therapy because it didn't work, but because it did. [Todd May and George Yancy](#) make a similar argument about police brutality. In their article in the New York Times, "Policing is Doing What It Was Meant To Do. That's The Problem," they provide a structural and systemic analysis of policing since its inception in Europe and the United States. They suggest that all social institutions function like organs in a body. That is to say, like our liver, they do certain things and have certain tasks. In a sense, the people who are part of that social organ, are like cells whose roles are proscribed by the overall task of the organ in relation to the body.

However, the actual function of a social organ, such as the police, can be obscured by inaccurate understandings of what it is designed to do. May and Yancy argue that, "it won't help to ask what an organ is said to do. It is better to observe what it actually does." In other words, simply saying that



the police are there to protect and serve will not tell us what their function actually is. We have to ask the question, what do they actually do? In the case of the police, the answer is quite troubling.

What the police have been doing since their inception as “slave catchers” has been to support the existing dominant structures of society. Rates of crime might well tell us that policing actually doesn’t protect us. Increasing or decreasing rates of sexual assault, mass shootings, gang related violence have seldom, if ever been responsive to efforts by the police. In fact, one could argue that in the case of sexual assault, for example, police intervention is often counterproductive and retraumatizing. So, if we are looking for what police do well in order to determine their actual function, what would we find? May and Yancy argue that,

They succeed in keeping people in their place. They succeed in keeping middle-class and especially upper-class white people safe, so long as they don’t get out of line. They succeed in keeping people of color in their place so that they don’t challenge the social order that privileges middle- and upper-class white people. And, as we have recently witnessed in many violent police responses at protests, they succeed in suppressing those who would question the social order.

In the powerful and ongoing protests that are finally bringing Black Lives Matter into the center of the public dialogue, there have been calls to dismantle or significantly reduce funding for the police. Given their historical function, this makes a great deal of sense. The question then becomes, who or what will take their place? One proposal is that [social services or mental health professionals will become first responders](#). In



these proposals, I have even heard child and youth services floated as a replacement for policing with young people. And at first, I was really excited. Finally, I thought our moment might be arriving. Certainly, we can do better than the police in working with the kinds of crisis situations involving young people.

Then I began to apply the same analysis to our work that I had been using to understand why the police were a problematic part of a systemic application of racism and economic inequality. I remembered what Foucault had said about apparently benign social institutions exercising modes of control and discipline on behalf of the dominant system in ways that obscure their actual function as a social organ. I wondered about our own lineage as a field of practice in the same ways I looked at the police with their history as slave catchers and strike breakers. How far away from our own history are we? Are there still vestiges of residential schools in our residential programs? Are we still hell bent on the assimilation of “marginal” young people into the dominant system? Do we still rob communities of their children? Are we still an organ of the systemic application of racism and economic injustice? Are we a part of what [Sandrina de Finney](#) and her colleagues call the transcarceral social service system, where “thousands of Indigenous and racialized children continue to be systematically detained, incarcerated, criminalized, institutionalized, and lost by US and Canadian authorities.”

Such questions are likely to arouse a defensive response among many in the field. But as Foucault points out, without a deeply critical analysis of what we do, rather than what we say we do, the chances of bringing our old legacies forward into our work today is highly likely. Of course, we have alternative modes of CYC that have greater degrees of overtly anti-racist and liberatory practices. However, they remain on the margins of mainstream CYC.



It is encouraging to see some of the mainstream organizations in CYC taking more overtly political stances against racism and social injustice, but I have to wonder whether this translates into practice in the greater number of residential, afterschool, diversion, recovery, emergency shelter, and other CYC programs and institutions? Do we really protect and serve young people? Or like the police do we assure the dominant system that we will make young people less troublesome?

If we are made first responders, what will we bring? Will it be kinder and gentler, developmentally and relationally informed policing without overt violence? Will we continue to apply theories of psychology and psychiatry that allow us to individualize suffering, while doing virtually nothing about the conditions in which that suffering is born? If so, then we will be true to our institutional roots, but we will be betraying our full capacity for really changing the world.

If we are offered a new and expanded role in engaging young people, I hope we seek our alternative lineage in the radical practices that still exist on the edges of our field. To do that we would have to re-think what is important to us and let go of our collaboration and cooperation with systemic racism, sexism, homophobia, and economic injustice. This is not about a few bad apples in our programs and institutions, it is about the field itself. It would require a massive restructuring of what we really do. The question as always is, are we willing to give up our privilege, roll up our sleeves and get to work to build a better world for us all? If so, what will we bring?

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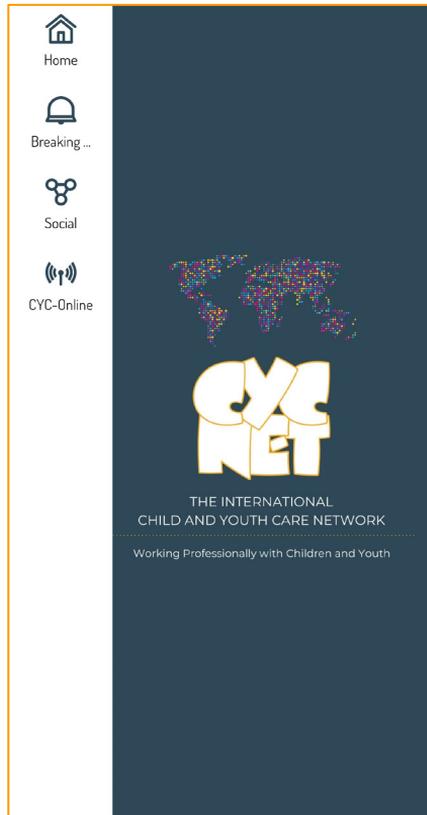
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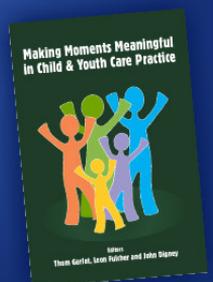
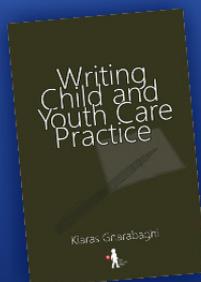
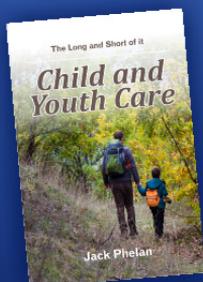
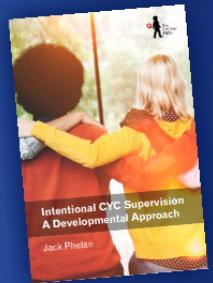
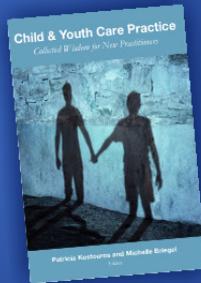
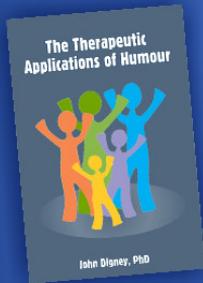
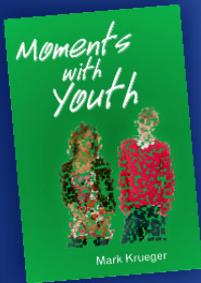
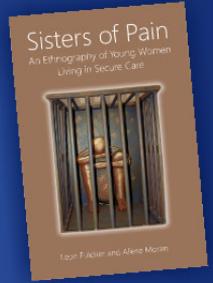
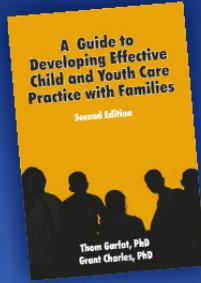
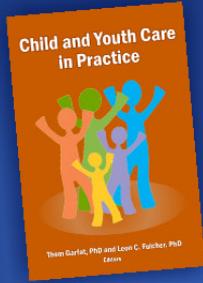
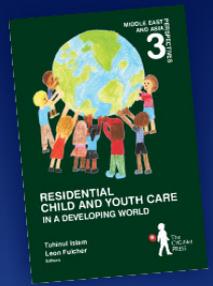
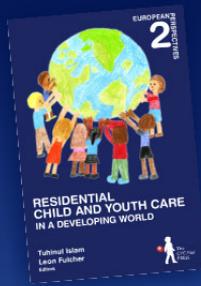
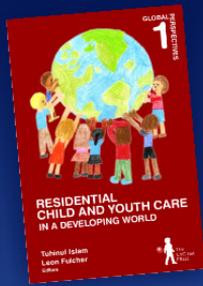
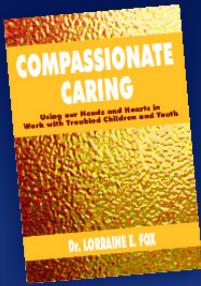
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Self-Care and Boundaries

Shelly Currie and Michelle Chalupa

For many of us the journey of life relates to finding happiness in what we do and who we are as people. Having and upholding clear boundaries is a way to be true to ourselves and uphold our happiness. As a reader of this article, I'm sure you can relate that this is easier said than done. Therapist and author, Sharon Martin describes boundaries in this way, "All relationships need boundaries. A boundary is an imaginary line that separates me from you. They separate your physical space, your feelings, needs, and responsibilities from others. Your boundaries also tell other people how they can treat you – what's acceptable and what isn't. Without boundaries, people may take advantage of you because you haven't set limits about how you expect to be treated." (2017).

Martin (2017) states that the four reasons we need boundaries are:

1. Boundaries allow you to be true to yourself
2. Boundaries are a form of self-care
3. Boundaries create realistic expectations
4. Boundaries create safety

Martin also goes on to elaborate on what prevents us from creating boundaries discussing reasons such as fear, ambivalence, not knowing how, low self-worth and a cycle of people pleasing (2017).



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Michael Sorenson (2019) suggests that when we consider establishing boundaries it might be helpful to envision them like the fences in our yards, and that if your neighbor was to try to throw unwanted weeds or garbage into your yard you would quickly put a stop to their actions. However, when it is emotional or social impositions from others, we often allow these matters go unchallenged when there is a lack of boundaries present. This ultimately leaves you feeling disappointed or mistreated, perhaps even shame for not addressing your concerns which then in turn creates a barrier to your own personal happiness. Boundaries are simply how we share guidelines with others on how we want to be treated and respected as an individual. This will vary from situation to situation and even with the people who you are interacting with.

Figuring out and defining what our pathway through life is a unique journey for each of us. Brene Brown (2019) talks about [the importance of boundaries](#); she says “that the most compassionate people she has worked alongside of were also the most boundaried.” As child and youth care professionals, empathy and compassion are qualities that are necessary to offer Trauma Informed Care to the young people and their families that we work with. As we take a moment to reflect on this statement and short video it is obvious that an understanding of self and what our boundaries are is another way of taking care of self in such a critical role as a care giver and practitioner.

The world as we have known it has changed incredibly over the past few months, which may have afforded us some time to explore what our boundaries are, what may need to include and how they may be reshaped forever based on COVID 19. With the new social limits that have been imposed upon us we are surely needing to explore self and determine what new considerations may be needed. For many empathetic people



boundaries are a challenge as we often chose to consider their needs while overlooking our own – which at times can be detrimental in self-care and potentially in achieving happiness.

As the world situation evolves with COVID 19 in unique ways (recognizing that this is different depending on where you live geographically) we need to be mindful that boundaries will look different for everyone. Each situation, social isolation, bubbling, restrictions being enforced or reduced will be different depending on where in the world you live – but the important thing to remember is that your boundaries – are your boundaries to create. Determining what boundaries we need to ensure we are happy with the direction our life will take. Some people will be elated to head to a restaurant and have a nice meal outside of their homes while others will continue to wear a mask to the local grocery store while they pick up their groceries. The truth is – it is all okay. We need to understand and be compassionate of the fact that this situation has caused many people to create new boundaries, where they have ground themselves in values and beliefs and that we truly need to meet people (including ourselves) where they are at.

What do you need to feel happy and safe in these next phases of this virus that has taken the world by surprise and turned life as we know it upside down? What do you need others to respect and understand? How will you respect and understand others? These are important questions to consider as you transition through some of the upcoming stages of COVID times.

Boundaries are something that we need to establish as an individual based upon our values and beliefs. With an ever changing and unprecedented time ahead of us it will be critical to have self-reflection related to boundaries – across all dimensions of our wellbeing. We will



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want to explore our values and beliefs as during this time of social isolation it has potentially afforded each of us to reflect on what these might need to include moving forward.

It might be helpful to reflect on the dimensions of wellness that allow us to experience a holistic overview of a balanced life. Dimensions of wellness allow us to think of our health and wellbeing as multifaceted. The World Health Organization (WHO) describes wellness as “a state of physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO, n.d). The 8 dimensions of wellness that must be focused on to optimize health include Emotional, Spiritual, Intellectual, Physical, Environmental, Financial, Occupational and Social dimensions of our life (LifeOfWellness, 2020). When you visualize these dimensions, picture each dimension as a circle and it overlaps the other, like a Venn diagram.

In our teaching, we have discovered that thinking about wellness in this way allows us to understand that our well-being does not work unless the rest of our life is in alignment with it. For instance, if your finances are out of whack, this affects other aspects of your life; same if you don't like your job. This doesn't mean that all 8 dimensions are perfect all the time, but it means that we have found a rhythm or a balance that works in our life to ensure all dimensions are being attended to. A lack of boundaries, support or self-care can compromise our overall wellness.

We recently presented a small workshop related to self-care and wellness where we had participants complete an activity where they explored their own wellness across these dimensions and created SMART goals to create balance within their lives and much of the feedback that was shared with us during this time is that many participants did not consider some of these dimensions when thinking about self-care practices. If you would like to hear more about these activities please feel



free to connect with us via email at selfcare2020@gmail.com and we would be happy to share some of these resources with you.

As a closing note, in the video Brene (2019) shares with us that “Empathy without boundaries is not empathy. Compassion without boundaries is not genuine. Vulnerability without boundaries is not vulnerability. Boundaries are frickin’ important.” Be sure that you are living a life with boundaries to ensure that you are happy with the life you are living, but to also establish normalcy within the complexities that you will be faced with in these upcoming months.

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Not Just an old Carry On: Reframing and Refocusing

John Digney and Maxwell Smart

The sun rose and set in a land of dreams whether the clocks were right or wrong.

Patrick Kavanagh, Irish Poet

There is time for everything and time to choose for everything. We are that time, that choice. Everybody gets what he deserves.

Alan Bold, Scottish Poet

Introduction

One of the mantras that we have become accustomed to hearing (and using) over recent months is that ‘we must carry on’. This is in the context of an ever-changing world, where restrictions have become the norm and where the necessity to keep doing what we need to do remains. We need to keep on providing the best care and protection to the kids and families with whom we share our lives, we need to ensure that the highest possible standards are met, and that we look after the physical, emotional and psychological needs of not only our ‘clients’ but also our staff, colleagues and our friends.

Listening to the relentless cries of ‘carry on regardless ...’ we are reminded of a series of so-called comedy films known as the ‘Carry On’ movies. These were movies of our childhoods and were satirical, loaded



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with innuendo and double entendre. As we consider them now, as right-thinking adults, we can see that they were (all 31 of them) of their time. They lacked sophistication of plot, political correctness and were at times downright inappropriate.

The reason for this article is not to provide a critique of these movies, although we have borrowed from some of their titles. We have selected only 7, as some do not lend themselves to this article, and others because they are just offensive. This article is about taking stock of where we are right now and about refocusing and reframing the impacts of what we do and how we do it in Relational Child & Youth Care.

1 & 2. Carry on Doctor / Carry on Nurse

The current global crisis has allowed for members of the public to shower accolades on the wonderful and selfless health and social care professionals. We have all witnessed the heroics of gowned and masked medics, putting their own lives at risk to save others. This has been humbling to watch. It gives us hope and shows us that the only way to overcome the evils of the world is to work as a collective, having hope, being hopeful, demonstrating courage and having the conviction that things can and will get better.

As the doctors and nurses 'carry on' with their amazing work, we need to also commend the unsung heroes who similarly have dedicated themselves to the care and protection of our vulnerable children, youth, and families. Here we are referring to any of the social care professionals and carers, across all care groups, many of whom have spent extraordinary amounts of time living in the same life space as those they care for and about.



As this crisis unfolds, twists and turns, we can see the importance of the little moments these workers, carers, nurses, and doctors have come to rely on to generate hope when there seemed nothing but hopelessness, create tiny bits of optimism which illuminate the dark and gloomy situations, and give comfort and reassurance, when all might seem lost. This talks to many of the core aspects of relational practice, such as doing with, hanging in, working in the now, counselling on the go, being emotionally present, connection & engagement, and examining context, to name but a few.

3. Carry on Don't Lose Your Head.

Throughout this crisis, as is true when any such global incident occurs, a smorgasbord of information and misinformation seem to become available simultaneously. Politicians, scientists, and others give regular briefings, providing advice, guidance, and direction. Some of the information and misinformation can be contradictory, and some of the reactions to this information are perplexing. There are always those who follow the best-practice advice but there are others who are by nature oppositional and think they know better -- for instance the politicians who impose the restriction and then go about unapologetically breaking every one of them, or the panic-stricken shoppers who seem to be losing their heads as they bulk buy toilet paper and pasta.

In our work it is always essential that we remain calm and collected, because, as we have come to realise, anything is possible and the worst thing that we can do is to react. When we react, we are operating from some part of our primitive 'survival' brain and not from our thinking 'logical' brain. Reacting in our work does not just lead to a shortage of hand sanitiser, disinfectant, soap, or rubber gloves -- it can have more far-reaching effects. If we were to lose our heads and lose our caring focus, we



could end up making many mighty big mistakes that could impact on the relationships we have with those in our care.

We are being tested on a daily basis by the circumstances that previously existed, such as the challenging behaviours of kids who are without hope, joy or connection; now in addition many other factors have come to bear, including managing our own anxieties about where this is all going to end up, state-imposed restrictions, and changes to the availability of necessary support and resources. But still dedicated workers carry on displaying dignity, compassion, empathy, and kindness; not losing their heads but remaining relational and caring.

4. Carry on Screaming

As frustrations associated with any crisis build and deepen, stress and distress are prone to increase to burgeoning levels. Some are better at managing than others and we must all find a way to release these toxic levels. As we witness the horrors that have affected people across this world of ours, it is perfectly acceptable that we scream. We can scream like a banshee, to let out some of the pain, or we can scream from the rooftops about what we are now seeing that might not have been otherwise apparent. We are witnessing disproportionate numbers of people from marginalised and minority demographics being impacted by this crisis – this needs to be screamed about.

There has been screaming about unfairness and lack of accountability and when politicians protect their own, the volume increases. The legitimate screaming about inequity has gained greater traction than in the past, and this has given rise to a carrying on of screaming about racism, bigotry, bias, and populism.



It has been wonderful to witness the social cohesion that has taken place during this crisis, the loving and caring members of our societies who have raised the bar and opened some new doors as they participate with others as they live their lives. Screaming from the highest heights about all that is wrong is only part of the puzzle. Screaming louder with suggestions for making things better and following through are the other pieces.

5. Carry on Teacher

As the crisis lingers, we are having to find creative ways to keep our kids engaged in some form of education and are pondering how, and even if, they will return to formal education. Social distancing, hand washing, and clarity about safety are all factors to consider, along with the surrounding debates about the impending economic crisis.

This crisis has also brought to the fore debate within society about what it is to be educated and what education actually is. We have always known that education is not simply about pouring knowledge into the child receptacle; it is more than that, it is also about thinking and doing better than we had done before, it is about helping others, developing autonomy, building resilience, having new experiences and many other things. In a time where the Teachers have not been able to carry on business as usual, there have been many opportunities for a different type of teaching. Suddenly home projects are starting to think about topics such as climate change, previously accepted truths about materialism, and the collateral damage of social cohesion created by over-production.

Teaching those who are resistant and vulnerable has always been a tricky business but for many of these youngsters the current crisis has added further strain to their emotional health, making traditional teaching methods even more difficult. For the helping adults, education and



teaching has become more about finding creative and innovative ways to engage in the learning process to ensure that teaching can be carried on. This can be finding ways to teach through games, a jigsaw, a game of darts, counting without knowing you are counting, problem solving and strategy in a game of chess. It can be about taking a youngster under the hood of a car for the first time. It is also about preventing kids becoming overwhelmed, and even realising that learning does not always fit into prescribed timeslots. Emotional learning has been about finding positivity amongst the gloom, using kindness and mindfulness, finding small connected moments in which to build trust, and teaching that learning is not just about formal education.

So, whether it is about building competence or confidence, providing reassurance or hope, we must be willingness to set-up and be creative in teaching style and substance. We must carry on teaching and carry on teaching well.

6. Carry on Regardless

As American poet Robert Frost said in his poem Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening, '... I have promises to keep, and miles to go, before I sleep'. Here he refers to his duties and obligations to others, regardless of fear and situation. To that degree this crisis has shown us that far from breaking societies, crisis like this can bring to the fore the best in us all. Trust, cooperation, collaboration in science, partnership, and a capacity for innovation are all essential components. If the last 300,000 years has taught us anything of humankind, it is that we are and that we must remain creative and adaptive beings. If we are to go beyond surviving and move towards thriving, we must embrace a collective and supportive way



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in the world, where everyone plays a part, where we are all open to giving and receiving love and care; where none are left behind.

If our profession is to survive and evolve, these relational characteristics must remain and become strengthened and perhaps this crisis will encourage others to recognise and realize human resiliency, accelerate our willingness to challenge what needs to be challenged, and move debates on about how we can be better than we have been before.

7. Carry on At Your Convenience

If we are to carry on at our convenience, we must recognise that this crisis has created a 'moment' in time for reflection, understanding, and innovation for our field. This moment is about our 'new', new. Our convenience is about generating, articulating, and presenting arguments and practices to effect public thinking and doing for kids in difficulty. As Bob Dylan said in the 1960's, 'the times, they are a-changing'.

What is it that we want for all our children and young people who have in the past been most disadvantaged by our systems of intervention and education? This is a time maybe for a true levelling up where we seriously address equality of opportunity and equality of potentiality; a wholesale change in what we think and what we do for the generations to follow. To that end what might our contribution be to this moment?

Carry on Relationally

To reiterate, 'carrying on' should not be a continuation of the status quo. It is a call for a good use of the old and a call to the new. Our 'Carry On' contributions are:



- **Carry on Connecting:** Whether in our personal or professional lives we need to continue doing all we can to connect with those in need. Be they the neighbours who we have never spoken to before or the kids who are living in our care who we have never been able to find a way to connect with. If we can think just a little bit differently, perhaps a bid to connect will be accepted – this talk to the idea of a ‘one-degree shift’. Connection is the beginning of healing
- **Carry on Hoping:** Hope and optimism are the cornerstone of positivity and recovery. They give us a sense that if we ‘Hold On, Pain Ends’. Hopelessness is a cul de sac and we must continue to stand as traffic police, turning people away from this dead-end route, using small and simple creative reframing and refocusing methods to have them explore alternative routes and pathways.
- **Carry on Helping:** Connection helps to provide opportunities for helping and if we can encourage others to shift their gaze, just a little bit, they may be better placed to (i) see the opportunity for helping, (ii) see that they have the necessary skills and (iii) be motivated to take on the task of helping others.
- **Carry on Growing:** It takes a village to raise a child – this much we know. If we can bear witness to and be part of the many processes involved in nurturing, be it nurturing a seed all the way to being a plant or a guiding a kid all the way to adulthood, we are more inclined to be invested and see things through to a successful end. The more we are present for the growth and development, the more likely we are to want to ‘water the plant’ or ‘meet the developmental need’.



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- **Carry on Supporting:** There are innumerable ways that kids can be and need to be supported. As we have inched away from behavioural methodologies, we can see that we need to be proactive in 'doing with' and this includes creating developmental partnerships with the kids. They need champions and mentors; they need someone there to show them a better way. This begins with raising their expectations of themselves, just a little bit at a time. This will inspire them and let them eventually take responsibility for their own progress and development.
- **Carry on Laughing:** In times of crisis, as in times of serenity, people need to continue to search out joy and fun. Laughing in the face of adversity may seem paradoxical, but as survivors of horrors have attested, a sense of humour is a necessary tool (a weapon) that gives us back a little bit of autonomy. We can model this and teach it to those who are devoid of joy and seem to suffer from 'humour-deficit disorder' (be they child or adult).

Carry on with Courage

We find ourselves at the end of this relational 'carry on' and we take a knee, a powerful symbol of challenge to the status quo and a nod of respect to those who carry on through adversity. But this end should only be seen as a beginning, or at least a fresh beginning of what has gone before. Over recent years we have been part of many processes and forums that have sought to better define the work that we do, beginning with the notion of relational practice. Let us all take a knee, before rising in unity, with the collective vision of 'carrying on' the work of our early pioneers and considering what the next contributions need to be.



As we review and pay homage to the wisdom of past pioneers, as we evaluate where we are as a profession today, and as we begin consider the next steps in our evolution, let us declare what it is that we believe in, let us proclaim loudly what our values are and the practices that we wish to promote and to clearly articulate those that we must resist. Only then can we 'carry on' with courage.

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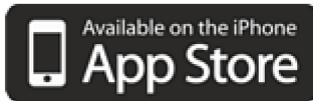
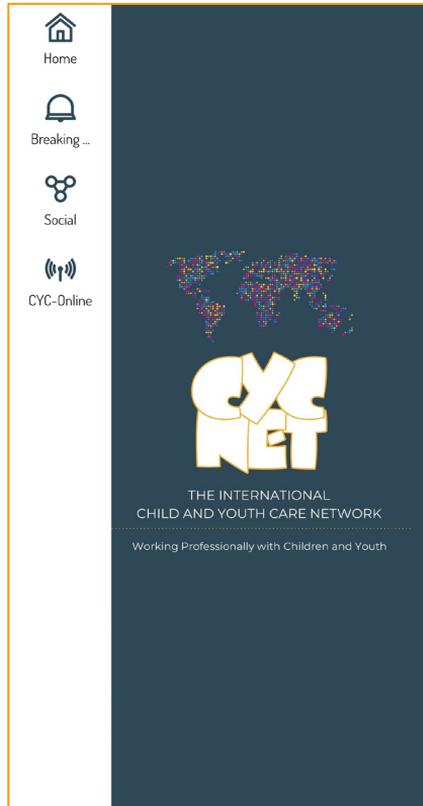


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The Concept of White-Privilege in Indigenous Communities: A Personal Exploration of Self as a Front-Line Child Protection Worker in Nunavut

Nicole Diakite

This paper originates from an assignment in the Master of Arts Child and Youth Care program at Ryerson University in 2018. The author explores her white-privilege while working in an Indigenous community in Canada. The original paper has been altered to protect any identifying information for the individuals and communities involved.

Keywords

CYC, white-privilege, Indigenous, child protection

What does it mean to be an educated White female in Nunavut working with the territory's most disadvantaged and marginalized population? What power dynamics are at play that contribute to systemic barriers, and does my own social location continue to oppress the oppressed? Indigenous people continue to remain



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a marginalized population and power inequities continue to contribute to modern colonialism. Understanding privilege in relation to Self requires personal reflection about individual ways of being in the world. Privilege is based on false assumptions and false logic that is limited by the Self's own experiences; as such, without understanding Self, truth cannot be realized. It is critical to understand privilege through meaning-making and the interpretation of personal experiences that shape privilege and Self, as there is power in understanding. How has my own privileged narrative contributed to my role as a front-line child protection worker working with young people and their families in Nunavut? This literary piece will provide a personal account of how I came to be in Nunavut, with an internal dialogue of my own personal Whiteness.

In 2011 I skimmed through a plethora of job ads from my cozy downtown apartment, and I stumbled across the perfect job – *Community Social Services Worker* with the Government of Nunavut's (GN) Department of Family Services. With the click of a mouse, my résumé was instantly submitted for consideration. I was elated, and my goal was to live within purpose. I was confident that I would get the job; after all, I was educated and had significant experience working in multiple residential care facilities. But why was I so confident? Was my confidence related to my own personal white-privilege? I mean, I worked hard to get where I was. I did what young people are supposed to do...I graduated from high school and pursued post-secondary education. It was not easy, but I made it. I was qualified and deserved the job! *Right?* Little did I know that I was about to embark on a journey of Self, the only being that will experience my collection of thoughts, feelings, and privileges, in relation to my own personal white-privilege. As I reflect on this experience, I cannot help but wonder how my white-privilege shaped the opportunities I received in life,



specifically, the opportunity to apply for the Community Social Service Worker position. What led to that very moment? Was I just lucky enough to own a computer and have unlimited Internet access at my fingertips? Or was there something deeper occurring below the surface?

My privilege goes far beyond the click of a mouse. I have always felt safe and have been told that I can do anything that I set my mind on – whether I wanted to pursue post-secondary education to become a lawyer, a doctor, or a child and youth care (CYC) practitioner. I lived close to a local university, had my own car, and lived with my parents. But what about the Indigenous people residing in Nunavut? What prevented them from applying to the job ad, and what barriers lay below the surface? Did they have the same opportunities that I did? Did they feel safe? Who would blame them if they did not? The colonial era forced Indigenous people from their land, which resulted in the loss of traditional practices, traditional ways of doing and knowing, and intergenerational trauma that further contributed to the development of maladaptive coping strategies and ineffective child-rearing practices. It is like Nunavut's colonial history exists in a frozen frame of existence, constantly repeating, flowing backwards and in circles, forcing Indigenous people to relive the constant cycle of marginalization and white-privilege with no hope of escaping or experiencing their own privilege. As such, the privileged do not know that they are privileged, and the marginalized are barely able to exist, scraping by on the meagre and inadequate provisions afforded to the most impoverished. I wonder what would happen if the cycle were interrupted, if the tables were turned and Indigenous people developed their own privilege? What if local Inuit people were given the same opportunities to attend university? What if there was a sense of safety and control in the



Inuit narrative? Would the job have been posted? Would I have unintentionally used my white-privilege at that very moment in time?

After a series of interviews, I was offered the job. I was told that my role was to promote the best interest of the child while adhering to the Child and Family Services Act. I was told that child protection would be the main focus of my role. *My white-privilege just became even more complicated!* How do I, as a white-female, indirectly represent colonization as a result of my privilege? As an educated white-female should I advocate for the liberation of Indigenous people, and what are the implications if I did? Was my presence just another act of colonization that stripped the power from the Indigenous people to care for their own, a fundamental cultural value that it takes a community to raise a young person? My Whiteness implied another mission to save the Indigenous people from marginalization, to act as racial managers that will save the world from its unjustness. Is the unintentional understanding of my Whiteness a result of the innocence of the mind, or does it continue to provide distance from understanding the truth of my privilege? Surely to not acknowledge my Whiteness, is to falsify it, and the privileged truth that lies at the core of my being.

My first week in Nunavut was a whirlwind of new experiences, where I “inherited” eighteen child protection files. The system that was meant to provide support to Indigenous families was permeated in white-privilege and power inequities that prevented Inuit families from climbing out of the never-ending cycle of assimilation. Not only did my Whiteness afford me privilege and power, but so did my role as a Community Social Service Worker. What implications did my white-privilege have on developing therapeutic and relational connections with young people and their families? Every encounter I experienced was riddled with white-privilege, and understanding my Self in relation to others was challenging. My



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interactions with Indigenous people were based on my own personal understanding and white-ways of doing and being which did not recognize traditional ways of knowing and doing. Privilege shaped my values and belief in how young people should be in the world, and influenced my approach to practice. As such, my privilege is smooth, subtle, and invisible but it's always there, just below the surface, like a warm comforter on a cold Arctic night, lurking in the silence in wait of an opportunity that will benefit me. Privilege is the very breath I breathe; it is my existence, a gift that I was born with and a tool that I have used unintentionally every day of my life to take advantage of the endless opportunities that my Whiteness has afforded me.

I remember my first apprehension vividly. It was both terrifying and exhilarating, and I felt like I was making a difference. I now question how my Whiteness influenced my response to the situation. I was not consciously aware of the tension between Indigenous people and systemic barriers, and I question whether the apprehension of young people is a modern form of assimilation, a way to force Indigenous people to conform to western ways of doing, often preventing the return of young people due to systemic barriers and white-privilege expectations. My first apprehension paved the way for countless apprehensions that would follow. I embarked on a journey that would have me question how my Whiteness contributed to the unintended harm of young people as a result of the white supremacy ideology, which still exists today and is deeply rooted in the constitutional fabric of our economy. I have begun to understand how my privilege provides me with a significant advantage over others, and although it does not mean that I have not struggled or been discriminated against, it means that my being is not constantly being challenged by systemic barriers and racial prejudices. My Whiteness is part



of a larger and more sinister truth that I will always be among the most privileged and powerful unless our systemic structures address the inequities that are at the very core of their services. As such, the exploration of Self in relation to privilege is a lifelong journey.

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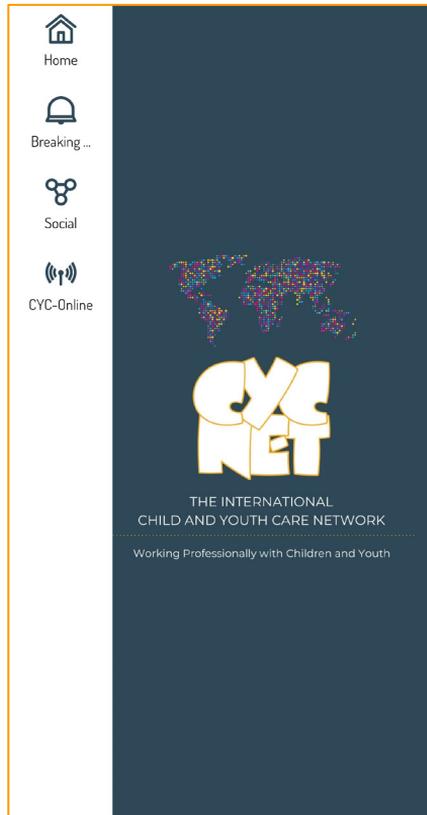


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The Expendables

Garth Goodwin

If there was one fact that sticks with me out of this global lockdown period it must be the exposure of the horrors of the care home, senior's centers and long-term care facilities. Not the sudden exposure but one that kept building in public view yet without consideration. Dealing with the pandemic rolling over the populations around the world shielded much of the detailed study of the event. Rather stories would emerge of seniors dead in their beds, in their own filth or stored in facility morgues or just a room in great numbers of 15 or more. Then, it began to emerge how seniors, those over 60 years, tended to make up the bulk of those impacted and killed by Covid-19. Percentages of 50 to over 90 percent emerged literally around the world in different jurisdictions. I was scanning the internet and major news organizations for anything involving group care for children and youth and found myself coming up short for the most part in contrast to that for long-term care homes. A 113-year-old, survivor of the corona virus, Maria Branyas from Italy stated the following:

"This pandemic has revealed that older people are the forgotten ones of our society," she said in an interview with the *Observer*, carried out with the help of one of her daughters. "They fought their whole lives, sacrificed time and



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their dreams for today's quality of life. They didn't deserve to leave the world in this way."³

This column explores the common threads that run through care for the elderly and care for youth at risk. No government can legislate caring as such, yet it is possible to professionalize it as the child and youth care field has demonstrated.

Once the pandemic was underway there was this period of confusion, shock really, in which people were passing away at alarming rates. As reporters dug deeper the numbers of seniors passing began to stand out and then the numbers who had resided in senior care facilities. There was a reluctance to expose this in the United States where "Routine health and safety inspections have been suspended by the federal government to protect against any additional exposure to workers and residents."⁴ CNN reporters Blake Ellise and Melanie Hicken (report that?) the federal government ordered reports be made to the Center for Disease Control and individual facilities began to ban family visits. The reporters summarized the situation with this statement: "'I'm concerned about neglect, poor care, rights being violated and abuse right now," said Patricia Hunter, the long-term care ombudsman for Washington state, where the first nursing home outbreak publicly unfolded."⁵ This tendency to cover up the situation was similar in Canada as well. Robert Green, writing for *ricochet*, an online journal wrote:

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/16/worlds-oldest-coronavirus-survivor-the-elderly-are-the-forgotten-ones-of-society>

⁴ <https://www.cnn.com/2020/04/24/us/nursing-homes-coronavirus-invs/index.html>

⁵ <https://www.cnn.com/2020/04/24/us/nursing-homes-coronavirus-invs/index.html>



“While our politicians can claim to be saddened over the tragedy that is now unfolding in long-term care homes around the country, none should claim to be surprised at this situation. Unions and organizations that advocate for the various people that depend on long-term care have for years decried the worsening conditions of these facilities. Many have also been extremely clear about the central reason for these worsening conditions — privatization.”⁶

Something clicked reminding me of a period in child and youth care history in Manitoba when residential care, group care, more usually known as group homes were first set up in the late 60's. The province had quite an array of treatment facilities with secure and privately operated group care. The notion was popular, and it seemed anyone who could afford a suitable property and had some plan or philosophy of treatment could get into the business and scores did. I went from a treatment orientated facility to one built upon the outward-bound model focusing upon a blend of structure, activity and care. It was not so much a shared journey as the owner's private one career of megalomania controlling the lives of all involved with intense scrutiny and brute force. Still, there seemed to be a positive change within the conventions of society and community. Another fellow only hired convicts who had served out their time using them to scare young men straight. One of the leaders set up a home in a rural town a good hour from the city and then integrated the residence and its caregiving into the community with an extensive volunteer/mentor program. There was also a

⁶ <https://ricochet.media/en/3043/privatization-the-pre-existing-condition-killing-seniors-in-long-term-care?fbclid=IwARICanN9rLYhu00fWxXyFhs9YFOrG0EVCXbuUg1g8p7ttmV-73EMFVMS2ao>



board with members from the community. The home I worked in developed the family model quite extensively and enjoyed a good reputation as such as a place that would work with family, school and community to both address the and socialize the young person. By the 90s the private approach had lost its cachet. Most had closed, been closed or were absorbed or morphed into larger entities overseeing child and youth care in group and treatment foster care.

It was the early 90s that saw my involvement with the private model end quite suddenly and, for me, traumatically. My employer/owner/operator decided to quit and invited me to consider taking over the business – the classic double whammy. She gave me the government residential requirements to read, noting they applied to all residential situations including long term care homes. The business transaction was rather simple, you pay the mortgage and then take up all the responsibilities of running the operation. I was a little stunned and protested regarding direction and so forth. It turned out owning and operating a group home was right up there with working in one for the first time, you just hold your nose and go for it. The statement was made: 'it's just business' which totally clashed with my own perception of it being all about the passion for caregiving. A fine working relationship and chapter of my life ended.

For Robert Green the issue is straightforward: "If we want to finally bring an end to the decades-long tragedy that has been concentrated in the growing number of for-profit care homes, we need to stop electing politicians unable or unwilling to see for-profit care as the disaster it is."⁷ Of

⁷ <https://ricochet.media/en/3043/privatization-the-pre-existing-condition-killing-seniors-in-long-term-care?fbclid=IwARICanN9rLYhu0OfWxXyFhs9YFOrG0EVCXbuUg1g8p7ttmV-73EMFVMS2ao>



course, it is not as simple as that as there are many long-term care homes that do and have succeeded operating well even with this virus. The call has emerged as Raisa Patel of the Canadian Broadcasting Network noted the Canadian Union of Public Employees has become involved, recognizing: "Right now, long-term care in Canada is a patchwork system with no national standards," said CUPE national secretary-treasurer Charles Fleury in a news release. "It's time to fix that."⁸ Those familiar with the early years of child and youth care residential care history may smile over that. Competition, finding out what does indeed work, developing an educational infrastructure to guide research and publish better practices and lately a real emphasis upon promoting and maintaining the atmosphere of care on the front line has done much to elevate the standards of care in child and youth care work. Adding an element of care to the obvious medical understanding looking after seniors demands with total emphasis upon attention, preventative intervention and a genuine positive regard for the person would go a long way along with the salaried and benefits support such work demands. If it is the case that society wishes to extend and provide care for those periods of life when you are truly on your own - early adulthood and late in life, before you are securely in the work force and when you no longer have the capacity to provide for yourself, the agreement for standards of care and reasonable infrastructure could follow. One of the ironies of sheltering in place or locking down due to this virus has been to drive people back into their homes alone away from society as such. In the same way the concept of autonomous families living across great distances emerged out of frontier days when everybody

⁸ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/union-launches-long-term-care-reform-campaign-covid-19-1.5582732>



had a role to play and caring for the departing young or the aging parent it has been driven inward in isolated shells of extended family. At this point it remains totally uncertain as to what will emerge when the economy revives.

Finally, the point of the matter as this writer has some skin in the game, as they say, on this one. I fall right smack in the center of the vulnerable age this virus is attracted to and have more than a few of the pre-existing conditions it favours with its fullest impact. To go from globalized flying about the world one minute to cowering down under the multiplying stages of disinfectants being applied at the local grocery store and only at that grocery store has been jarring. Meanwhile the dance continues between those pre-existing conditions and the capacity to live with them knowing long term care may become necessary sometime. After this it is hard to believe we have actual waiting lists for these places with their recent reputations with their killing beds. There is a kind of comfort in the shared, globally shared discipline of lockdown being applied. There is also a concern as that discipline is relaxed. The Canadian Army has just reported on its intervention in a few Ontario long term care homes forcing the Premier of Ontario to state: "This tragedy must serve as a wakeup call to our entire country," said Ford. "It's no secret that Covid-19 has taken a system with deep problems – a system that has been neglected for years – and pushed it to the brink."⁹ His belief that criminal charges would be appropriate as a first step. The Manitoba care system, however, it may appear undefined is overseen by an increasingly more sophisticated and prompter government department with licensing powers. Perhaps, this moment of global shame will lead to real change. Meanwhile, each day is a

⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/26/canada-care-homes-military-report-coronavirus>



gift with its simple pleasures. My generation and its offspring have known lives of constant innovation, economic and educational expansion and global networking and experience. My hope is that mankind gets back to just that.

GARTH GOODWIN spent his 41-year career in both practice and as a database designer and administrator. In over 30 years of frontline practice he worked for both public/board and private agencies. He was the first recipient of the National Child and Youth Care Award in 1986. He nurtured the Child and Youth Care Workers Association of Manitoba through its formative years and became its representative to the Council of Canadian Child and Youth Care Associations. He has been privileged to be the witness and participant in significant events in CYC history and remains an active observer in the field of CYC.



@CYCAREWORKERS



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Postcard from Leon Fulcher

Tuai Village in New Zealand's Te Urewera

Kia Ora Kotou
Comrades
and Warm

Greetings to you all! It has been a difficult time during the past week where we live. A little girl was playing with her sisters on a Friday afternoon after school. The children had discovered a new



We are never ready for the death of a young child while playing with her sisters

game that involved climbing and hanging down from the steel cage climbing frame, only this climbing frame was used in transporting firewood. It had been removed from a trailer and left standing on end where it was unloaded.

Ataatua and her older sisters were laughing and carrying on when suddenly, the steel cage toppled over trapping the little girl across the pelvis. It soon became apparent that Ataatua had been fatally injured. Playful children laughing turned into tearful shrieking as fear, pain and then grieving the loss of little sister and baby impacted so suddenly and unexpectedly. This was so different from the death of a child because of a terminal illness.



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In the Maori community of Tuai, a death normally involves transporting the body to a tent space called a Wharemate (house of the dead) erected beside a Whare Tipuna or ancestral house. Ataatua was not taken

to the Marae where she would normally lie with family members for 2-3 days before burial. Instead, Ataatua was taken in a handwoven flax body wrap to lie in Tuai Community Church built in 1918 where Seventh Day Adventist parents worship on Saturdays.

It was noted that this whanau kept their little girl at the community church instead of at the tribal Marae. Community members simply adapted their responses and the little girl's family were supported with food



Mother, father and children faced with sudden grief supported by extended family



Remembering is what remains with those left behind to mourn

and shelter throughout the public grieving period for visitors from afar.

When a child dies unexpectedly by accident while playing, inevitably parents and other adults ask themselves what might have been done to ensure that children can play safely in their own garden or back yard. Some consider such accidents as a matter of fate while others seek to find the hand of God in such times. Still others get angry.

It is important to remember that Ataaturua has sisters who continue to take an active part in the cultural traditions of their Maori ancestors. A lot of bridge-building is likely to take place over coming weeks as community members reach out to support this family in traditional ways.



Personal achievements and relationships are forever frozen in time



Personal achievements and relationships are forever Sisters remain and continue to participate in community activities

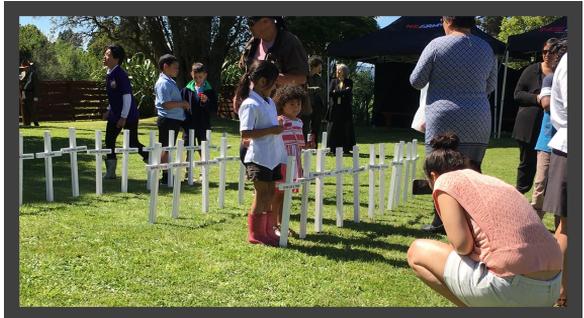
Life will go on in Tuai, and community members will shake their heads in sadness for weeks to come. No death is ever easy in small indigenous communities in rural areas. Here, the death of a child highlights the vulnerability of Maori people and their culture and is especially painful.

At such times, it is important to remember the mothers. Their pain is especially prominent. But the fathers and siblings also need remembering. There are no pre-set questions that need to be addressed. Instead,

it is about acknowledging the pain of grieving and seeking ways of finding personal peace and opportunities for ongoing growth and development as a person - especially for mothers. Maori tradition signals an 'unveiling



Memories of unfulfilled dreams and severed relationships



Remembering others who have gone before and those who follow on

ceremony' in a year from now to remember Ataatua and the way she added joy to family occasions.

A wider community issue involves exploring ways of making back gardens, school yards and play areas safe places for children. South

Africa's NACCW have provided leadership around safe play areas for children in indigenous communities. Most accidents involving children at play can be prevented through adults pausing to review what potential hazards may need addressing. I'll remember Ataatua's impish smile and what a loss that means for all who knew her.



Safeguarding children where they play and how they play

Information

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Columnists

Kiaras Gharabaghi, Jack Phelan, Hans Skott-Myhre, Leon Fulcher, Doug Magnuson, Tara Collins, Garth Goodwin

Writing for CYC-Online

CYC-Online is a monthly journal which reflects the activities of the field of Child and Youth Care. We welcome articles, pieces, poetry, case examples and general reflections from everyone.

In general:

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