

CHARTER

Gonzaga's Journal of  
Scholarship and Opinion



Volume 55  
2017-2018

RESILIENCE



## **The Empire I Am**

*Kayla Kim*

when you left me  
    in pieces  
    i built an empire  
    out of the ashes  
    had it not been for you  
i would have never known  
    how to turn dust  
    into skyscrapers  
this is how i make entire cities  
    out of myself  
    when you are gone

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# Letter from the Editor

Dear reader,

I could have easily made the theme of this journal “hope.” I also could have easily made it “adversity.” Both of these were top contenders amongst the themes considered. However, when I really thought about it, I realized that I did not want this journal to be about blind optimism or devastating tragedies. I did not want it to be about hoping for a team to win the superbowl or that victorious moment when they did. I did not want it to be about that one poem your professor told you was no good, so you stopped writing altogether. No, I wanted it to be about *both*.

I wanted this journal to be about the hope you felt despite the adversity you faced. I wanted it to be about that heartbreaking loss, that moment of utter defeat, and then the way you turned around and won the game the next year. I wanted this journal to be about the first time you picked up a pen after receiving harsh criticism, and the way you felt after you finished a piece you were proud of. I wanted this journal to be about your “comeback kid” moments, the return of the defeated, the raising of the voices that had been silenced, even if it was just to a whisper. I wanted it to be about your resilience, whatever that might mean to you.

And perhaps your resilience isn't about overcoming some unthinkable obstacle. Maybe you see resilience in the way that you are able to show up to class, day after day, no matter how taxing it may be. Perhaps your narrative about resilience isn't even about you. Maybe you see resilience in the way monuments continue to stand over time, regardless of the outside forces acting upon them. Maybe you see the rainforests as resilient, or your mother, or sea turtles. I am sure you have heard resilience defined over and over again, and I am sure at times you disagreed. This year, we decided that we were going to stop telling you what resilience was. This year, we elected to listen.

When I got the call that I had been chosen for this position, I knew the second that I hung up the phone that I wanted to make a



difference with this journal, and I knew that I could. I am a firm believer in the power of the written word. It has the power to inspire us, to move us, to make us laugh or cry, to further our understanding, and ultimately, to change us. The material you will find in the following pages did all of that and more for me. Thanks to the submissions we received, many of which you will see printed in this journal, all of my wildest dreams for Charter came true.

Editing this journal has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. I have learned so much from each and every piece I read, as well as each and every person I worked alongside. I cannot thank the submitters enough for trusting us with their stories of resilience. I encourage you all to speak your truth, share your definitions, believe in the power of self-expression, and remember to listen to those around you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "SKersey". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end of the word.

Sarah Kersey  
Editor-in-Chief



# Naming the Resilient

Giulianna Pendleton

Poet Rupri Kaur writes of her mother's and her own resilience. Scholar Sara Ahmed analyzes the resiliency of the feminist movement against anti-feminist strategy. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg is resilient in her fight for women's rights in the eyes of the law. I do not distinguish these three women to undermine the whole community of women and our resiliency, but rather use them as examples for how different backgrounds and expertise can embody resilience in our life and work. There would not be a women's movement without the body of women denying the institution of man its power, and all the women who have come before us — who have fought for their inherent rights to personhood — have made it possible for us to continue the fight. Rupri Kaur, Sara Ahmed, and Honorable Ruth Bader Ginsburg have all had their own unique life experiences, and are each exemplary embodiments of women's resilience against our persisting oppression.

Contemporary poet Rupri Kaur has published two books of poetry detailing her own life struggles and thanking the people who have helped her through them. Her most recent collection *the sun and her flowers* emphasizes themes of rape, love, immigration, mothers, and sexism, all tying into her overarching message that, just like flowers, “People too/must wilt/fall/root/rise/in order to bloom.”<sup>1</sup> In her poem “The Art of Growing,” Kaur alludes to men and boys seeing her body as belonging to them. Starting at the age of twelve, Kaur remembers being embarrassed of the word “boobs” — she was embarrassed of her own body parts because she did not see herself as in control of them. Men controlled them and her body parts belonged to men. Instead of men being pressured to respect women's bodies, girls are taught to act like a lady and to not give anyone a reason to violate their bodies.

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1 Rupri Kaur, *the sun and her flowers* (Kansas City: Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2017).

Nonetheless, Kaur is determined in this poem, and rightly shouts, “Your actions are not my responsibility/you will control yourself.”<sup>2</sup> Her body belongs to her, and only her, and she will not allow men’s lustful urges to become her primary focus in life. She has dreams and goals of her own and she will not compromise her passion for life to “act like a lady” because men cannot control themselves. Though much of Kaur’s writing is of suffering, her collection of poems ends with hope. In being able to find hope and strength amidst suffering and oppression, Kaur represents the whole community of women in our fight out of the ruins to a more just and equitable world. She is resilient.

Feminist scholar Sara Ahmed, in *Bringing Feminist Theory Home*, presents feminism and being a feminist as constant work, emphasizing that it *is* work. She explains that the feminist movement is a “collective political movement,” and that a movement exists to transform the existing norm and power.<sup>3</sup> Successful movements require momentum, and momentum requires determination, action, and resilience. I think one of her most powerful comments is when Ahmed realizes that “when you become a feminist, you find out very quickly: what you aim to bring an end to some do not recognize as existing.”<sup>4</sup> This is such an important recognition because even though being a feminist is such a large part of my life and identity, what I fight for, and the injustices I study and experience, some are not even aware of its injustice. Ahmed recognizes that being a feminist requires the determination to make the world aware of social injustices against women of all groups. Moreover, Ahmed, in combating anti-feminist strategy, practices retooling methods to reclaim the power and importance of certain feminist strategies. For instance, anti-feminists call out “feminist policing” as a negative tool of feminists to name patriarchal injustices and sexism, but feminists can reclaim this term. The ability to take something that is used to

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2 Ibid, 96.

3 Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017), 3.

4 Ibid, 5.

break down the movement and turn it into a powerful strategy tactic is in itself resilient. It is the ability to take a stigmatized action of calling out sexism and saying, no, we must claim sexism in order to change the current hetero-patriarchal culture. Instead of shying away from naming sexism or standing up against sexist actions, we should give power to the term and be a “feminist police.” In her writing, Ahmed uses her own strategy for empowering women by making a point to not cite any white men. In this sense, she acknowledges that for centuries, several groups of women and persons have been excluded from the academic platform; so, instead of allowing this tradition to persist, she gives formerly excluded voices a stage. Ahmed reclaims women’s power and voices. She is resilient.

As the second woman to sit on the Supreme Court, Honorable Ruth Bader Ginsburg constantly works for the fight against women’s oppression and dehumanization under the law. She has fought for equal pay, birth control, and abortion access, often against the rest of the bench. In the 2007 Supreme Court case that upheld a federal ban on a procedure that opponents called partial birth abortion, Ginsburg claimed the majority decision “reflects ancient notions about women’s place in the family and under the Constitution.”<sup>5</sup> As a women’s rights advocate even before reaching the Supreme Court, Ginsburg recognizes that the more than 200 new restrictions and regulations on abortion clinics target impoverished women. Without accessible resources to reproductive justice, women are forced into compromising their jobs, autonomy, and independence, whether that be from lack of resources for working mothers or not being able to choose when to become a mother or start a family. Ginsburg is controversial — some argue that she imparts political preferences into her judicial philosophy — but I would argue that her decision-making process reflects her critique of the patriarchal paradigm rather than being

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5 Greg Stohr, “Ruth Bader Ginsburg Isn’t Giving Up Her Fight for Women’s Rights,” Bloomberg, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2015-02-12/ruth-bader-ginsburg-isn-t-giving-up-her-fight-for-women-s-rights>

motivated by politics. Every time she writes a dissent, she offers a woman's experience, one that has been silenced for most of the bench's history. Instead of solely siding with a man's perspective, she uses her gender studies background to offer a progressive way of interpreting the Constitution. She fights for her voice on the bench. She is resilient.

The feminist movement is not unique to one career, region, or society. It is a global movement to break down the patriarchy and end all gender-based oppression, discrimination, and violence. These three women have all had unique experiences that shaped their world perspectives and careers, but, just like all feminists, these three are resilient in their fight for justice. They are crucial to the movement in that they all name and claim injustice, oppression, and violence against women, in order to build a more just and equitable world. It is important to remember that while we must resist oppressive regimes, we also must build more feminist structures so that we are not just deconstructing the bad, but also constructing the good.

# Pushing On

*Makenna Presnell*

Resiliency has several definitions: to be able to spring back, to recover easily, to return to your original form after injury, or to heal. My experiences over the course of my life have led me to disagree with this definition — here's why.

I entered this world too early. I was twenty-nine weeks' gestation, underdeveloped, and fighting for my life. On that day almost 20 years ago, I was given my first diagnosis: cerebral palsy. Cerebral palsy is a neurological condition which affects individuals in a variety of muscular and cognitive ways and occurs in 2 of every 1000 births in the United States.<sup>6</sup> Suddenly, I was part of the .2% of children with Cerebral Palsy. My prognosis was unknown. Would I live, speak, or grow up? Nobody knew. The wait began. My body knew adversity before it knew peace; it knew how to stake a claim in my flesh as a warzone before it knew what a neutral world felt like. My very birth almost took my life.

The fight began.

The day of my first cerebral palsy-related surgery was one of the weirdest days of my life. The doctors decided my leg needed to be fixed (even though it felt just fine to me). Granted, it was a little bent, a little twisted, it hurt, and I fell a lot, but my body felt like my body. My body, my space. So, when the doctor asked seven-year-old me if I had any questions about the femoral de-rotation osteotomy, I didn't have the words for the thousand things rolling across my consciousness.<sup>7</sup> I was not equipped with the language or knowledge to understand what was coming next.

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<sup>6</sup> "Cerebral Palsy (CP)," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed February 27, 2018, <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/cp/data.html>.

<sup>7</sup> "Femoral Derotation Osteotomy," BC Children's Hospital, accessed February 27, 2018. <http://www.bcchildrens.ca/our-services/clinics/orthopaedics/orthopaedic-cerebral-palsy/lower-extremity-surgery/femoral-derotation-osteotomy>

I pushed on.

I woke up from that surgery unable to recognize the lower half of my body. The left side of my body looked so different at that point. My legs were symmetrical like they had never been before, which was nice, I guess. The pain came next, and it felt like knives were stabbing into every part of me. I didn't know this wasn't normal, and neither did anyone else. Unknown to my doctors, my family, or me, my limbic system, the part of the brain designated as your safety response center, was rewiring itself, furiously building new protective pathways in response to the trauma I had just endured.<sup>8</sup> When this new condition was finally diagnosed almost 10 years later, they would describe it to me as “a neuroplastic post-traumatic stress response,” but in that moment, all I felt was pain that I didn't know to question.

I pushed on.

In its continued effort to protect me, my brain would spend the next decade rewiring itself, while my family and I struggled to find a diagnosis. A second surgery made things worse, catalyzing the rewiring process. After that, things were never the same. The pain, which had been mysterious but manageable after the first operation, was now spreading. Normal tasks became harder, and pain became a constant. With that, so did the doctors, the medications, and the search for an answer. I could not stop its path, could not make my loss of function slow down, could not stop the spread of the pain which seemed to be invading every neutral zone in me. First the legs, then the joints, the torso, the ribs, the back, the arms, the hands, and the head, until I could not move without wondering how much longer I'd be able to go on. It's amazing what the human condition can get used to.

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<sup>8</sup> Rand Swenson, “Chapter 9 – Limbic System,” Dartmouth, 2006, accessed February 4, 2018, [http://www.dartmouth.edu/~rswenson/NeuroSci/chapter\\_9.html](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~rswenson/NeuroSci/chapter_9.html)



I pushed on.

By my senior year in high school, I could barely move. It became evident I wasn't going to go to college. I wasn't going to have a family. I didn't think I was even going to make it another year. I spent my days listening to audiobooks on the lowest volume possible because I struggled to be around lights or sounds. My limbic system's neural rewiring efforts had progressed so far, that, in layman's terms, my brain's sensory and pain centers were eating the rest of my brain.

I pushed on.

Illness is inherently isolating, especially when you're young, and most of my support from people like me in my age group was found online. From my computer, I connected to support groups for chronically ill or terminally ill teenagers during this time. My friends were some of the most resilient people I've ever met, battling diagnosis after diagnosis. Many of them died. The traditional definition of resiliency would tell you they weren't very resilient. I don't agree. They are the most beautiful lives I have ever stood witness to, and they helped me push on.

We pushed on.

The day I learned I didn't have to push anymore was the day I started the treatment that saved my life. It was the day I was finally properly diagnosed with limbic system failure. I was 18 and three months away from a college start date I had been sure I would miss, but, by the time August rolled around, I was well enough to attend college on time. Treatment was still ongoing; I was overwhelmed with the transformation that had occurred in such a short time. I didn't feel very resilient, and I still don't. I don't believe that resilient is something you are. I think resilience is something that happens to you. Resiliency is, in my mind, one's ability to keep pushing through difficult things, but that's just

human nature. We're all just playing the hand that we were dealt, and I'm trying to play mine well.

This is probably not your story, but it is the very short version of mine. There is so much more to tell, but frankly, I'm better at recounting the story in person. I understand it's difficult and confusing, and there are days I'm not even sure how to grasp what I have lived and pushed through. Life knocks people down, and that's okay. Resiliency doesn't always look like a heroic effort to keep pushing forward. Resiliency is often shown in our ability to show up in our daily lives despite the craziness happening around us, and you are far more resilient than you think you are.

Keep pushing on.

# Overcoming Ourselves

*Joshua Fowler*

During my freshman year of college, I lived in Catherine/ Monica Hall. Anyone who is familiar with the dorm “CM” knows that this dorm has an infamous reputation of being one of the more “social” dorms on campus. As a resident here, I embodied a certain character and lifestyle. I was the type of person who used explicit language regularly, drank alcohol frequently, and engaged with other typical-CM activities. Throughout that first semester, I was generally “content” with this lifestyle.

As life in CM went on, I found myself involved in a conversation about marriage, careers, and life’s future. The discussion prompted me to *think*. Here I was, 18 years old, having a conversation about some distant event, right? But then again, jobs and marriage weren’t abstract concepts. My own parents were chemistry lab partners in high school. Internships were becoming increasingly important for good careers. As I considered how time flies, I understood that “real life” was right around the corner. Upon realizing this, I discovered that my priorities were misaligned. My current actions did not truly represent what I wanted — their consequences were too high. Going to wild parties and being frequently intoxicated were not events that I wanted to be proud of. The choices I made were simply not going to result in true, long-term happiness or success for me. Ultimately, I decided I wanted a change.

My awareness of the issue and my desire to change were the first steps on my journey, but that alone was not going to change things. I had to act and be held accountable for those actions.<sup>9</sup> It was all too easy for me to make excuses for why I had failed to go to the gym that morning or why I decided to go drink that Friday night. I needed someone to hold me accountable for my

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<sup>9</sup> James Hunter, *The Servant: A Simple Story About the True Essence of Leadership* (Prima, 1998).

actions, someone or something who would inspire me to be better. That's why having a mentor or friend to help guide us is so important. I had a good friend from home who I could be honest with and who held me to a higher standard. I worked diligently to escape from my short-term desires and oriented myself toward long-term goals, focusing first on the little things. I failed several times, but I kept at it. I focused on my small victories, and, over time, the frequency and intensity of my negative actions changed.

The most difficult aspect of my journey was leaving the friends that I had connected with from orientation weekend. As social creatures, humans need social interaction. I had to extend beyond what I was comfortable with in order to change. For me, this meant leaving my friend group. It started off by questioning their behavior. I asked them why they made sexist jokes. I asked them why they defined 'cool' as drinking as much as possible. As I continued to question them, my friends became irritated and began to reject my actions and who I was becoming — and they were right to do it. Our actions are often rooted in long-held beliefs, and the questioning of these beliefs is existentially threatening.<sup>10</sup> I failed several times to leave my friends — isolation can be awful. I was drawn back to them several times before I finally succeeded in breaking away entirely.

With my newfound freedom, I committed myself to finding new activities. I decided to start reading. I read books about investing, the future, leadership, discipline, and the structures of social groups. I watched TED talks and documentaries about psychology and philosophy. I started reading Morning Mail to see what was happening on campus for that week. To put it simply, I essentially took part in activities I had never done before. I extended beyond my comfort zone and tried as many new things as possible, regardless of my preconceived notions.

While I have established the problems and negative aspects

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10 Tim Urban, "The Cook and Chef: Musk's Secret Sauce," Wait But Why, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://waitbutwhy.com/2015/11/the-cook-and-the-chef-musks-secret-sauce.html>

of the events that led to my perspective shift, it is vital to realize that each of these events have had a positive component that we need to focus on. I read one book recently entitled *Make Your Bed* by William McRaven. The title is simple and even comical, but the principles derived from it are invaluable. The primary notion is to focus on the little successes and positives in life, such as making our bed or going to the gym, which instills the courage to tackle life's bigger tasks.<sup>11</sup>

For example, each time I tried and succeeded to control my use of vulgar language, I began to feel more disciplined and in control of my actions. While isolation is typically perceived negatively, it gave me the opportunity to learn about myself and the world, and to create some critical life structure. Looking at the bigger picture, leaving my friends, and changing myself was difficult at first, but the positive component was that it helped me to escape certain bad habits and interact with brand new groups of people with different values. Nowadays, I spend time with friends who uphold the same values I do.

At first especially, change was not easy or quick. Just like working out at the gym, we are not going to experience euphoric changes overnight or even within a week. It takes resilience and time.<sup>12</sup> This past summer, I did not go to the gym a single day. The first month of this semester went by and I began working out in the afternoons about once a week. Now I wake up at 6:00 A.M. each weekday to go to the gym before classes. By starting with small, realistic goals and building upon these small goals, we can grow to our full potential.

Although I have found structure in my life, I continue to face obstacles and seek to improve myself. I share this story with you as evidence that overcoming our obstacles in life is possible. I hope you relate this story to your own life. All of us experience

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11 William H. McRaven, *Make Your Bed: Little Things That Can Change Your Life...And Maybe the World*, (New York City: Grand Central Publishing, 2017).

12 Kelly McGonigal, "How to Make Stress Your Friend," Recorded June 2013 at TEDGlobal, Edinburgh, SCT, video, 14:25, [www.ted.com/talks/kelly\\_mcgonigal\\_how\\_to\\_make\\_stress\\_your\\_friend](http://www.ted.com/talks/kelly_mcgonigal_how_to_make_stress_your_friend)

struggles and challenges, but it's our *attitude* toward these challenges and our *actions* on them that measures the resilience in our character. While perhaps we may not share the same challenges, the underlying principles of how to overcome our struggles remain true. By trying new things, creating structure in our lives, and facing our fears we can live a happy in life in which we make our own decisions rather than having decisions made for us.

The defining factor of resilience within ourselves is not merely the presence of struggles, but our view and willingness to take on and *overcome* these struggles no matter how tough. And at the end of the day, overcoming life challenges comes down to *you*. Creating change in your life ultimately comes down to changing *your* outlook and *your* resulting actions. Going forward, let's take action and use it as an opportunity to learn and grow. Let's join organizations that test our beliefs. Let's take on academic challenges that bring out our best work ethic. Let's hold ourselves to a higher standard and see what we can become.

*"We choose to go to the moon, in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and **measure the best of our energies and skills**, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and **one which we intend to win**, and the others, too."*<sup>13</sup>

*John F. Kennedy on September 12th, 1962*

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13 Mike Wall, "JFK's 'Moon Speech' Still Resonates 50 Years Later," Space.com, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.space.com/17547-jfk-moon-speech-50years-anniversary.html>.

# Resilient Mindset: A Real Mechanism for Life Success

*Manojprabhakaran Thirupal*

*Trigger warning: assault, suicide*

Today, we are surviving in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous [VUCA] world.<sup>14</sup> In this VUCA world, no one can escape without facing difficult experiences at some point in their lives. The difficult experiences could be anything — poverty, health issues, assaults, loss of employment, loss of loved ones, etc. These types of devastating experiences affect an individual's mind, body, and soul — three main components that allow a human being to operate in their day-to-day life. When he/she damages any one or all of these main components (mind, body, and soul) due to traumatic or adverse circumstances, they feel emotionally imbalanced, depressed, stressed, attempt suicides, involve themselves in drugs, isolate themselves from others, hate, or shout at everyone for no reason. Thus, they feel mentally exhausted and emotionally drained and often experience a sense of uncertainty. However, with time, affected individuals tend to adapt, improve and overcome their complex traumatic and/or adverse experiences in order to cope with the present life and continue their journey. What is the unique element or capacity that triggers affected individuals to change their mindset and move forward to achieve their life goals? The cultivation of a resilient mindset constantly propels affected individuals to quickly recuperate from their struggles (depending on the nature of events or conditions).

Very few individuals naturally have a capacity to recover by themselves through shaping their resilient mindset. Many individuals who suffer from struggles over a long period

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14 A. Nicolaidis and D.C. McCallum, "Inquiry in action for leadership in turbulent times: Exploring the connections between transformative learning and adaptive leadership," *Journal of Transformative Education* 11, no. 4 (2013): 246-260.

seek love, care, support, guidance, counselling, training, pathways etc., to assist in shaping their resilient mindset and achieving their life goals. Shaping an individual's resilient mindset involves multiple processes and requires time and effort from both the affected individual and those helping that individual, especially if the nature of the atrocity is very serious. Thus, a resilient mindset is a recuperating capacity that aids individuals to encounter complex challenges, trauma, and adversity throughout their life journey.<sup>15</sup>

The following true story may provide a platform for any responsible leaders/individuals to understand the process of shaping the resilient mindset of broken individuals within their family in the real-life situations across the complex world.

It was February 8th, 2007, the day before my birthday and the day after my elder brother's birthday. My sister was assaulted by four rogues in the early morning when she was going to school. She had twenty-two cuts on her head, her left hand was broken, and the attackers chopped two fingers off her hand, and damaged all her other fingers. She was unconscious by the time we found her on the blood-splattered ground. By the time she was admitted to a hospital, we had no hope that she was going to survive. But not far from God's hands, she was born again.

However, her life become totally dark. During the treatment and recovery process, her head was shaved, and she had stitches all over her head. Screws and plates were fixed in her broken hand, and all her remaining fingers were completely stitched. The medical treatment helped her recover from her physical wounds to

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15 Amanda Howe, Anna Smajdor, & Andrea Stockl, "Towards and Understanding of Resilience and its Relevance to Medical Training," *Journal of Medical Education*, (University of East Anglia, Norwich, 2012), 349-356; Jennifer Houpy, Wei Wei Lee, James Woodruff, and Amber Pincavage, "Medical Student Resilience and Stressful Clinical Events During Clinical Training," *Journal of Medical Education*, (University of Easy Anglia, Norwich, 2017); Kirstie Maclean, "Resilience: What and How Children and Young People Can be Helped to Develop It," *Journal of the International Child and Youth Care Network*, (2004), retrieved from: <http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0304-resilience.html>



some extent. After a certain period, the wounds that were on her scalp were covered by hair, as it is a natural gift from God. Her right hand was fixed after multiple surgeries, but she cannot carry or hold heavy weight. Her clothes help her cover the wounds on her body. However, her fingers will never be like they were before; their shape has been totally changed. In fact, the doctors said she would not be able to do anything with these fingers unless some miracle happened.

My mother and family members' care and love had consoled her for some time, but the comfort did not last long time given the nature of her injury, pain, and mental situation. Many times she attempted suicide because she couldn't bear the pain or imagine living in this world as a victim. She cried most of the time, shouted at everyone, and eventually, she isolated herself. I remember my sister covering her face and head with her shawl when we took her to medical treatments because people around us stared at her. People started to gossip about her virginity — some people even directly asked my mother questions: “Did she lose her virginity during the assault?” Such types of questions, comments, and gossip have damaged all of my family members to some extent. In fact, we all isolated ourselves by not going out or talking with many people. My family members still cannot entirely digest the tragic incident and the vacuum it has created cannot be replaced by anything.

I was in middle school when this incident happened. It damaged me in many ways — it created a great fear within me. The fear that I had due to my sister's life-threatening incident pushed me to undergo multiple counselling sessions. It was not this incident alone causing trouble in me, but my own childhood experiences as well. I am still not mentally prepared to share my own life incidents in this article, but I hope to share them in my book in the near future. All of these traumatic and adverse experiences helped me build a resilient mindset at an early age. It helped me to self-recuperate from my own pains and to move forward with my journey. It transformed me into a humble, caring and loving individual, and most importantly, it transformed me into

a dreamer. A resilient mindset helped me to work hard to achieve my goals.

As I was progressing towards a high school education, God made me realize that education was the pathway that would change my sister's life. My family was not in a financial position to support my sister in going to school because my mother was a manual scavenger who cleaned up toilets and manholes to earn less than two dollars per day. Our income was not at all sufficient to provide a meal per day to me, my other three siblings, and my father. My father was an alcoholic who always fought with my mother and would take money from her to purchase alcohol. Later, he died of tuberculosis. My elder sister also died and her husband left (since he was the main culprit for her death), leaving her two children under our family's responsibility. My elder brother quit his school education and started to work along with my mother to support the family. Thus, we lived in extreme poverty. I remember my sister and I would go to school without food and fill our stomachs full of water.

After the incident, my sister wasn't able to write with her gravely injured fingers. After a few years, a miracle happened, assisted by counselling, my constant support, and my mother's love and care. My sister constantly practiced, failed often, but never gave up. She practiced writing with half of an active index finger and thumb every day. As a responsible brother, I also didn't give up. I started working a part-time job overnight and saved money to help my sister continue her school education through a distance education program. Together, my sister and I prepared for final exams. Through God's grace, she cleared all her exams and received a high school diploma. Unfortunately, she wasn't able to score high enough marks to obtain a partial scholarship to continue her university education. Even so, I thanked God and dreamed that one day I would help my sister to get into a university.

I started my university education in 2009 and simultaneously continued to work overnight to support my family as well as to save money for three years to help my sister to go to a university. In 2011, my sister applied for a university, but

unfortunately, she wasn't able to get through the interview process since she applied for art school where she needed to use her hands to draw. My sister naturally had the skill of drawing before her assault, but after the assault, she wasn't able to get better. Thus, her dream of completing an art degree was snatched away. The interview panelist also rejected her due to her lack of English proficiency and other competencies. It was not her fault. Given my family capacity, my sister could only attend the low quality non-English medium school, where she had no chance to cultivate her skillsets. She stayed away from school for almost three years due to the assault. In turn, she wasn't able to meet the university standard.

She cried after the interview and said to me, "let's go home, I don't want to study." Later, I talked with her for a while to console her and motivated her to apply for an English language program, which was a one-year course. She applied and began her language development journey. The next year, she decided to pursue a social work degree since she had become passionate about helping untouchable victims like herself achieve their educational and life goals. However, the money that I saved could not meet all that was needed for tuition, hostel fees, etc. I explained her situation to the Catholic nuns working in the same school. The nuns, in turn, offered her opportunities to work for them and work in the library. This income helped her to meet her school expenses and finally she received her degree in 2015. Further, I started to constantly encourage her to acquire more higher education abroad to develop her global skillsets, so she could uplift victims and survivors like herself across India. My constant motivation triggered her self-interest and made her see me as a role model. I dreamed to study in the U.S. while I was in high school and constantly worked hard, and finally God created a unique opportunity through my friend Aaron Danowski (a Gonzaga alumnus) to pursue a Master's in Organizational Leadership at Gonzaga University. It was a long journey.

In 2017, after a complex process, my sister submitted her educational documents to one European University for internal

evaluation, but the evaluation report was not favorable to my sister to apply to that school. This again pulled her back and left her with great disappointment. As she was discussing with me about how to move forward, I conversed with Stashia Kaiel, the Senior Admission Specialist, Dr. Joseph Kinsella, and Assistant Vice-President for the Center for Global Engagement, with my advisor, Dr. Adrian B. Popa, Associate Professor & Chair of Organizational Leadership, and with my mentor, Father Timothy Clancy S.J. Pastor of Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church, Spokane and Professor of Philosophy at Gonzaga University, to explore viable ways to motivate my sister to apply for Gonzaga University. I wanted to help her start her journey in the leadership program and prepare herself to work for women's empowerment. Finally, she was conditionally accepted into the Organizational Leadership Program. The condition was that she needed to attend and successfully complete her English Language Program at Gonzaga to bolster her language to meet the university standard. Now, my sister needs to arrange finances to start her education; finance is always the biggest hindrance for poor international and domestic students. In order to help my sister overcome the financial burden, I started a fundraising campaign (<https://college.fundly.com/share-support>) and raised \$1,630 out of a \$16,000 goal. I express my sincere thanks to members of the Spokane Indian Community, Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church, Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, and the Gonzaga community for their strong prayers and constant support. I am hoping that God will raise many more helping hands to support my sister financially to start her educational journey at Gonzaga in the near future.

On the whole, this story calls to emerging leaders to seek to understand an individual's hardship, hindrances, and challenges in reaching their higher education and life goals. A leader's in-depth thinking provides a fundamental platform for them to be resilient and support affected individuals within their family, society, and organizations through care, love, motivation, guidance, and mentoring. All affected individuals do not have an immediate capacity to self-recuperate from struggles. In this juncture,

individuals like my sister require more attention since they need someone to show a pathway for them to recuperate, to build self-confidence and motivation, to overcome fear, to dream big and wild, and to train themselves to better shape their own resilient mindset in their life. Thus, a resilient mindset is the key that prepares leaders to lead and succeed in their own life as well as to encourage others to lead a simple, smooth, and peaceful life journey. We must shape individuals' resilient mindsets so they are able to shape their lives and lead peacefully.

# The Problem with Resilience in an Unhealthy Relationship

*Isabella Manoguerra*

As I'm writing this, Valentine's Day is right around the corner. In conjunction with the advertisements for chocolates, balloons, jewelry — you name it — I was intrigued to see a trailer for the new *Fifty Shades of Grey* movie: *Fifty Shades Freed*, the last in an erotica movie franchise from novels written by E.L. James. I'd almost forgotten about the series. A girl-friend had dragged me along a few Valentine's Days ago, both without dates for the night, to see the first *Fifty Shades of Grey*, and I have a brief recollection of being both bored with the plot and slightly mortified by the graphic sex scenes. However, the explicit nature or the general lack of imagination is not what struck me about this movie — it was the clearly romanticized emotional abuse.

A quick Google search tells me that E.L. James started writing the *Fifty Shades of Grey* series as a fanfiction, based off the *Twilight* series written by Stephanie Meyer. This does not surprise me, considering the similarities between the main female characters, Bella Swan and Anastasia Steele. Both authors make their heroines not only static, flat characters with little to no outside interests, hobbies, or accomplishments, but the women in these franchises also withstand a huge amount of controlling manipulation from their boyfriends.

The fact that these books and movies are labeled “romance” becomes highly problematic in more than one way. Both male characters and romantic interests for these young women, Edward Cullen and Christian Grey, exhibit oppressive tendencies toward their supposed loves. Both women are treated as fragile, unable to take care of themselves, unable to make informed decisions, and are chastised and even punished for misbehavior when they've crossed bounds put forth by their significant other. In one scene from *Eclipse*, the third in four books in the *Twilight* series, Edward disconnects the cables from Bella's car to prevent her from seeing

a friend he does not deem “safe.” Susan Jeffers explains in her essay “Bella and the Choice Made in Eden,” that Edward’s “behavior toward Bella for the first three books is frightening in many ways. Over the course of the series, he watches her sleep, constantly tells her she’s absurd, and tries to control who she sees and who her friends are.”<sup>16</sup> As young women consume this material with the expectation of romance, this behavior shifts from obviously creepy to understandable and romantic. Maybe we don’t want our boyfriends watching us sleep, but the fact is that the *Twilight Saga* gives dangerous precedence for this type of controlling and possessive behavior. In the first *Fifty Shades of Grey* movie, Christian follows Anastasia to Georgia where she is visiting her mother because she wouldn’t answer his *phone calls*. Seriously? And we’re calling this behavior love. We’re commending these women for sticking by their man, and, most of all, we hope that they can fix them.

Okay, so what? It can be argued that this is just entertainment, after all. But no one can argue that these franchises have become wide-spread and highly popular. *The New York Times* has the total number of Stephanie Meyer books sold worldwide at over 70 million in 2009.<sup>17</sup> In addition, the first film in the series made \$384 million at the box office.<sup>18</sup> The numbers of people picking her work off the shelves speaks for itself. The *Fifty Shades of Grey* figures don’t look much different. According to a 2014 media brief by Julie Bosman of the *New York Times*, the series has sold “more than 100 million copies worldwide.”<sup>19</sup>

The extreme popularity of these series among young and

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16 Susan Jeffers, “Bella and the Choice Made in Eden,” *The Twilight Mystique*, 2010, quoted in “At Its Core, the Twilight Story is a Story About,” *The Atlantic*, 2012, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2012/11/at-its-core-the-twilight-saga-is-a-story-about/265328/>

17 “‘Twilight’ by the Numbers,” *ArtsBeat: New York Times Blog*, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/11/19/twilight-by-the-numbers/>

18 *Ibid.*

19 Julie Bosman, “For ‘Fifty Shades of Grey,’ More Than 100 Million Sold,” *The New York Times* online, accessed February 28, 2018,

middle-aged women perpetuates the idea that a controlling, suffocating, and unreasonably jealous boyfriend is not only romantic, but normal and healthy. In many ways, we want to commend Bella Swan for never giving up on Edward Cullen, and we hope that Anastasia Steele can one day reach the buried heart of Christian Grey. Even after being belittled, controlled, and hurt time and time again by their lovers, the girls bounce back. The framing of this behavior as devotion and romance gives young (and maybe even older) women the impression that love means inflexibility, control, and dominance, and that this should be accepted and even desired by the partner.

This all might still seem harmless to you. Maybe you're wondering now, what does this all have to do with resilience? Well, we might call what these heroines do in the face of manipulation and control a type of resiliency, but not a positive one. Not only does this genre give a false impression of healthy relationships, it teaches its viewers and readers that these major issues can be a means to an end. If, or when, these female characters manage to fix their significant others, the point is that it shouldn't have been a problem in the first place. Even a happy ending teaches readers and viewers that, if you can manage to hold out long enough, the relationship will turn out with a happily-ever-after.

This isn't the type of resilience we want to be teaching or promoting, especially if we want both women and men to recognize when their relationship becomes unhealthy. This can become extremely difficult when popular culture normalizes problematic behavior. Leslie Morgan Steiner, author of a memoir about relationship abuse entitled *Crazy Love* and a presenter of a TEDTalk about the victims of abusive relationships, addresses this false happy ending in the *Fifty Shades of Grey* trilogy, which "ends with Ana and Christian's happily-ever-after marriage... unlike real life, where most abusive relationships end with protective orders, blocked cellphone numbers, drawn-out court battles over children,



or in the worse cases, death.”<sup>20</sup> The trilogy gives readers the unfair impression that holding out in the face of abuse may lead to a change of heart over time.

Steiner also points out how *Fifty Shades of Grey* hints at an overarching issue within victims of emotional or physical abuse. She explains that “for some victims, the intoxication of healing a damaged partner is the root of how love blindfolds us while delivering us into danger. We cling fiercely to the seductive idea that we are powerful, smart women who can fix hurt men; perhaps nobly, perhaps idiotically, we refuse to abandon these men when so many others already wisely have.” While this is in no way true for everyone, popular franchises like the *Twilight Saga* and *Fifty Shades of Grey* allow for this desire to fix a damaged partner to circulate throughout our modern romantic culture, and we may mistakenly call this devotion and commitment strength or resilience.

The unfortunate thing about the definition of resilience within our everyday rhetoric is that it implies tenacity, or at the very least, elasticity. If we want the interpersonal culture of relationships to change, or if we want the way we talk about what a healthy relationship means and to reflect positive, constructive and supportive behaviors, then the material that young men and women consume on a daily basis must also change. Resilience does not always have to mean hanging on; sometimes, it means knowing when to be done. Romance novels should not be allowing for a normalization of unhealthy relationships, but they should instead encourage readers to challenge those behaviors, and, most importantly, stress the importance of the necessary agency a partner possesses to walk away from these relationships. Otherwise, the lines are only becoming more blurred between concern and control, love and possession, leaving us to mistake abuse for romance.

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20 Leslie Steiner, “There is a line between dominance and abuse – and ‘Fifty Shades of Grey’ is blurring it,” The Washington Post online, accessed February 28, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/02/13/there-is-a-line-between-dominance-and-abuse-and-fifty-shades-of-grey-is-blurring-it/?utm\\_term=.334db5208322](https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/02/13/there-is-a-line-between-dominance-and-abuse-and-fifty-shades-of-grey-is-blurring-it/?utm_term=.334db5208322)

# Trump > Hillary: Why We Need Trump in The Oval

*Nicholas Peters*

When thinking back to 2016, it almost feels surreal that it happened. With so much that occurred over such a short amount of time, it was tough to process, but arguably the peak of this unreal time was the 2016 election. For the second time in the past five elections, the candidate who won the popular vote, Hillary Clinton, didn't become president, but the candidate that won the electoral college, Donald Trump, did. Many people in America were, and still are, uncertain about the future of America (both politically and culturally) and where we're headed. We now know, with a year of Trump as president, that Trump has been, as the Atlantic put it, "the greatest thing to happen to America's civic and political ecosystem in decades."<sup>21</sup> This is *not* endorsing the policies of Trump whatsoever. It's advocating for the net benefits of the *byproducts and long-term benefits* of Trump's presidency on America over Hillary's hypothetical presidency for Democratic and progressive beliefs and ideas. The resilience of the American people and the country's political institutions have created a country where, as I'll explore, more people are starting to care about what happens in politics. Trump is getting more people to better understand politics and how they can play a role in it. While we don't know exactly what would've happened under Hillary, there are various events that can be nearly or directly correlated with Trump becoming president that wouldn't be said if Hillary had become president. We can see this through the surge in civic engagement, the change in how we consume information, and how Trump proves how resilient America is.

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<sup>21</sup> Eric Liu, "How Donald Trump Is Reviving American Democracy," The Atlantic, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/03/how-donald-trump-is-reviving-our-democracy/518928/>

## Surge in Civic Engagement

While civic engagement can be activities such as protesting, door-knocking, or working on your local PTA board, the main focus of this section will be on protesting, since more quantitative data on protesting since Trump's election is available. Because of this, when focusing simply on the increase in protests since Trump's presidency, the most obvious example of this is the Women's March. Its inception directly derives from a woman in Hawaii, named Teresa Shook (which is quite poetic, considering how many people said they were "shook" by Trump's election) who decided to make a Facebook page for a march in Washington against Trump.<sup>22</sup> After Bob Bland, a fashion designer in New York, had a similar idea, he consolidated other Facebook pages that called for a march against Trump (including Shook's), collaborated with a few long-time political activists, and started to organize rallies.<sup>23</sup> These efforts resulted in, depending on where you get the numbers, the largest demonstration in American history.<sup>24</sup> A year since the first march, the Women's March has taken on a "#PowerToThe Polls" campaign, where they held an event and launched:

"...a national voter registration and mobilization tour targeting swing states to register new voters, engage impacted communities, harness [their] collective energy to advocate for policies and candidates that reflect [their] values and collaborate with [their] partner to elect more women and progressives candidates to office."<sup>25</sup>

Just looking at the Women's March, this itself should be gratifying

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22 Cake Tbh, "literally shaking right now," Youtube Video, 00:27, posted November 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ro1ROeKbZhm>

23 Nina Agrawal, "How the Women's March Came into Being," LA Times, accessed February 28, 2018, <http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-pol-womens-march-live-how-the-women-s-march-came-into-1484865755-htmlstory.html>

24 Sarah Frostenson, "The Women's Marches may have been the largest demonstration in US history," Vox, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.vox.com/2017/1/22/14350808/womens-marches-largest-demonstration-us-history-map>

25 "Women's March Anniversary: Power to the Polls," womensmarch.com, accessed February 2018, <https://www.womensmarch.com/power-to-the-polls>

to see. However, it goes deeper than just the Women’s March.

Antifa, a conglomeration of autonomous anti-fascist chapters in the United States, has seen a rise largely due to Trump. In an interview with Vox, Mark Bray, a historian at Dartmouth College and author of *Antifa: The Anti-Fascist Handbook*, explores the concept of anti-fascism and how it is derived from backlash against early European fascism since Mussolini; he agrees with Trump being a main figure in how Antifa has seen a resurgence when the anti-fascist movement was fading away in the mid-2000’s.<sup>26</sup> Antifa’s tactics and order of operations are controversial to say the least, but it nonetheless proves how more people are getting involved with civic engagement via protesting.

In addition to Antifa and the Women’s March, the American Civil Liberties Union and League of Women Voters have seen membership swell up in the past year.<sup>27</sup> There’s more data to divulge, but the main point here is that this growth in protest as a means to be civically engaged is occurring because of Trump being in office. It’s unfortunate that people are only doing so now, but it’s important to be grateful that they’re at least getting more involved now than they were before.

### **The Way News is Consumed**

An unfortunate byproduct of Trump’s presidency has been the rise of “fake news,” in that it’s a means to an end of delegitimizing what’s reported. However, to blame Trump alone for “fake news” would be ignorant of history, even going past yellow journalism in the late 19th century/early 20th century. In a piece by Jacob Soll in *Politico Magazine*, he explores the origins of how false reports of what occurred started soon after the printing press was invented in 1439. He goes on to talk about how fake news in America goes back to the Founding Fathers, when “Ben Franklin himself concocted propaganda stories about murderous ‘scalping’ Indians working in league with the British

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26 Sean Illing, “‘They have no allegiance to liberal democracy’: an expert on antifa explains the group,” Vox, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.vox.com/2017/8/25/16189064/antifa-charlottesville-activism-mark-bray-interview>

27 Eric Liu. “How Donald Trump Is Reviving American Democracy”

King George III,” making this more of a human nature problem than a Trump problem.<sup>28</sup>

I make this point because the argument of Trump promoting the delegitimization of news, which we can now see as a problem that supersedes Trump by several centuries, is also accompanied by the information about how such actions have been combated. The fact-checking industry has boomed since the Trump administration, where one-third of all the world’s fact-checking sources come from America, which was only made possible by four of these fact-checking sources coming about in the past year or so.<sup>29</sup> Newspaper subscriptions have surged since the election, with some newspapers, like the *New York Times*, seeing a 47 percent year-over-year rise in subscriptions.<sup>30</sup> It is true that newspapers aren’t making as much as they used to, but the rise of newspaper subscriptions will reverse these trends in the long-run because this trend has slowly been occurring for the past couple years, but is now booming because of the Trump presidency. These statistics verify that people want to be more informed primarily because of Trump.

### **American Resilience**

I had planned to argue that Congress would have done everything in its power to limit Hillary Clinton’s effectiveness as president if she had won the election, but not enough data exists to support this argument. When researching for this essay, however, I happened to find a common pattern in looking up how America’s government institutions would have hypothetically hindered Clinton’s presidency: these same institutions are the ones hindering

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28 Jacob Soll, “The Long and Brutal History of Fake News,” politico.com, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/12/fake-news-history-long-violent-214535>

29 Mark Stencel, “Fact-checking booms as numbers grow by 20 percent,” reporterslab.org, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://reporterslab.org/fact-checking-booms-as-numbers-grow-by-20-percent/>

30 Michael Barthel, “Despite subscription surges for largest U.S. newspapers, circulation and revenue fall for industry overall,” pewresearch.org, accessed February 28, 2018, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/06/01/circulation-and-revenue-fall-for-newspaper-industry/>

Trump's success.

The resilience goes further than just that, and this is where the power of America comes in hand and connects back to the underlying theme of resilience. The Women's March and its large turnout signifies how political activism has been activated in America, resulting in protests like the protest over the "Muslim ban" that prevented it from becoming a law. This is because those protests led to petition, which led to court verdicts, which led to court victories. The increase in newspaper subscriptions indicates a growth in Americans wanting less fake news and more real journalism. The increased amount of civic engagement — through means of non-protesting, such as cold-calling and reaching out to your representative — allowed the resilience of the American people to make sure Congress didn't pass the repeal of Obamacare.

Do you see the pattern? When Trump goes against what the American people want, the resilience of Americans and the government institutions that uphold the country's political system fights back harder. We are now seeing signs of this when looking at gubernatorial races and what's happening in Congress. The Trump presidency has seen two states become blue in governorship (Virginia and New Jersey, both landslide victories)<sup>31</sup> and Virginia also gained ground in the state legislatures, neutralizing the Republican majority.<sup>32</sup> With the recent federal court cases regarding gerrymandering, specifically in Pennsylvania where the Supreme Court rejected an effort from Republicans to redraw 18 congressional districts, Democrats have opportunities to win Congressional seats usually held by Republicans.<sup>33</sup> Democrats have now been given a huge chance to increase their likelihood of

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31 Eliza Relman, "'This is a tidal wave': Democrats blow Republicans out of the water in the key bellwether state of Election Day 2017," *businessinsider.com*, accessed February 28, 2018, <http://www.businessinsider.com/democrats-virginia-new-jersey-sweep-elections-tidal-wave-2017-11>

32 Kevin Robillard, "One-vote recount win gives Democrats tie in Virginia state House," *politico.com*, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.politico.com/story/2017/12/19/democrats-tie-virginia-house-of-delegates-244598>

33 Chirs Cillizza, "Democrats' chances of winning back the House just got a major boost," *CNN.com*, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/05/politics/pennsylvania-redistricting-ruling/index.html>

making a comeback in the midterms, and maybe even take back the House.

On one final note, to help further ensure this possible path for Democrats, if that's what you desire to happen, it starts with the American people taking action, and that includes you. If the American people keep taking action and stay informed at the rate they are right now (because that's the only way this happens), then America's future is looking good. Nay, the future...is looking blue.

# Metaphor as Strength: the Intersection between Illness and Literature

Colin Bonini

When I was about eleven, my mother explained the death of Alexis Briski, a family-friend who died of cancer when she was ten, with a short question. She sat my sisters and I down and asked, “When you’re walking through a garden, which flowers do you pick first?”

“The prettiest ones,” one of my little sisters said.

“Exactly. Alexis was an amazing gift for all of us, but God thought she was ready to come back to Him. We should be happy that she is in a better place now, even if we don’t understand why.”

It was a much kinder explanation than, “The cells in Alexis’s lymph nodes began growing at a rate beyond control and slowly caused her organ systems to fail.” The flower metaphor, regardless of the religious context, helped all of us come to grips with a serious subject very early in our lives. It introduced to our young minds a thoughtful discourse on life, death, religion, illness, and our general perception of mortality in a way that we could easily visualize and cope with. This metaphor was a segue into an important life lesson: things happen that are beyond our control, but we must remain strong in their wake, resilient in our efforts to understand and endure.

Susan Sontag is well known for taking the opposite view. Her contentions against the usage of metaphor within the context of suffering and illness are posed in both *Illness as Metaphor* and *AIDS and its Metaphors*. In these works, she claims that the constructed metaphors around sickness ultimately harm sufferers. But, her arguments neglect the importance of metaphor’s ability to make the abstract aspect of illness tangible, a practice just as important to those suffering as it is to those close to them. It is vital that Sontag’s work be reconstructed in a way that does not entirely



outlaw metaphoric thinking in one's experience with illness, but instead utilizes it as a mechanism to accept illness and suffering as parts of the human condition.

Sontag particularly criticizes metaphors surrounding tuberculosis, cancer, and AIDS. *Illness as Metaphor* focuses on the comparison between past metaphors of tuberculosis and contemporary assumptions and language addressing cancer, while *AIDS and its Metaphors* was written a decade later to bring into light the progression of these metaphors onto the newest epidemic: AIDS. The goal of Sontag's works is, in her own words, "to rectify the conception of the disease, to de-mythicize it."<sup>34</sup> Her attempt to end the hyperbolic perception of illness brought upon by metaphor begins by tracing the "mythicizing" of these diseases, starting with tuberculosis. She ultimately argues that the social conception of tuberculosis at its peak began defining the type of person who protracted it, creating a "character type." Tuberculosis was thought of to be a disease of "the spiritualized body"—"a disease of the soul."<sup>35</sup> Thus, a person who contracted tuberculosis was thought of to be excessively "genteel, delicate, [and] sensitive," and, ultimately, "TB was also thought to make the sufferer sexy."<sup>36</sup>

Sontag then explains how this concept of creating a "character type" for a disease moved on to cancer in the 20th century. However, she purports that in contrast to TB's romantic air, "the cancer personality is regarded...as one of life's losers."<sup>37</sup> She claims that metaphors surrounding cancer have turned it into a "demonic enemy [that] make[s] cancer not just a lethal disease but a shameful one."<sup>38</sup> According to Sontag, the worst (and most prominent) metaphor used in conjunction with cancer is the military metaphor, which depicts cancer as "the epitome of evil."<sup>39</sup> In her opinion, the militaristic metaphors surrounding cancer, such

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34 Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor: and, AIDS and its Metaphors*, (Penguin Books: 1991): 7.

35 Ibid., 18.

36 Ibid., 26, 28.

37 Ibid., 50.

38 Ibid., 59

39 Ibid., 89

as “the battle against cancer”, actually harm those diagnosed by turning their condition into “an incitement to violence” that “overmobilizes... overdescribes, and...powerfully contributes to the excommunicating and stigmatizing of the ill.”<sup>40</sup> Sontag claims that instead of helping sufferers overcome their circumstances, metaphoric language turns them into passive victims who are exiled by society.

This theory that the use of metaphor in describing illness actually suppresses and alienates patients rather than helps them is what Sontag capitalizes on in *AIDS and its Metaphors*. The book hinges on the perception of AIDS as a disease of the other; that those diagnosed with AIDS are necessarily linked to deviant behavior. She writes, “the unsafe behaviour that produces AIDS is judged to be more than just weakness. It is indulgence, delinquency — addictions to chemicals that are illegal and to sex regarded as deviant.”<sup>41</sup> Sontag equates Western society’s view toward AIDS to a moral plague that subjugates AIDS victims into a moral subset — one that is seen to inherently deserve their circumstances. AIDS, even more so than cancer, is wrongly surrounded by an attitude of guilt and shame that adds to the hardship of those afflicted. Sontag argues that these metaphors stigmatize patients so much that they even create an attitude that hinders the progress of patient care, that “they inhibit people from seeking treatment early enough, or from making a greater effort to get competent treatment. The metaphors and myths, I was convinced, kill.”<sup>42</sup> Sontag asserts that the solution to these problematic associations is to eliminate metaphoric language in regards to illness. She believes that freeing medical discourse from the binds of metaphor would contribute to a less stigmatizing and more open and constructive dialogue about illness. The key to enduring suffering is rooted in reality as opposed to metaphor.

While Sontag does create a convincing argument against the use of metaphors within a medical context, there is an inherent

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40 Ibid., 84, 180.

41 Sontag, *Illness*, 111.

42 Ibid., 99.

flaw in her reasoning. Illness itself is a subjective experience, and therefore no one person can speak on behalf of all people diagnosed with a disease. So, although Sontag specifically wrote both *Illness as Metaphor* and *AIDS and its Metaphors* as non-narrative pieces, it must be noted that they are her subjective views on the treatment of illness — not those of the entire sick community. Many people may agree with her, but others maintain that the use of metaphor ultimately helps the illness experience, even becoming a key tool in overcoming their hardships.

One such example comes from a piece written much before Sontag's time. In *Life in the Sick Room*, Harriet Martineau introduces the concept that the physical experience of illness, the pain itself, is a fleeting sensation; "The fact of their occurrence is all that even memory can preserve. The sensations themselves cannot be retained, nor recalled, nor revived; they are the most absolutely evanescent, the most essentially and completely destructible of all things."<sup>43</sup> This idea that physical pain is a fleeting feeling that lacks accurate description serves as a precursor to an attitude expressed in Virginia Woolf's essay, "Illness." Woolf eloquently and precisely pinpoints the shortcomings when discussing illness: "Finally, among the drawbacks of illness as matter for literature there is the poverty of the language. English which can express the thoughts of Hamlet and the tragedy of Lear has no words for the shiver and the headache."<sup>44</sup> Both women believe that language falls short when it comes to the physical experience of illness, but I argue that the use of metaphor in dealing with illness would help to bridge this gap.

Martineau hints at this theory when recounting how, despite never being able to recall or transcribe the experience of pain, she is able to express positive emotion when she says, "the good is indissolubly connected with ideas—with the unseen realities which are indestructible. This is true, even of those

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43 Harriet Martineau, *Life in the Sick Room*, (Boston: L.C. Bowles and W. Crosby, 1844): 27.

44 Virginia Woolf, "Illness," in *The Body in the Library: A Literary Anthology of Modern Medicine*, ed. Iain Bamforth, (Verso: London, 2003): 193.

pleasures of sense which of themselves would be as evanescent as bodily pains.”<sup>45</sup> Even though the “good” experiences are just as intangible as the pain Martineau feels, she is able to express them through *relationship*. “Good” things can be expressed metaphorically, and can therefore evoke emotions about an abstract, intangible event. In the same way, the employment of metaphor in dealing with suffering could potentially help patients express their experiences more accurately to non-sufferers. While it may be impossible to fully empathize with an ill person in relation to their physical pain, the use of metaphor shortens the sensational gap by using language to draw emotion and feeling out of an abstract event. It becomes a valuable and powerful tool rooted in resilience.

Just as the metaphoric expression of an illness can assist in communicating the feeling of illness to non-sufferers, it can also be utilized as a tool for patients to better understand and cope with their circumstances on a personal level. In her essay “After Sontag: Reclaiming Metaphor,” Martha Stoddard Holmes gives a personal recount of how her aversion to metaphoric thinking hindered her mindset when struggling with cancer. She testifies, “my slowness in seeking diagnosis, I became convinced, was closely related to my lack of active and verbal imagination about the inner realms of my own body and my dearth of metaphors to express and thus identify the unfamiliar sensations that would later be diagnosed as cancer.”<sup>46</sup> Holmes’s claim that thinking in an abstract manner about her body would have led to seeking diagnosis and treatment sooner is in direct contrast to Sontag’s argument. After her own experience with cancer, Holmes believes that Sontag’s argument against metaphors actually restricts patients to the confines of their illness, hurting the ability to cope with illness on a personal level. In contrast to the Sontagian approach, Holmes asserts, “there are many more ways to use metaphors, and some of them decrease suffering rather than add to it. We can use figurative language to

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45 Martineau, *Sick Room*, 28.

46 Martha Stoddard Holmes, “After Sontag: Reclaiming Metaphor,” *Genre*, vol. 4 no. 3, (2011): 269.

approach the body, as verbal pincers to get at the thing itself (or somewhere close to it) and express our own embodiment.”<sup>47</sup> This quotation reinforces the idea that metaphoric language can make tangible the abstract sensations experienced within illness, and adds in the aspect of using figurative language’s ability to help the ill come to terms with their own circumstances and serve as a source of strength.

A prime example of metaphor being used to reclaim one’s body from illness in this way comes from the novel *The Fault in Our Stars*, written by John Green. The story chronicles the relationship of Hazel and Augustus, both sixteen-year-old cancer patients. Louise Creechen notes in her essay “Terminal Truths: Children’s Literature, Cancer and its Metaphors” how metaphor is utilized by both characters frequently throughout the novel, such as when Hazel describes herself as a grenade or when Augustus places an unlit cigarette between his lips, saying “it’s a metaphor [...] you put the killing thing between your teeth, but you don’t give it the power to do its killing.”<sup>48</sup> Creechen argues that through the use of metaphor Hazel and Augustus are both able to reclaim their bodies and lives from preset concepts of what it means to be ill — that metaphor helps the young patients to “understand and construct their own patient narrative.”<sup>49</sup> Her belief in metaphor is similar to that of Holmes in that she sees figurative language as a tool through which Hazel and Augustus understand their personal identities within their illness. Sontag’s argument is practically turned on its head when Creechen writes, “enacting metaphors of their own creation is an attempt to control their identity construction and to avoid being made ‘tropes’ of their cancer.”<sup>50</sup> In this case, metaphor acts in the exact opposite way that Sontag claims: it individualizes patients to their own narratives and personal identities, rather than generalizing them into one

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47 Ibid., 270.

48 Louise Creechen, “Terminal Truths: Children’s Literature, Cancer and its Metaphors,” *HARTS & Minds: The Journal of Humanities and Arts*, vol. 1, no. 3, (2013-2014): 8.

49 Creechen, “Terminal Truths,” 7.

50 Ibid., 8.

suppressed group. It is vital to recognize that Sontag's distaste for metaphor, if taken to heart, is actually capable of furthering the suffering of the ill by restricting their personal interpretation of their body and self within the illness experience; metaphor can easily be a tool for the ill as opposed to a hindrance.

Just as vital in forming a personal understanding of illness is metaphor's role in discussing illness with those who cannot yet grasp concepts such as the permanence of death, like children. In the same article, Creechen quotes Freud on the child's perception of death: "the child's idea of death has little but the word in common with our own. . . being dead means, for the child, who has been spared the suffering that precedes death, much the same as being gone, ceasing to annoy the survivors."<sup>51</sup> While a child deals with serious illness for the first time, regardless of if they themselves are ill or if a close loved one is suffering, the implications are often times too overwhelming for them to grasp concretely. Metaphors are absolutely necessary to translate these complicated phenomena — death and terminal illness — into a language that children can understand.

Patrick Ness's *A Monster Calls* is a children's book that beautifully addresses this concept. Its main character is Conor, whose mother is dying of cancer. Conor is only able to address and discuss his mother's condition through metaphoric stories with a yew tree. He uses proverbs like, "Kingdoms get the princes they deserve, farmer's daughters die for no reason, and sometimes witches merit saving."<sup>52</sup> These kinds of metaphors are the only way Conor can understand the repercussions and implications of his mother's illness — similar to the way my sisters and I were helped to cope with Alexis's death in our childhood. Without metaphors, Conor would be left in the dark as to his mother's condition, and would fail to have a complete understanding as to why she was suffering and what that means. According to Creechen, "it is actually the metaphor that carries the *truth* about the

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51 Ibid., 7,

52 Creechen, "Terminal Truths," 9.

consequences of cancer and the feelings that arise from it.”<sup>53</sup>

In other words, Conor would be unable to comprehend the significance of his mother’s illness without metaphor, proving that it is a necessary tool for children in dealing with illness, helping them to stand strong in the face of suffering instead of retreating into emotions of confusion and terror.

On the other hand, Morris Glietzman’s *Two Weeks With the Queen* paints a picture of how children fail to cope with these kinds of situations when deprived of metaphoric discourse. In the novel, young Colin’s two-year-old brother Luke is dying of cancer, and so he is sent to England by his parents in an attempt to spare Colin from the hardship of watching his brother die. Far from helping Colin deal with his brother’s condition, the attempt to ignore and shield him from the illness prompts a series of misunderstandings about cancer. Without any opportunity to have cancer explained to him, Colin begins constructing his own metaphors to try and grasp what is happening to his brother, consistently underestimating the severity of the situation by attributing the causation to an overeating of “jelly snakes” or proposing cricket as a cure.<sup>54</sup> This misunderstanding climaxes when Colin casually asks an uncomfortable businessman if his indigestion is actually cancer, “it is clear from his inappropriate mention of ‘cancer’ in a conversation that he has failed to understand the significance of cancer as a serious, and potentially terminal, illness.”<sup>55</sup> Although funny, this demonstration of Colin’s misguided perception of cancer indicates the underlying problem that without a way to understand cancer in his own way, he is lost in his journey to come to terms with the death of his brother. If other characters in the book, such as his parents or relatives, had attempted to explain the situation in a way that he could more appropriately perceive, Colin would be able to start a journey of understanding instead of a misguided quest for reason.

Comparing the assessments of illness that stem from Colin

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53 Ibid., 10.

54 Ibid., 6.

55 Ibid., 7.

and Conor makes it clear that metaphor is a critical part of explaining illness to children. In *A Monster Calls*, Conor is able to come to grips with his mother's condition through open, metaphoric conversation about her illness. Conversely, Colin's story revolves around people hiding and closing off conversations about his brother's condition. This results in a dramatic misunderstanding of cancer along with a constantly unfulfilled urge for Colin to find answers to his questions. These two stories taken in conjunction prove how important a part metaphor plays in discussing illness and suffering with children, and that, as Creechen notes, "Paradoxically, in Children's Literature 'truth' is best communicated through metaphor."<sup>56</sup> This echoes the idea presented by Creechen regarding *The Fault in our Stars* and Holmes's own illness experience that metaphor is an important tool in discussing illness.

The use of metaphor within discussions surrounding terminal illness and needless suffering is not black and white; Sontag's *Illness as Metaphor* and *AIDS and its Metaphors* each do an excellent job of exposing the negative aspects of an overindulgence in metaphoric thinking regarding illness. However, she fails to recognize the power of language in easing the suffering of patients in several regards. Metaphor is a crucial instrument for the communication between those suffering and those not, helping the experience of illness reach a wider level of empathy and understanding. On top of this, a metaphoric mindset regarding one's body and selfhood within illness can be an incredibly powerful way to reclaim identity from illness, as was the case of Martha Stoddard Holmes and the characters Hazel and Augustus from *The Fault in Our Stars*. The abstract aspect of metaphor is also important in helping children begin their journey to understanding illness and engaging in the discourse surrounding it in an appropriate way. With all of this in mind, it becomes apparent that Sontag's work cannot be taken as gospel in describing the experiences of all people experiencing illness. The negative aspects of metaphor do exist, but the application of

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<sup>56</sup> Creechen, "Terminal Truths," 10



figurative language can also help ease the suffering and experience of illness to patients. Illness is a subjective experience, and while metaphors can be harmful, they can often act as a tool for people to understand, accept, and live with illness in a state of resilience, as opposed to one of dread.

# My Hands

*Matthew Williams*

I once held in my hands the beautiful sun  
68 degrees<sup>57</sup> of love  
Scorched my hands beyond repair  
Giving me a reason to care  
For the eleven million men, women, and children<sup>58</sup>  
Who asked for opportunity, but received rejection  
And learned to run in the desert sun

I once held in my hands a gallon of water  
with fire unquenched, vision unfulfilled  
I rushed to replace slashed open salvation  
Only to lose sight of my own nation

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57 Weather History for KTUS - December, 2015.” Weather Underground (10.226.242.163). [http://www.wunderground.com/history/airport/KTUS/2015/12/1/DailyHistory.html?req\\_city=&req\\_state=&req\\_statename=&reqdb.zip=&reqdb.magic=&reqdb.wmo=](http://www.wunderground.com/history/airport/KTUS/2015/12/1/DailyHistory.html?req_city=&req_state=&req_statename=&reqdb.zip=&reqdb.magic=&reqdb.wmo=).

On the third day of the service immersion, our group went out in the desert and walked on paths that immigrants themselves have taken. This weather grounded in me a fraction of the physical experience of crossing the border.

58 Jens Manuel Krogstad, Jeffrey S. Passel, and D’Vera Cohn. “5 facts about illegal immigration in the U.S.” Pew Research Center. April 27, 2017. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/27/5-facts-about-illegal-immigration-in-the-u-s/>.

When I went on a service immersion to the U.S.-Mexico border in December 2015, I got to hear the stories of four incredible women and one family who had journeyed north from many places throughout Central America, did business with cartels to get across the border, and survived deportation. This article gives rough figures as to how many other people in the United States have similar stories to remind me of how many people I have chosen to continue fighting for on the path to immigration justice.

At knowledge of six thousand who paid with their lives<sup>59</sup>  
To give hope for tomorrow to those whom they loved  
Who did not find rest for lack of water

Now I hold in my hands solidarity scars  
To remind me to never take “the side of the oppressor”<sup>60</sup>  
To bear witness to hope that not all is lost  
No matter my failure to alleviate cost  
For eleven million men, women, and children  
Who suffer as I struggle to fight everyday  
That I might be the only one to bear those scars

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59 Colin Schultz. “Nearly 6,000 Migrants Have Died Along the Mexico-U.S. Border Since 2000.” *Smithsonian.com*, October 1, 2014. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/nearly-6000-migrants-have-died-along-mexico-us-border-2000-180952904/>.

As a mathematician, I frequently look for numbers to help me decide where to stand. As long as the number of border crossing deaths is higher than zero, I refuse to remain silent in the face of this injustice.

60 Robert McAfee Brown, *Unexpected News: Reading the Bible with Third World Eyes*. (Westminster John Knox Press; 1st edition, 1984).

Desmond Tutu is quoted saying, “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.” This quote provides one of the most important reasons I have to stay committed to fighting for justice for immigrants.

# Resilience is Everywhere

*Kalika Singh*

Resilience.

A resilient person has the personality of one who focuses on conquering the issues that harm them emotionally and mentally. It is important to take a step back and examine the situation carefully. One might notice that there are many moments in life that are considered “difficult” — but it is simply the magnitude of difficulty that either makes us immune to the struggle or well aware of it. In other words, we are always encountering obstacles in our daily lives; in some cases, the problems are so small that the “resilient” option is seemingly quite clear and doable. Other problems are more magnified, and it is proportionally more difficult to choose the “resilient” option.

Throughout my life, I have had to make the choice between being resilient or breaking apart numerous times. In the beginning of my educational career, I was declared a student requiring special education as a result of having speech impediments. I was always fighting to make the resilient choice, even though I was too young to register what I was actually doing. Growing up, I remember being considered strange by my peers. I learned at a young age how it is human nature for the “normal” student to form cliques with the other “normal” students, even if these kids were only seven years old. Looking back, I decided I wanted to do some research, where I found the following. According to the *Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing Research*, “prevalence [of speech impediments] estimate for boys was 8% and for girls 6%” this separation was to be expected.<sup>61</sup> Along with this, a study conducted in the *Journal of School Psychology* stated that those who “receive special education services are at increased risk for bullying others, for being bullied, for receiving office referrals, and for not

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61 J. Bruce Tomblin, “Prevalence of Specific Language Impairment in Kindergarten Children,” *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, (1997): <https://jslhr.pubs.asha.org/article.aspx?articleid=1781924>.

engaging in prosocial behavior.”<sup>62</sup> In addition, according to a study conducted by The JAMA Network, the “prevalence of frequent bullying among elementary school children is substantial” which emphasizes on how frequent this type of behavior is in the first place.<sup>63</sup> Even with this in mind, I wasn’t going to let this keep me down. One day, I would be able to speak like the rest of my peers and be one of them. I would eventually belong. Up until the third grade, I would continue working towards resolving my speech impediments, even though it would become difficult at moments. After those years of work, I graduated from the special education system in the third grade and was considered a “normal” student. While this might seem like the end of my struggle, I would soon learn that this was only the beginning of it all.

The test of my resilience would only continue.

My peers soon became aware of race, gender, and popularity. Eventually, it wasn’t my speech that my peers found strange, but rather my skin, hair length, and shyness. During those moments, I knew I still had two choices: be resilient or break apart. I began to choose the resilient path and find ways to face the cruel words and opinions that people can have. There were moments when I felt like giving up was the best choice. For example, the time I grew my hair out, I thought that the teasing would stop. I thought that by conforming to what everyone thought was normal I would fit in and feel better about myself. However, the beauty of choosing the resilient path is found in how much it can teach you about life and how the world works. It was throughout my journey of being resilient that I began to realize my identity should be shaped by my experiences and personal preferences, not just what someone else considered to be normal. I learned just how important it is to make the decisions that you believe are correct. I realized that this was my life and I should have the liberty of being

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62 Susan M. Swearer et al, “Understanding the bullying dynamic among students in special and general education,” *Journal of School Psychology*, (2012): <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0022440512000374>.

63 MD Gwen M. Glew, “Bullying, Psychosocial Adjustment, and Academic Performance in Elementary School,” *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, (2005): <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/486162>.

able to cut my hair short or keep it long, if I so choose.

When I came to this realization, I began to look at my problems differently. My problems suddenly became less of a nuisance, but rather a challenge that can be beaten if addressed strategically. After I thought I had everything handled, during my junior year I injured my back to the point that I was unable to walk. I missed the first week of the school year because I couldn't leave my bed. When I was finally able to go back to school, I wore a back brace, took the elevator and hung on to walls just to get to and from classes.

However, my previous experiences that required me to be resilient helped me get through this difficult time as well. Throughout all of this I remembered that while the resilient path is difficult, the results are incredible.

# Earth's Promise to Humanity

*Madison Dougherty*

A couple months ago, a good friend of mine awoke at 4:00 A.M. by the sound of blaring bullhorns ringing through her walls, followed by violent yelling and the sound of thunderous crashing. Her husband reached over to turn on the lamp, but soon realized that the electricity was out. They were both sweating, as their house had reached a sweltering 90 degrees despite it being October. The horns kept sounding outside, and someone was banging at their door. As they opened their door, they were greeted by five firefighters and, behind them, the hellish flames that licked the hills around them and turned the world into glowing purgatory that barely resembled their previous home. The land was now consumed by flame and fire, and was thus destroyed. They realized that this moment would be the last they would have with their house. Yet, my friend had a positive outlook. Her house was gone, but fire had laid down a blanket of fertile ash that encouraged stronger, healthier trees and plants to grow back. In time, the land her property sat upon would possibly be even more beautiful than before.

A couple days ago, another friend of mine called, saying she was worried because she had to evacuate her campus as rivers of mud and noxious water flowed through her neighborhood. She told me she had watched a man get swept away by the torrent force of the floods, only to be caught last minute by the branches of a fallen tree hanging over the muddy flow. Afterwards, she described the gentle rain that fell, a sort of apology from above that washed away the mud that covered everything.

Last week, my father called my mother and told her he didn't know when he would be coming home from Virginia, because his flight was cancelled. Arctic air had pushed its way across the eastern side of the country, turning it into a freezing nightmare. The storm had brought wind chill that reached 100 degrees below atop mountains and even laid down snow in Florida. It was too dangerous to even step outside for a few minutes

Although almost all of the eastern states were frozen, my father couldn't help but notice how the sky was the most iridescent blue he had ever seen. The storm had seemingly blown out all of the air pollution, acting as a sort of reset button for the atmosphere.

Our world is changing at an alarmingly fast rate. The wildfire in California that destroyed my friend's home also burned down 5,300 other structures, killed 44 people, and burned over 36,000 acres of land, making it the most destructive wildfire in California history.<sup>64</sup> The mudslide that trapped my best friend inside a shopping mall in Santa Barbara in January, 2018, had killed 20 people and wiped out entire blocks, with 43 people declared missing and yet to be found in thick mud as deep as ten feet. These numbers are not definitive, as the death toll is expected to rise as mud and debris are cleared away.<sup>65</sup> The storm that stranded my father in Virginia had dumped a foot of snow each day in some states. The Northeast states had become colder than Mars by the end of the first week of January.<sup>66</sup> More than a dozen lives were claimed during the freezing storm as sub-zero storms literally froze the entire eastern coast, from Florida to Maine.<sup>67</sup> However, after each of these traumatic events, there was a single sign of hope given by nature herself, whether it be a gentle rain, a clear sky, or a single sprout within the ashy ground. Earth has a message for us, but are we listening?

The year 2017 will be remembered as a year that ravaged our country specifically, with over 362 recorded deaths and

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64 Dale Kasler and Ryan Sabalow, "Don't get fooled by the calendar. October is deadly month for fires in California," *The Sacramento Bee*, accessed February 27, 2018, [www.sacbee.com/news/state/california/fires/article180628301.html](http://www.sacbee.com/news/state/california/fires/article180628301.html).

65 Jennifer Medina and Patricia Mazzei, "Victims of California Mudslides Were Swept Away Weeks After Surviving Fires," *NYtimes.com*, accessed February 28, 2018, [https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/11/us/california-mudslides-victims.html?rref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Fus&action=click&contentCollection=us&region=rank&module=package&version=highlights&contentPlace-ment=1&pgtype=sectionfront&\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/11/us/california-mudslides-victims.html?rref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Fus&action=click&contentCollection=us&region=rank&module=package&version=highlights&contentPlace-ment=1&pgtype=sectionfront&_r=0)

66 Holly Yan and Judson Jones, "Winter storm threatens East Coast, bringing temps colder than Mars," accessed February 28, 2018, <http://www.cnn.com/2018/01/03/us/cold-weather-arctic-outbreak/index.html>

67 *Ibid.*



approximately \$306 billion lost, both due to climate disasters. As a country, we were continuously ravaged by disaster throughout the entire year. Wildfires burned in every season in California and along the west coast. Three major hurricanes hit the southeast. Tornadoes ripped through the classic tornado alley, and record-breaking thunderstorms and freezes occurred in both the Midwest and east coast.<sup>68</sup>

Was this year not enough to make our world open its eyes to one of the biggest threats that addresses all of mankind? Climate change and global warming are not just affecting our country, but the entire world as a whole. Despite colder than average temperatures in some parts of the world, temperatures over the planet continue to rapidly increase, as we have been continuously seeing for the past forty years.<sup>69</sup> Our planet is changing into a vessel that will soon no longer be able to bear the weight and consequences of our actions. As we dig deeper into the skin of Earth and spill noxious toxins into her lungs, our planet is becoming feverish. As we cut down her forests to make room for houses and development, and drive her creatures to extinction by claiming their land for ourselves, we are undeniably forcing our planet down a path of destruction, and towards imminent death. This is our only home. Once Earth can no longer cater to our needs, where will we go? After the last tree is cut down, and freshwater is no longer available to the pipes of privileged countries, is that when we will realize that there is nowhere else for us to go? Will we only change once it is too late?

We have been treating our planet as if she were created for us humans only, to live on and take from, and we expect her to keep giving to us without end. Climate change is one of the biggest threats that humans have collectively faced. Why? This is because it could take away our water, our food, our fresh air,

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68 “2017 was 3rd warmest year on record for U.S.,” National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration online, accessed February 28, 2018, <http://www.noaa.gov/news/2017-was-3rd-warmest-year-on-record-for-us>

69 “Long-Term Warming Trend Continued in 2017: NASA, NOAA,” NASA online, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.nasa.gov/press-release/long-term-warming-trend-continued-in-2017-nasa-noaa>

our land, our resources, and everything else that we have come to depend on. Communities across the globe who subsist on the land are already facing problems that climate change is creating, such as natural disasters and changes in water and food resource availability. You may live in a house with electricity and running water and a refrigerator full of food, but that does not make the issue any less serious. It may have snowed or rained the other day, but that doesn't mean global warming isn't real.

Humans are unquestionably speeding up the process of climate change by releasing unfathomable amounts of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide or other noxious gases into the atmosphere, while also exhausting Earth's natural resources such as oil, minerals, freshwater, forests, and animal species. Unfortunately, Earth has limits. Earth cannot replenish her resources as fast as we use them. In fact, some of her resources, such as oil, cannot be restored (unless you are willing to wait a couple of million years). We are pushing our planet past her limits, and we are facing the consequences. We get to witness and participate in the phenomena of the destruction of our one and only home.

However, we have been blessed with such a beautiful planet that is strong enough to keep us alive, and strong enough to withstand our cruelty. Although Earth is warming due to a sharp increase in greenhouse gases present in our atmosphere (in 2015, the EPA measured 6,587 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions released globally into the atmosphere)<sup>70</sup> and we have cut down more than half of our world's forests (each year between 2000 and 2010, the FAO measured around 13 million hectares of forests globally were cut down or converted for other uses)<sup>71</sup> and we have polluted our oceans beyond belief (the NOAA has measured that

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70 "Overview of Greenhouse Gases," United States Environmental Protection Agency online, accessed February 27 2018. <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/overview-greenhouse-gases>

71 "World deforestation decreases, but remains alarming in many countries," Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations online, accessed February 28, 2018, <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/40893/icode/>

1.4 billion pounds of trash per year enters the oceanic systems),<sup>72</sup> somehow Earth has managed to live on.

As our human population grows beyond 7.5 billion, it is becoming evident that the Earth is not strong enough to sustain all of us.<sup>73</sup> More than 3 billion people live on less than \$2.50 a day, and 805 million people live and suffer without adequate sanitation and clean drinking water.<sup>74</sup> Collectively as the human race, we have been foolish to blindly take advantage of Earth's resources as if they were infinite, and we have disregarded the consequences that arise when these resources become low and we cannot feed everyone or give everyone a proper home or clean water. As a result, people die, and our own planet is unable to regrow and replenish fast enough to keep up with our harmful degradation of her once abundant natural resources and beauty.

Climate change and global warming is as real as you and me. You may not see it or feel it directly, but it affects billions of unknowing people every day. Although it is a depressing and existential concept that possibly threatens our species' own survival on this planet for future generations, there is also the deeply inspiring fact that trees have seeds, and when trees are cut down they drop their seeds, and then the seeds eventually mature into trees once more. After the ground is frozen for months and all the flowers die, the air warms again in the spring and plants return with fruity and floral abundance. There are clouds that spill water to help the plants grow, and the ocean's tide that helps regulate aquatic life and salinity balance. In the winter, animals hibernate, only to awaken again to a world that is green and warm once more. After a fire has ripped through a countryside and laid the land completely charred and barren, years will pass and the ash will cultivate the foundation for a forest that is stronger and healthier

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72 "Ocean Pollution," National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration online, accessed February 9, 2018. <http://www.noaa.gov/resource-collections/ocean-pollution>

73 "World Population Clock," Worldometers online, accessed February 9, 2018. <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/>

74 "Poverty Overview," The World Bank, accessed February 28, 2018, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview>

with nutrients that allow full regrowth to occur. After hurricanes, mudslides, tornadoes, thunderstorms, and drought, the sun continues to rise and fall over the horizon. Although Earth is being deconstructed and beaten down to her bones, she holds an eternal promise that the sun will always rise, and the moon will always rise, and Earth will continue her orbit, and she will continue to slowly replenish and attempt to heal herself from the burdens we have placed upon her. It is ultimately our decision, though, to see Earth's recovery to the end. We must recognize that this is our only home, and therefore it is our responsibility to nurture it as it nurtures us, for the sake of our benefit and for future generations to come.

# Two Years Later

*Sarah Ghods*

*Trigger warning: sexual assault*

*“Authenticity is a collection of choices that we have to make every day. It’s about the choice to show up and be real. The choice to be honest. The choice to let our true selves be seen.”*

Brené Brown<sup>75</sup>

Did you know that if you Google “will I ever recover from my brain injury?” there are over 1 million results? And most of these websites will tell you that if you have a bad brain injury, there’s not a lot of hope that you will ever fully recover. Did you know that you heal the fastest in the first six months and that once you hit the two year mark, your recovery tends to stagnate and further recovery is minimal? There’s a really bleak outlook for people trying to return to their normal, pre-injury functioning state — especially once they’re two years out.<sup>76</sup> Did you know that Saturday, January 27th, was the two year mark since my initial injury? That reality terrifies me more than I can say.

I don’t know that I have the words necessary to explain what it’s like to suffer from, and try to recover from, a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) while you’re in your early 20s, but I’m going to try to capture it. Not because I owe it to anyone to explain what’s going on with my head, but because I’m not really good at being unrelentingly honest with myself about how I’m doing. I don’t think people realize how difficult and complex this injury is, and I wish people could see how hard I’m trying to hold it together.

The initial injury may have happened two years ago, and

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75 Brené Brown, “Take a risk and put your true self out there,” CNN.com, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2012/04/15/opinion/brown-authentic-self/index.html>

76 Simon Fleminger and Jennie Ponsford, “Long Term Outcome after Traumatic Brain Injury: More Attention Needs to Be Paid to Neuropsychiatric Functioning,” *British Medical Journal* 331.7530 (2005): 1419–1420. Print.

yet many days it feels as though nothing has changed. I still feel as broken and scared as I did then. Maybe even more than then because before I understood that I would probably never fully recover, but I was still hopeful. I accepted where I was functioning, and still believed I would one day resume the insanely busy social life that had been my norm for 20 years. Now, though, I see that there's a slim chance I will ever live the life I did before. I feel like I've plateaued — which doesn't sound bad when you consider how far I've come — but if that is my reality then it's frightening because I want so desperately to return to my pre-injured functionality. There are still the occasional victories, but overall I feel like I'm never going to fully “get better” which is upsetting when you consider how hard I've worked and how much I've sacrificed to be where I am today (not to mention the sacrifices made by my family, close friends, and all the other incredible people who have helped and supported me along the way). I am still not able to live the life I led before January 27th, 2016, and now it's finally *really* hitting me that I may not ever be able to.

Now that I'm not focused on finishing a paper, or on getting my degree, I've had more time to reflect on all that I've gone through. Last year I was unbelievably happy to have made it back to Gonzaga to the point that even when I was struggling harder than I've ever struggled in my life, I was still grateful to be functioning enough to go to class. I could once again read and write, my degree was my end goal and my sole purpose for being, and I had something tangible to work towards. This year I don't have that, and it's forcing me to finally grapple with some very real, very painful emotions I've suppressed over the past two years. Navigating this injury has been isolating, difficult, upsetting, and trying in a multitude of different, intricate ways.

I'm 22 years old and, despite my strict bedtime and self-care regime, most days I struggle simply to make it to and from work. Where I'm currently functioning, between working, recreationally reading, and studying for the GRE, it is *literally* not possible for me to even have a small semblance of a social life. I would say that I'm still in pain from my head 94% of the time.

Migraines are practically a constant companion in my day to day life. I've taken enough pain medication and migraine medicine to damage my liver. Most of the time, I still struggle to remember things, and I'll rarely remember what I've told people which results in me repeating myself constantly (and feeling like an idiot when I'm told I've already said what I'm in the process of sharing).

There are so many things about day-to-day life and functioning that people take for granted, and I would love to resume a more normal life again. I want to remember things without having to write them down. I want to be able to read a book without having to annotate it to try and remember what happened. I want to be able to sleep! It's not surprising in the TBI world, but I struggle with insomnia *every* night and would love to fall asleep, and sleep in, like a normal person.<sup>77</sup> I want to watch a TV show or a movie and be able to remember enough about what happened to be able to have a conversation about it with others. I want to go to a movie theater and not have to worry about whether or not the lights or noises from the movie will give me a migraine. I want to remember all the words I used to know, and I wish that I would stop using the wrong words — malapropism is a constant in my daily life now. Essentially, my world is full of mistakes I never used to make two years ago. They are mistakes I never in a million years dreamed I would struggle with, ever. I want so desperately to believe in my ability to get better, but day by day I am slowly losing that hope because every day I am reminded of how far I still have to go.

To complicate matters further, sometimes I'm terrified because I feel like I'm using alcohol as a coping method to handle the emotions I'm finally trying to feel. For the past two years, I have considered saying no to alcohol as a strength of mine – my recovery was too important to even risk it — but now it's more difficult as my hope for a full recovery dwindles and because, quite

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77 Mari Viola-Saltzman and Nathaniel F. Watson, "Traumatic Brain Injury and Sleep Disorders," *Neurologic clinics* 30.4 (2012): 1299–1312, accessed February 26, 2018, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3482689/>

simply, when I'm drunk I'm not in pain. For the past two years I had no desire to drink because I existed solely for school. I wanted my degree and a full recovery so badly that I was not willing to jeopardize those desires for anything. Every day of my life felt like I was living in a blackout and I existed in a constant state of a hangover, so when all that's considered, it's not really surprising that I didn't drink. Now, though, I'll justify my decision to drink by saying "I don't care" which is a blatant lie I tell myself far too often. The main reason why I drink now is because I don't want to acknowledge the pain that is in my head and heart. To give myself the time and space to come to terms with all that I've gone through in the past two years would be too traumatic, and too trying to do without alcohol.

Unfortunately, there's also another layer to my head trauma. I won't go into details, but I think it's important to at least acknowledge that I have been dealing with sexual assault and sexual coercion for the past two years. I know that this happened in correlation to my vulnerable state of being at the time, and also because there are horrible people in the world. There was a man who realized that, in my injured state, it would be easy to manipulate and take advantage of me, and so he did. This has taken a huge toll on me during an already traumatic enough time in my life. Isn't it ironic how in a two year span where I can barely remember anything, including my senior year of college and subsequent graduation, I can remember all the details of my sexual assault? I'm stuck with some horrible memories, questions of how any of it happened, and an unbelievable amount of self-blame.

Despite everything I've gone through in the past two years, and the fears that are still plaguing me, I realize that my brain injury recovery is far from over. I have tried and struggled and failed and succeeded and I have not come as far as I have to give up now. To be honest, I don't know what giving up would look like, because the story I'm telling is my life. People will sometimes praise me for my strength, and for sharing such an "inspirational" story, and whenever I'm told something along those lines it makes me feel like a fraud, because I don't see it. I am a jumbled mess of



so many emotions — frustration, positivity, bitterness, happiness, and sadness — and I don't see how someone can listen to my story and applaud me for strength. A lot of the time I'm longing for my old life. Just because I've accepted my situation, and have incessantly worked to improve it, doesn't make it suck any less. Mostly it's difficult for me because I don't feel strong — I'm just trying to survive the hand I was given.

My TBI is an injury that will forever impact me, but it is not the sole reason for any given thing in my life. I don't credit resiliency as the reason why I'm working so damn hard to overcome my injury — especially as it's something I'm still working to overcome — instead I credit my values as the reason why I'm trying so hard to recover. The things I love, and I mean *really* love, like writing and reading, matter so much to me that I will do anything to get them back. I don't know if that's resiliency, stubbornness, or sheer idiocy, but regardless of its name I'm thankful I've got enough of it in me to keep me moving forward even when it feels like I'm being pushed towards failure. It may sound strange, but this is not a new trait in my life. Ever since I was little, people have been quick to label me as stubborn and I think that this constant refusal to give up is inherent in who I am. I grew up hearing phrases like “when you fall off the horse you get back on,” and “when the going gets tough, the tough get going,” and having been surrounded by this mindset my whole life helps to explain why I've handled this injury as such. When I was 16 my mom was diagnosed with Stage 4 Hodgkins Lymphoma and her strength during that hellacious time, and during her next two battles with cancer, has also played a huge role in terms of my unwillingness to quit when life gets hard. It's a mindset and behavior that, at this point, is essentially ingrained in who I am as a person which is probably why it's so difficult for me to see these traits in myself. Sharing what I've gone through in regards to my TBI alone has allowed others to see these qualities, but I know for a fact that my head injury is not the sole reason I am resilient.

Despite my positive, headstrong nature, I have still struggled a lot these past two years. However, my brain injury is

not the only reason why, and it will never be the sole reason behind my resiliency. My TBI may be a huge chapter in the story that is my life, and it will definitely shape my 20s, but I refuse to be entirely defined by it because I am so much more than my brain injury. I know that I've been to hell and back over the past two years mostly because of my injured brain, but if there's two things I've learned it's that 1) even though it hasn't always felt like it, I am the one in charge of my own life and recovery and 2) I am not alone – I am surrounded by incredible people, a caring family, and an unbelievably loving emotional support cat. Since January 27th, 2016 I've had some unbelievably high highs and some supremely low lows, but I realize that's life for everyone. Every single person on this planet is going through something at this very moment, and the main thing that separates me from everyone else is how I choose to react to my given circumstances. After all, that's the one thing I have always been able to control in this unfortunate situation. Despite the constant barrage of tribulations I've faced, and will continue to face, I'm still proud of the person I am today and of the difficulties I've overcome to get here. I know that I'm going to continue to struggle, and I know that I can't really do anything to change that, but I also know that I get to tell my own version of this story. I may still feel broken in this moment, but I know that I will not stay that way forever and for now that's enough.

# Victor, not Victim

*Anonymous*

*Trigger warning: emotional abuse*

## Realization

I sat frozen in a hunched ball on my friend's bed, clutching her stuffed dog helplessly as her piercing green eyes stared searchingly back at me. Her words still hung in the air: "I think he's emotionally abusive." I felt as if I had been punched in the stomach, and all the breath that had been knocked-out of me had formed a cloud of disbelief that seemed to choke me. Anger and fear struck as I realized I was a victim of abuse. I scratched at the label as if it was actually stuck to my skin. A swirl of thoughts assaulted my mind, beginning with questions like "why is this happening to me?" Then my brain seemed to raise its voice: "how did you not see the signs?" "Why are you letting *one* person cause you so much distress?" As the tornado of emotions continued to surge forward and destroy my conscience, I felt increasingly defenseless and numb. Then confusion fizzled up inside me. What exactly *was* emotional abuse, and how had I not heard of it before? Furthermore, how did my friend know he was emotionally abusive? Did he know he was emotionally abusive? At my friend's suggestion, I snatched up my phone and Googled emotional abuse.

My jaw dropped in realization as I read,

Not all abusive relationships involve physical violence. Just because you're not battered and bruised doesn't mean you're not being abused. Many men and women suffer from emotional abuse, which is no less destructive. Unfortunately, emotional abuse is often minimized or overlooked—even by the person being abused. The aim of emotional abuse is to chip away at your feelings of self-worth and independence—leaving you feeling that there's no way out of the relationship, or that without your abusive partner you have nothing.<sup>78</sup>

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78 Melinda Smith, M.A., and Jeanne Segal, Ph.D., "Domestic Violence and

It dawned on me that I had been so brainwashed by manipulation that I had lost all sense of self. I no longer trusted my own intuition to the extent that I blamed myself for the abuse. I had also developed an intense fear of being alone. Curious as to how an abuser manages to inflict such damage on a person, I proceeded to search for the warning signs of emotional abuse. My eyes widened as I read the first sign, *Isolation*.<sup>79</sup> I shivered as I recalled an instance in which I was on the phone with friends who wanted me to come over, but lied and said I was busy as my abuser stared at me coldly and pressured me to let him stay with me for the night.

My nervous quaking increased as I remembered receiving countless upset snapchats from my abuser after I told him I had plans with friends. *Humiliation*.<sup>80</sup> I felt slapped in the face once again as I remembered him addressing me in front of a group of people as we left a classroom: “are you still stupidly tired because you’re a workaholic?” *Insults*.<sup>81</sup> Flashback to my ballet performance he attended. Instead of congratulating me, he commented, “I would have bought you flowers, but I didn’t.” I grew angrier as I remembered our Valentine’s date at a nice restaurant, his words echoing in my mind: “Don’t expect this often.” And regarding my belief in God, my abuser repeatedly infuriated me by saying, “you need to change your opinion because you’re wrong.” *Domination*.<sup>82</sup> I remembered nights in which I did not want to engage in sexual activity, but reluctantly agreed just to please him. Even as I tried to break up with my abuser, he touched me sexually despite us being in a semi-public place. I now see that this was another means of manipulating me into staying in the relationship. I am still unsure whether this constitutes coercion or sexual assault, but I am confident that I should not have received such treatment. When he asked the real reason why I was breaking

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Abuse: Recognizing the Signs of an Abusive Relationship and Getting Help,” accessed January 4, 2018. <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/abuse/domestic-violence-and-abuse.htm>.

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid.

up with him, I could not tell him that it was because he was emotionally abusive. I felt as though I was always walking on eggshells and could not voice my true opinions for fear of him blowing up. I then read the final warning sign.<sup>83</sup> *Gaslighting*. My eyes stopped on that term as I had never heard it before. The definition I found was as follows:

Gaslighting is the word used when an abuser makes you feel like you are losing your mind or memory. An abuser might deny an event happened, call you crazy or overly sensitive, [or] describe an event as completely different from how you remember it. Gaslighting is a form of emotional abuse that abusers use to maintain power and control. When a victim is questioning her memories or her mind, she may be more likely to feel dependent on the abuser and stay in the relationship.<sup>84</sup>

My mind flitted back to the times I had tried to confront him about the hurtful things he said to me, only to get the same responses. “You’re making all this up.” “I didn’t mean it that way.” My brain exploded as I realized that my abuser’s put-downs had been serious micro-aggressions. The putdowns initially seemed like harmless banter that only caused a slight twinge in my stomach because I believed my abuser’s claim that I was “oversensitive.” I felt relief that I was not going crazy after all, but frightened because I knew what my next step had to be.

## **The Breakup**

Tears welled up in my eyes as I realized what I had to do. Fear gripped my heart and squeezed it tighter and tighter as I

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83 Please be aware that the signs of abuse are not limited to the ones I have presented here. Although they often overlap, warning signs can vary depending on the type of abuse one is experiencing. To learn more about the warning signs of abuse, a helpful resource to consult is the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence’s Power and Control Wheel. A quick Google search can be highly informative as well.

84 “Emotional and verbal abuse.” Womenshealth.gov. November 14, 2017, <https://www.womenshealth.gov/relationships-and-safety/other-types/emotional-and-verbal-abuse>.

considered the very real possibility that he would deny my feelings and needs, manipulating me into staying with him as he had so many times before. Recalling the amazing flying feelings of happiness and excitement of new love I had felt at the beginning of our relationship, I clung to it and hid in its shadow. However, at the back of my mind, I knew breaking up was best for my mental health. Several attempts later, I was finally able to outsmart his manipulation and take the first step in reclaiming my happiness, but I retreated into a dark period of inconsolable despair. I laid sobbing on my grandmother's bed, memories of our relationship constantly replaying in my mind to make the worst movie ever. I stopped, disgusted amidst my tears, when I remembered he had told me, "Seeing you cry turns me on." Meanwhile, my phone blew up with several missed calls, texts, and even emails from him for several days, and the nefarious dings of their notifications haunted me before I finally mustered the courage to block him. I had dropped to the lowest point of my life, and recovery seemed impossible.

### **The Aftermath**

Months later, my gut still constantly twisted uncomfortably, manifesting my inner turmoil as physical pain. Although spring had arrived, decorating campus with cheerful blossoms and greeting us with warm rays of sunshine, I couldn't help but feel covered by a cloud of sadness and regret. Had I made the right decision? Did I really make up all those problems in my head? Was I just overreacting? Was *I* really the problem? These remnants of the gaslighting I had experienced were maddening and all-consuming, and I was continually beating myself up for thinking about him too much. I was still extremely paranoid that I was fabricating my experiences of abuse in my own head. When I met eyes with my abuser in class, I would overwhelm myself with wild, insecure thoughts. Was that just a harmless glance or a menacing stare? Is he trying to intimidate me? Does he even know what he's doing? Am I just blowing things up in my own head? Why couldn't I just "think positive" like everyone told me to and forget

him altogether? Whenever my friends laughed and conversed, I found myself silent and unable to smile, only opening my mouth to comment how my ex did or said something similar to our topic of conversation. I recognized this negativity in the back of my mind and longed desperately for my old bubbly, naïve, shiny, happy, first-semester freshman self. My friends also noticed that I was not who I used to be, and out of love and concern, they finally held an intervention.

## **Recovery**

At first, I met my friends' suggestions of counseling with doubts. My thinking was, "how would I make time in my schedule and why should I? Every counselor I go to seems to say the same thing! Besides, it's not like he tried to hit me or anything. It's all in my mind and I should be able to get over it." I now see why that was an extremely unhealthy thought process, as emotional abuse is just as harmful as physical abuse and should not be discounted. Abuse victims should never minimize their pain and should seek help when possible. However, at the time I needed additional encouragement to attend counseling. As I kept conversing with my friends, they made me recognize that my mental health should come first, even before grades or extracurriculars. A turning point occurred as I realized that it's okay to get a few lower grades if it means I can heal. A massive weight lifted off my shoulders, and I found that as I invested more time in myself, my grades went up. It was not easy by any means, but when I made an active effort to practice the counselors' advice to retrain my thoughts while emphasizing self care, the hour-long counseling appointments that I first thought were a waste of time became worth it.

After putting more time toward myself, I found investing more time in my friendships to be easier. Although there were moments I felt like staying behind and allowing the pain of the trauma I endured to swallow me whole, I forced myself to go out with my friends even with everything at the back of my mind. Although my pain seemed to stalk me wherever I went, it gradually lessened. Finally, during a beautiful day at Greenbluff with my

suitemates, as giggles and the scent of pumpkin donuts filled the crisp fall air, I realized happily that I had gone a full day without thinking or being sad about my last relationship. In retrospect, leaning on friends for support was one of the best things I could have done for myself as I went through one of the toughest experiences in my life. Journaling and creating art were also my saviors as they helped me process my experiences in a healthy way. As my healing progressed, I found myself becoming an advocate for abuse awareness. I found comfort in the fact that my writing and art about abuse could help others.

As I continue to hit these milestones, I acknowledge that I will always take a piece of my experience with me. Rather than allowing my past hurt to negatively affect me, however, I will allow it to make me stronger and more knowledgeable. Instead of mourning the death of my young, naïve self, I will rejoice that I have gained strength and wisdom. I will give myself grace and acknowledge that not bouncing back right away is okay. I will walk freely around campus untriggered by my surroundings. I will enjoy what little time I have left with my friends at Gonzaga. I will rip off the label of “victim,” and replace it with “victor.” I will be resilient.

### **Get Help**

If you suspect that your friend is being abused, there are many ways you can help. Become knowledgeable of and be able to identify the warning signs of an abusive relationship. Listen to your gut, then approach your friend in a non-threatening, private environment. As you voice your concern to your friend, validate their feelings. The Center for Abuse Awareness Action advises one to “accept what you hear and assure your friend that you believe their story. Many survivors fear they will not be believed. They may be afraid that their experience will be minimized as ‘not important’ or made into a catastrophe. Remind survivors that the abuse is not their fault.”<sup>85</sup> Know that people can be charming in social situations but terribly abusive in private. They may seem

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85 Ibid.



“out of control,” but they in fact are extremely in control of their behavior and can stop when it benefits them.<sup>86</sup> Abuse is never accidental.

Listen to your friend without judging, and allow them to call the shots in the situation as their power has already been diminished by their abuser and their safety is at risk. Gentle nudges toward breaking up or professional help are acceptable, but overall, they will know what is best for them at that moment. Always be there for your friend no matter what they decide, and help them create a safety plan, especially if they decide to leave the relationship. A safety plan could include anything from helping your friend find a code word to use when they are in trouble, agreeing to meet your friend in a certain place if they need to flee their abuser for any reason, or letting them use your phone to dial an abuse hotline for help.<sup>87</sup>

If you suspect you or a friend are a victim of any type of abuse, I highly encourage you to seek help. Here are some phone numbers you can call.

### **General Resources**

National Domestic Violence Abuse Hotline: 1-800-799-7233

National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline: 1-866-331-9474

National Sexual Assault Hotline: 800-656-4673

YWCA of Spokane Alternatives to Domestic Violence: (509) 326-2255

Spokane Police Dept. (non emergency): (509) 456-2233

Lutheran Community Services: (509) 747-8224

### **Gonzaga Resources**

Campus Security and Public Safety\*: (509) 313-2222

Title IX Coordinator\*: (509) 313-6910

Center for Cura Personalis\*: (509) 313-4009

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<sup>86</sup> Smith and Segal, “Domestic Violence and Abuse.”

<sup>87</sup> “How to Help a Friend Who is Being Abused.” Womenshealth.gov, accessed January 4, 2018. <https://www.womenshealth.gov/relationships-and-safety/get-help/how-help-friend>.

Anonymous report completed online: [www.gonzaga.edu/sexualmisconductform](http://www.gonzaga.edu/sexualmisconductform)

Whistle blower website: [www.gonzaga.ethicspoint.com](http://www.gonzaga.ethicspoint.com)

Health and Counseling Center: (509) 313-4052

\*denotes non-confidential reporting

For even more resources and definitions, please refer to the Gonzaga University Student Code of Conduct's Harassment and Discrimination Policy.

To anyone experiencing or who has experienced abuse, you are not alone. There is hope and help always ready for you. You are a victor, not a victim.

# Moving Beyond the Statistics

*Sabrina Villanueva Avalos*

*1 in 3 children in the United States do not live, or have contact with, their biological father. To translate, that's 24 million kids.<sup>88</sup>*

Eleven years ago, I sat by the door with my backpack ready, waiting to be picked up for my highly anticipated camping trip. But of course, no trip could ever come easily with my dad. After a short five minute argument between my parents, I watched from the window as my dad drove away. Little did I know, that would be the last time I saw him drive away.

*15.1 million people over the age of 18 struggle with alcohol use disorder in the United States.<sup>89</sup>*

No, addiction is not always a choice. And no, people who fall into this struggle do not get to wake up one day and choose to give it up and move on. Addiction is a disease that touches almost everyone in some way, and if you don't think you've seen this problem in a loved one or a friend, maybe you aren't looking hard enough. It's not easy to watch someone you love — a family member, in my case — feel that a bottle is the only way out. But, unfortunately, all you can do is be there when they're ready to put it down.

*On any given night, 564,708 people were sleeping on the street or in a shelter in January 2015.<sup>90</sup>*

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88 "Fatherless Children Statistics and Other Data on Fatherhood | NFI," Father Involvement Programs for Organizations and Families, accessed February 12, 2018, <https://www.fatherhood.org/fatherhood-data-statistics>.

89 "Alcohol Facts and Statistics," National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, accessed February 12, 2018, <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohol-health/overview-alcohol-consumption/alcohol-facts-and-statistics>

90 "State of Homelessness Report," National Alliance to End Homelessness, accessed February 12, 2018. <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness-report/>.

I don't think that my 14-year-old self really knew the weight that the word eviction carried. I could tell you what it meant, but I couldn't tell you the severity that it has on such a huge number of families all around us. It is quite striking the number of people that are one paycheck away from losing their entire livelihood. Think it could never happen to you? I had the same mentality, until it did.

*In the United States, the rate of death due to breast cancer is higher than any other type of cancer other than lung.<sup>91</sup> 3-5% of women who are diagnosed with Parkinson's disease are below the age of 50.<sup>92</sup>*

My mother is the strongest woman that I know. But damn, life really put her to the test. Not like certain people deserve to be diagnosed with cancer, but add that onto an incurable disease, no roof over your head, and a 14 year old daughter to take care of? It feels unjust. And no, hearing that your aunt has cancer, too, does not make me feel any better.

*Children are considered at risk if any of the following categories apply to them: households without English speakers, large family, low parental education, residential mobility, single-parent household, teen mothers, non-employed parent(s), and/or economic hardship.<sup>93</sup>*

Ah, there's nothing like hearing the ever so encouraging words, "you won't amount to anything." I find it interesting that people constantly say that poor kids will never succeed because their lives are full of inadequate role models and self destructing decisions.

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91 "U.S. Breast Cancer Statistics," Breastcancer.org, accessed February 12, 2018. [http://www.breastcancer.org/symptoms/understand\\_bc/statistics](http://www.breastcancer.org/symptoms/understand_bc/statistics).

92 Susan M. Rubin, "Parkinson's Disease In Women," APDA, accessed February 12, 2018. <https://www.apdaparkinson.org/parkinsons-disease-in-women/>.

93 Taylor Robbins, Shannon Stagman, and Sheila Smith, "Also of Interest," NCCP | Young Children at Risk, accessed February 12, 2018, [http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub\\_1073.html](http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_1073.html).

Maybe we don't succeed because we live in a world where proper education is a luxury, and building your resume with volunteer work is a privilege, and the people that have those two things spend their time telling us we aren't going to make it. In reality, I have been working since the day I turned 16 to make sure that my mom did not need to sacrifice any more than she already had to give me everything I need in life. This does not leave room for unpaid internships and volunteer positions at the animal shelter. If working to spoil my mom every now and again and building a savings to go to college means I won't amount to anything, then so be it.

*11% of low-income, first-generation college students will have a college degree within six years of enrolling in school, compared to about 55% of their more advantaged peers.<sup>94</sup>*

So yes, I am a low-income, first-generation college student trying to be something more than a statistic. Many of these circumstances are still ongoing, and many of them have influenced the person I've become and the path that I'm taking in life. It often feels naive to think that I could be strong enough to overcome these adversities that have presented themselves in my life and succeed in some way. But here I am, studying for the GRE and hunting for jobs that will hire someone with a Bachelor's degree in Psychology, hoping that one day I can encourage a teenager just like me to find their own potential and pursue their dreams, because I finally believe that it's possible.

To conclude, I have several people to thank. Thank you to all the single moms and dads out there who keep pushing along by themselves and being two parents at once. Thank you to those who fight every day to find strength to try to recover, for yourselves and for those around you, even if it may not work the first, second, third time. Thank you to the shelter systems and case workers who

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94 "Factsheets," PNPI, accessed February 12, 2018, <http://pnpi.org/first-generation-students/>.

support all of those in poverty, despite the stigma that haunts them every single day. Thank you to the oncologists of the world who carry so much compassion in their voices each time they give a terrifying diagnosis or a beautiful certificate of remission. Finally, thank you to all the people in the world who said overcoming these obstacles was impossible. Thank you for lighting that fire under my ass and getting me so many steps closer to that once unattainable college degree. You can catch me in my cap and gown on December 14th, 2018.

# Give Up and Complain or Laugh and Persevere

*Ryan Byers; Former Staff Sergeant in the United States Air Force, Deployed in Support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Inherent Resolve*

We had yet to land, and there was already steady gossip amongst those on our flight of trees bursting into flames. This was going to be another rough and hot deployment. Can trees really burst into flames in extremely hot temperatures? Had this happened before, and is it even possible? After stepping off the plane and onto the blacktop, I had no doubt about it. My eyes felt as if they were melting out of my head. This was going to be a long deployment.

There is no getting accustomed to this sort of disorienting heat. When I arrived in Kuwait that July, it was estimated to be around 115 degrees.<sup>95</sup> Often, working in such an environment where my peers would collapse daily due to heat exhaustion (and many times worse symptoms) acted as a daily reminder, highlighting the importance of hydrating. “It’s never too late to hydrate!” became our rallying cry. Exposure to high temperatures was often unavoidable, and being Security Forces for the base, my job duties included a wide variety of posts in extreme elements. Throughout my career, I had witnessed first-hand a wide assortment of dangers, especially from extreme heat, particularly while training in Texas. Conventions were quickly established amongst us to help relieve the burden of the elements. Heat, sandstorms and critters in the deserts were just another obstacle to overcome, and I knew the drill.

This was my second deployment, so I had some experience and an idea of what to expect, or so I thought. The months serving

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<sup>95</sup> “Weather History for OKBK, 2015,” Wunderground.com, accessed February 21, 2018, <https://www.wunderground.com/history/airport/OKBK/2015/10/11/WeeklyHistory.html>

overseas in this foreign land would be grueling. There would be long days, and there would be longer nights, in which I would be without a second of sleep. Nevertheless, there would luckily be chances to go off base once every month or two and explore the local culture, and opportunities such as these helped boost morale. These rare moments to experience cultures in countries so unlike my own changed my perspective on life. They helped me to become cognizant of the many privileges and blessings I had in my current situation, serving far away from home. A specific and particularly impactful example that has stuck with me over the years occurred during my first deployment to Oman. While in the city on an off-base trip, I rashly cut through a back alley of a bazaar and witnessed an older woman and a couple of children who were dismally clad in rags and visibly starving, huddled around a pit. Often, I think back to the image of that woman's face, and different thoughts and emotions well up inside me. The poverty rate, while gradually decreasing in countries like Oman and Kuwait is unlike anything I had witnessed back home in America.<sup>96</sup>

Away from home, every aspect of my being would be tested physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. Believe it or not, the physical part of the experience was the least challenging. The times that really tested my resilience involved aspects of the other three: mentally forcing myself to wake up after a night with hardly a blink of sleep, staying focused and alert, and knowing that I, and my fellow defenders, are the Security Forces enabling thousands of our friends and service members to carry out the greater mission safely. For my spirituality, I would read a passage out of the Bible to find wisdom and encouragement to get through another day. Emotionally, I would find the time (though never really enough) to talk to the woman who is now my wife, both giving and receiving support and keeping our relationship strong.

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<sup>96</sup> "Recent Trends of Poverty in the Middle East and North Africa," The World Bank, accessed February 21, 2018, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2010/02/19/recent-trends-poverty-middle-east-north-africa>



I believe the human mechanism of dealing with these kinds of difficult situations differs from person to person. Some people have mental breakdowns, some just give up, others complain and keep complaining about the circumstances they find themselves in, with the latter being the most popular. Mine was quite different. I laughed in what should be horrible situations, finding humor in trying and difficult times, my preferred tool to cope with difficult circumstances and stress. Humor has been identified as an effective way to moderate and control stress and emotions in difficult situations, and this was often what worked best for me.<sup>97</sup> Other times, I found myself shutting off my emotions and thoughts, becoming a sort of robot to get through each day. Days became weeks, weeks became months, and I had completed another deployment with life experiences and trials that others may never face in their lives. I forged lifelong bonds with friends who deployed alongside me, and nothing felt better than flying back home together after completing such a monumental life event. Resilience is simply a form of perseverance, and I had persevered.

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97 S. Takaoka, "P-1404 - Humor Production and Mental Health in Interpersonal Stressful Situations," *European Psychiatry* vol. 27, (January 2012), Supplement, p. 1. EBSCOhost, doi:10.1016/S0924-9338(12)75571-2.

# Reshaping Self-Perception

*Kaitlyn Caniglia*

By observation, I have found that the term “resilience” is most often attributed to those who have suffered a “profound adversity,” yet these individuals have managed to emerge as changed, as more experienced, and stronger than they were before.<sup>98</sup> They persevered through the trials, maintained their individuality, and were able to build upon it. Others witness or hear about these experiences and are left in awe of this obvious resilience despite struggle. This way of thinking about resilience as a sort of grand endeavor is absolutely valid; however I believe it unintentionally, but necessarily, neglects a large demographic of individuals who absolutely qualify as resilient.

I have been prompted to critique resilience after witnessing the silent emotional and physical battles faced by my peers and myself throughout high school and upon entering college. As a freshman in high school, I was innocent and largely alone, thrown into a sizeable public school after years of private education. I became friends with an adorable girl, full of energy, but small in comparison to her age group. Over the next couple of months, I would learn of the struggles in her past that had taken a toll on her ability and willingness to adequately nourish herself. The emotional battles that cultivated insecurity inside her would occasionally show themselves in her comments regarding my own physical stature or the food I put into my body. This planted a seed in my mind that rooted deeply and grew alarmingly fast, creating unfamiliar feelings of anxiety and insecurity. My mind engaged in a battle with my body, one to which the people around me were utterly oblivious.

During this time, another dear friend of mine was facing a similar foe, but one whose roots had taken hold more firmly. There had been clues: the miniscule, or simply non-existent, meals, more

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98 J.S. Russell, “Resilience,” *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 42, no. 2 (18 February 2015): 159-83.

exercise than was healthy considering her lack of nutrients, a shiver that allowed her slim frame no respite. We had some peers who would press food against her pursed lips, unaware of the cruel joke they played, and I would watch her eyes widen as they sought the comfort of the thick scarf around her neck. She was also fighting an internal war, one that she wanted so badly to win for herself, a victory that would allow her to take back control of her own mind and her own body. I was only informed of the reality when she mustered the courage to say something and to seek help for herself. It was in witnessing her ability to acknowledge the loss of control and the existence of this sheltered burden that I realized the need to redefine resilience.<sup>99</sup>

It blows my mind that the worst adversary is most often your own thoughts and opinions of yourself that are allowed to morph into something you had never imagined they would. It is that little voice that speaks to you from the mirror, insisting that you can skip lunch for the fifth day this week. It is that little voice that doesn't go away when you crumple on the floor as your mind makes your life appear to be plane wreckage: something that you remember once glided so smoothly, only to be run-down slowly by a seemingly insignificant malfunction in your perception. The worst part is that you know the way things really are. You know that you want to and can be strong, that you want to be healthy and to provide for yourself, that you want to regain control of the thoughts that form in your mind. Resilience comes in surveying the wreckage that your mind has wrought. It comes in realizing that it is all just pieces of your plane, and that your plane can be made functional again. You know what caused the wreck among which your mind stands, and you can seek to prevent that malfunction as you rebuild.

In my mind, the fact that my friends and I are still alive and fighting each day for new strength in every breath and for new joy in every success speaks more clearly to resilience than any televised story of external struggle. To my knowledge, the young

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99 Carlota Las Hayas et al. "Resilience in eating disorders: A qualitative study," *Women & Health* 56, no. 5: 576-594.

girl from my freshman year of high school continues to fight in the battle that her mind wages. Yet, her resilience is clear in her ability to even get out of bed each morning, holding on to her very real hope for healing. My friend who has mustered the courage to face the reality of her insecurity remains one of the most resilient human beings that I have had the pleasure to meet. She now finds renewed joy in the life that she lives, embarking on new adventures as she grows stronger in her love of herself. As for me, I have learned to look for the good in the day-to-day moments. I would be lying if I said that I don't occasionally spend too long staring at myself in the mirror when those critical thoughts seek to resurface, or that I never hesitate before agreeing to regularly consume the amount of food that would qualify as normal for most. However, it is the hope and joy that I bear witness to in everyday moments and the testimonies of my peers that have encouraged me to reshape my perspective of myself and of those around me. Loving yourself is one of the hardest, but by far one of the most valuable, things that a person can seek to achieve in their lifetime. I believe that the ability to love ourselves despite the internal battles that wage in response to things thrown at us by the world is the most significant manifestation of resilience.

I do not mean to discredit the reality of obvious struggle and perseverance faced by individuals within the public sphere, but I do intend to draw attention to the reality of conflict that has the potential to exist within each and every one of us. Resilience is something that can be possessed by all in the midst of struggle, especially those internal battles that cause us to falter in our very ability to be ourselves, to be confident, and to accurately perceive reality. Resilience comes in stepping back to realize the way that things really are. It comes in realizing that you are capable of self-realization and self-improvement. That the little things that you do really can make a difference in a world of people who bear witness to their lives as plane wrecks. It is when we take the step to consider our own situations within a larger context, viewing our individual plane wrecks as one among so many others, that a collective movement towards communal resilience becomes

plausible. Our personal narratives become all the more meaningful and powerful when we realize that they are “[foundations] for action.”<sup>100</sup> In sharing our experiences, we have the opportunity to reach out to those who are also striving to be victorious, but are unaware that the victory they envision can be a reality. It is with this I encourage you: be aware and approach each day with an open mind. Be willing to consider others as people standing amongst plane wrecks that affect them just as much as yours has affected you. Be compassionate. Be considerate. And most importantly, be willing to see yourself as you. As strong, as experienced, as resilient you.

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100 Robert Chaskin, “Resilience, Community, and Resilient Communities: Conditioning Contexts and Collective Action,” *Child Care In Practice* 14, no. 1, (2008): 65-74, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=9&sid=40e817e9-659c-4fcd-a8b6-457a10625110%40sessionmgr4007>

# Authors

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