



*Healing the Mind, Body & Spirit Through the Creative Arts, Education & Advocacy*

Hope, Healing & Help for Trauma, Abuse & Mental Health

*“Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characters are seared with scars”. Kahlil Gibran*

## **The Surviving Spirit Newsletter September 2023**

Hi Folks,

Welcome to the September issue of the Surviving Spirit. Fall is definitely in the air here in New Hampshire, pleasant days and *chilly nights*...a sign of what's to come.

Hoping to be able to 'unveil' the new website soon, it is being worked on and lots of updates and fixes. It's long overdue, but as we know, life's unexpected bumps and detours happen.

Very excited to share this news – my daughter Michelle and I have been practicing some songs together for the past few months and we co-wrote this tune. I wrote the music while reflecting on some losses and grief, Michelle added her voice and melody along with her thoughts and feelings with the lyrics. Here's the tune recorded on an I-pad...unfortunately when we went to record the song, my recording application decided to have technical issues for the day. We still captured the essence of the song posted here at You Tube. We will add a separate vocal microphone for her for future recordings.

Please take a listen - [Finding Peace Without You](#) – YouTube 3:55 minutes

Stay *tuned*, more songs to come!

***Take care, Michael***

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*“Human beings, by changing the the inner attitude of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives.” - William James*

*“When other people see you as a third class citizen, the first thing you need is a belief in yourself and the knowledge that you have rights.” - Judy Heumann*

1] [The Aplomb Project](#) - The Aplomb Project is a 501(c)3 organization that uses the transformative power of art to uplift trauma survivors, promotes creative healing and presents inclusive artistic

opportunities.

**Aplomb stands for self-confidence, self-assurance and poise; especially under the most trying circumstances.**

Through collaborative artistic expression, The Aplomb Project pays tribute to those who have experienced life-altering trauma. Contemporary portrait artist, [Danielle Festa](#), captures the resilience of trauma survivors, gifting the resulting oil portrait to the voluntary participants to celebrate their courage and strength.

[Revealing the 2023 Portrait Project Paintings to Trauma Survivors](#) – YouTube 2:43 minutes

Contemporary artist, Danielle Festa, painted six inspiring trauma survivors over the past year. With the help of supporters and sponsors of TheAplombProject.org, each receives their painting as a reminder of their strength and resilience. The incorporation of mixed media materials calls attention to the outfit they chose to reflect empowerment.

[Trauma Survival Poetry Reading & Book Signing](#) – The writers participants and their creative works are posted here.

*I attended this event, very powerful, inspiring and healing. Michael*

*“Shame dies when stories are told in safe places.” Ann Voskamp*

*“...And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.” - Marianne Williamson*

2] [Disability Advocacy and Research Network](#) [DARN] - A community for disabled psychology scholars and allies.

The Disability and Advocacy Research Network is for folks with disabilities in psychology at any career stage (including students).

We also welcome allies and those who study, work with, and/or teach about disability. Following a social model perspective, anyone who identifies or is viewed by others as having a disability can be considered to have a disability. This includes but is not limited to physical, sensory, cognitive, invisible, chronic illness, and mental health conditions. DARN facilitates community building, mentoring, professional development, and resource sharing.

DARN was founded in September 2021 when it was funded by a Community Catalyst Grant from the Society for Personality and Social Psychology.

*“Remind me each day that the race is not always to the swift; that there is more to life than increasing its speed. Let me look upward into the towering oak and know that it grew great and strong because it grew slowly and well.” - Orin L. Crain*

*"If you are always trying to be normal you will never know how amazing you can be." - Maya Angelou*

3] [She Was Headed to a Locked Psych Ward. Then an ER Doctor Made a Startling Discovery.](#) By Sandra G. Boodman @ the Washington Post [shared via Pocekt Worthy – no firewall]

A physician's gut instinct about a young woman led to a diagnosis that had been overlooked for years.

The 23-year-old patient arrived in the back of a police car and was in [four point](#) restraints — hands and feet strapped to a gurney — when [emergency physician Elizabeth Mitchell](#) saw her at a Los Angeles hospital early on March 17.

Chloe R. Kral was being held on a [5150](#), shorthand in California for an emergency psychiatric order that allows people deemed dangerous to themselves or others to be involuntarily confined for 72 hours.

She had spent the previous six months at a private treatment center receiving care for bipolar disorder and depression. Chloe had improved and was set to move to transitional housing when she suddenly became combative and threatened to harm staff and kill herself. Police had taken her to the emergency room at Cedars-Sinai Marina del Rey Hospital before a planned transfer to a mental hospital.

Chloe, Mitchell recalled, was "mumbling about Rosa Parks" when they met. She managed to tell the doctor that she hadn't used drugs or alcohol, but was otherwise incoherent. "We get a lot of psychiatric patients, and they're just waiting for placement," Mitchell said.

But something indefinable — Mitchell characterized it as "maybe gut instinct" honed by nearly two decades of practice — prompted her to order a CT scan of Chloe's head to better assess her [mental status](#).

When she pulled up the image, Mitchell gasped. "I had never seen anything like it," she said. She rounded up her colleagues and "made everyone in the whole ER come look."

"I was speechless," she said. "All I could think was 'How did no one figure this out?'" [Read the entire article](#)

*"Remembering that we can live only one day at a time removes the burdens of the past from our backs and keeps us from dreading the future, which none of can know anyway." - This Is Al-Anon*

*"No man can think clearly when his fists are clenched." - George Jean Nathan*

4] [How to Identify Financial Abuse in a Relationship](#) by Sherri Gordon @ VeryWell Mind

When most people think of [domestic abuse](#), the first thing that comes to mind is likely [verbal abuse](#) and physical assault. But research shows that financial abuse occurs just as frequently in unhealthy relationships as other forms of abuse.

In fact, a study by the Centers for Financial Security found that 99% of domestic violence cases also involved financial abuse. What's more, financial abuse is often the first sign of dating violence and

domestic abuse. Consequently, knowing how to identify financial abuse is critical to your safety and security.

**What Is Financial Abuse?** - Financial abuse involves controlling a victim's ability to acquire, use, and maintain financial resources. Those who are victimized financially may be prevented from working.

While less commonly understood than other forms of abuse, financial abuse is one of the most powerful methods of keeping a victim trapped in an abusive relationship. Research shows that victims often are too concerned about their ability to provide financially for themselves and their children to [end the relationship](#). Financial insecurity is also one of the top reasons women return to an abusive partner.<sup>1</sup>

Men can be victims of abuse as well. Considering the fact that financial abuse is recognized as a form of domestic violence, approximately 1 in 7 men (18 years and older) will experience a form of domestic violence.

Signs of Financial Abuse [Read the entire article](#)

*“It's ok to say, "I don't know". I don't know what I want. I don't know where I'm going. I don't know who I am. It's ok to be at a crossroads. It's ok to be uncertain. It's ok not to have clarity. Sometimes not knowing but being open to discovering, open to the opportunities, and open to the possibilities, will perhaps bring the most magic. Sometimes we need a blank page to discover the magic within.” - Lisa Buscomb*

*“We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.” - Albert Einstein*

5] [The life events most likely to change your personality](#) by Ross Pomeroy @ Big Think -

A few key moments are linked to significant shifts in thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Key Takeaways

- Our personalities tend to change over time, but what drives these changes?
- New research finds that graduation, one's first job, a new relationship, marriage, and divorce were linked to the largest personality changes.
- Prior work has revealed that our personalities often "improve" with age.

[Please note, you can also listen to the article at the website – 4:42 minutes ]

Over time, your [personality can change](#) — in big ways. But psychologists didn't always think this to be true. While one's personality — that is, their broad pattern of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors — might subtly shift at the periphery, scientists considered it to be largely fixed.

Ultimately, long-term studies measuring movements in subjects' "big five" personality traits changed psychologists' minds. As people grew older, these quintessential characteristics shifted. The big five traits are: (1) *conscientiousness* (how impulsive, organized, and disciplined someone is); (2)

*agreeableness* (how modest, trusting, and caring they are); (3) *extraversion* (whether a person seeks excitement and social interaction); (4) *openness to experience* (someone's curiosity and penchant for routine); and (5) *neuroticism* (a person's overall emotional stability).

But what triggers these [personality](#) changes? Recently, researchers have considered the impact of significant life events. Across dozens of studies published in the past 30 years, scientists have attempted to measure changes to the big five personality traits that occur following major family, career, and relationship events. Last year, a team of scientists from institutions in Germany and Switzerland pooled all this research and conducted a meta-analysis to discern the broad findings. In their completed [research paper](#) published in the *European Journal of Personality*, they revealed the life events most likely to alter someone's personality.

**Personality-changing events** - The authors focused on ten life events: (1) entering a new relationship, (2) marriage, (3) birth of a child, (4) separation, (5) divorce, (6) widowhood, (7) graduation, (8) entering one's first job, (9) unemployment, and (10) retirement. They found 44 studies that tracked subjects' big five personality traits before and after these events, and the studies included 121,187 participants in total, almost all from Western countries. [Read the entire article](#)

*"The most valuable possession you can own is an open heart. The most powerful weapon you can be is an instrument of peace."* - Carlos Santana

*"Trauma isn't just the bad stuff that happened. It's also the good stuff that never happened."* - Dr. Heidi Green

6] [He survived sexual abuse in the Boy Scouts of America. Now he wants justice](#) by Ed Pilkington with photographs by Anna Watts @ The Guardian -

Ron Hunter was repeatedly assaulted and sex-trafficked as a child. At 63, he's telling his story – to protect others and heal himself

### **This article contains descriptions of sexual abuse**

Ron Hunter is taking us on a trip down memory lane – or more precisely, 42nd Street in Manhattan. He is showing us the spots where, half a century ago, he was repeatedly molested, sexually assaulted and raped from the age of 13.

All because of the Boy Scouts.

He leads us to the block that for four years in the early 1970s was his patch. It was here that he was brought by the Boy Scout leader who groomed him, then sex-trafficked under his street name "Angel" for five bucks a trick.

Hunter stands beneath the awning of the former Selwyn Theatre, which in 1972 was a movie house showing pornographic films like *Deep Throat* and *The Devil in Miss Jones*. That's where in the winter he sheltered from the rain and driving snow.

Next door is a now defunct sporting goods store where Hunter was trained to ply the trade. He would

pretend to be window shopping, then catch the eye of a potential john reflected in the glass.

“They would say, ‘Those are pretty nice sneakers, aren’t they?’ and I would know I was going to make contact. Then we’d negotiate a price, and go from there.”

Across 42nd Street on the opposite sidewalk is the place where the Boy Scout leader, Carlos Acevedo – Charlie, as everyone knew him – would stand watching and waiting for the 13-year-old to bring back the cash. “I’d signal to him so he knew how much and how long,” Hunter said.

“Right hand was for the price – three fingers, 15 dollars, five dollars apiece.”

On one level, the story of Ron Hunter – Ronnie in his teenage years – is just a grain of sand in a vast mountain of abuse.

Now aged 63, he is one of more than 80,000 men who have made bankruptcy claims against the Boy Scouts of America on grounds they were violated by troop leaders in incidents spanning decades. It is the largest case of child sexual abuse involving a single organization in US history.

Amid that epic mass of suffering, Hunter stands out. Not just because of the severity of the abuse that he endured, or its longevity. But also because of his determination to speak out, to tell his story, in order to advance his own healing and to ensure that others are spared his ordeal. [Read the entire article](#)

[Angel Finally Found his Wings: A True Story of Finding Trust, Hope, Faith, and the Power of Love:](#) by Ronald Hunter

Angel Finally Found His Wings is an intimate and candid memoir about a child surviving life on the streets as a prostitute. Twelve-year-old "Angel" shares a room at the YMCA in New York City with thirty-four-year-old Charlie, the pimp who is blackmailing him.

Angel's mom is battling schizophrenia while Charlie, the neighborhood Boy Scout leader, grooms him away from his impoverished family, threatening to return his mother to a mental institution if Angel doesn't turn tricks on 42nd Street, the sex trade epicenter.

*“Victims are members of society whose problems represent the memory of suffering, rage and pain in a world that longs to forget.” Dr. Bessel Van Der Kolk*

*“Be not afraid of growing slowly, Be afraid only of standing still.” - Chinese Proverb*

7] [Harvard psychology expert shares the No. 1 thing she sees holding people back](#) by Dr. Luana Marques @ make it

[Anxiety, discomfort](#) and change are all part of life, but they are not enemies. The No. 1 silent saboteur of success is how we react to them.

As a [Harvard psychologist](#), I've observed this struggle firsthand. I coined a concept about it, ["psychological avoidance,"](#) based on my 20 years of research and clinical work.

Psychological avoidance is any response to a perceived threat that brings immediate emotional relief, but comes with long-term consequences.

To live a fulfilling life, we must learn to face our challenges and fears head-on. Here are three common signs of psychological avoidance, and how to handle them:

**1. Retreating** - If you've come face-to-face with a lion, your first instinct might be to run. But in our daily lives, retreating is more subtle.

You might attempt to retreat from anxiety by having a glass of wine to tune out, calling out of work sick when a major project or presentation is due, or passing up a job opportunity that involves public speaking.

What to do instead: Many times we rationalize our retreating behavior. We might say, "I'm not afraid of heights, I just don't like roller coasters," or, "No one will notice whether I attend."

To shift your thinking, identify one thought or fear, then ask yourself, "What data do I have to back this up?" or, "What would my best friend say in this situation?" The empirical evidence you come up with can help pull you out of that harmful mindset. [Read the entire article](#)

*"Courage faces fear and thereby masters it." - Martin Luther King Jr.*

*"A great loss brings up an emotional storm that opens up a hidden reservoir of childhood pain" - Pete Walker*

8] [California Black Women's Health Project](#) - is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, was established in 1994 as an affiliate of the Black Women's Health Imperative (formerly National Black Women's Health Project) based in Washington D.C. We seek to empower women to become active participants in improving their health status.

**Our Mission** - We are committed to advocating for policies and practices that promote and improve physical, spiritual, mental and emotional well-being of Black women and girls in California.

**Our Vision** - We believe a healthier future is possible when women are empowered to make choices in an environment where equal access and health justice are community priorities.

**What We Do** – Train, Inform, Advocate, Assist

[Mental Health](#) - A variety of circumstances put Black women at high risk for mental and emotional stress - economic insecurity, responsibilities of care-giving, neighborhood violence, lack of social support and physical illness or disability. As a result, many are plagued by tension, anxiety, worry and fear. Because of the powerful and complex links between the mind, emotions and body, chronic states of stress and anxiety can have dangerous and sometime fatal, health consequences. In addition, the daily struggles of coping with racism and sexism further exacerbate mental and emotional stress.

[12 Commandments of Good Mental Health PDF](#)

[Learn more](#)



*“If you want to touch the past, touch a rock. If you want to touch the present, touch a flower. If you want to touch the future, touch a life.” – Unknown*

*“Make the most of yourself by fanning the tiny, inner sparks of possibility into flames of achievement.”  
- Golda Meir*

9] [Now Unquiet: The Journey of Pianist Jonathan Biss](#) - Anxiety & Mental Health Recovery - YouTube  
12:44 minutes

Since he was six years old, Jonathan Biss played the piano. In fact, he grew up in a house filled with music. His parents both play the violin, and Jonathan became a successful concert pianist who now performs with orchestras around the world, sharing his love for music with thousands of people.

“Music is the lens through which I see the world. It is the thing in my life that evokes the strongest feelings in me. It is the thing that I’m most devoted to,” he says. “Music was a place that I felt home. It was a place where I felt like myself. It was a place where I could access feelings and just parts of myself that otherwise had no voice.”

So, it was a terrible irony when, eventually, the anxiety that Jonathan experienced around performing music became so extreme that it made him forget the core of who he was. Jonathan wrestled with his anxiety for many years, without really finding any answers or solutions to it. At first, he even had difficulty identifying the source of his stress. And though it’s true that everyone has anxiety (“It prevents me from crossing the street without looking and getting run over by a car. It also creates the extra sense of electricity that makes playing a concert in real-time for other people thrilling”), Jonathan knew deep down that his anxiety had the potential to interfere with the thing he loved most—sharing his music.

“I was ashamed of it. I felt that either not having bad anxiety or at least knowing how to manage it was a prerequisite for being good at my job. To admit that I had this problem felt, very, very much for years, like admitting to failure.”

9a] [Music & Anxiety Recovery: The Journey of Pianist Jonathan Biss](#) by Glenn Holsten @ [OC87 Recovery Diaries](#)

*“Some people’s lives seem to flow in a narrative; mine had many stops and starts. That’s what trauma does. It interrupts the plot. You can’t process it because it doesn’t fit with what came before or what comes afterwards.” – Jessica Stern*

*“Learn from the mistakes of others. You can’t live long enough to make them all yourself.” - Eleanor Roosevelt*

10] [MaleSurvivor: Who We Are](#) – YouTube - This five-minute video will tell you who we are, what our mission is, and introduce you to the MaleSurvivor community

[MaleSurvivor](#) – Hope. Healing. Support.

*“Just like there’s always time for pain, there’s always time for healing.” — Jennifer Brown*

*“Never underestimate the difference you can make in the lives of others. Step forward, reach out and help. This week reach to someone that might need a lift.” – Pablo*

11] [Lindsay Swan Artist Statement](#) - Creating art therapeutically can help cope with stress, work through traumatic experiences, facilitate memory recollection, and increase self-awareness. This installation represents the use of clay as a medium to document my path towards healing as a survivor of early childhood abuse. In my early twenties, I began to experience waking flashbacks and night terrors as fragmented memories from early childhood dissociated traumas surfaced. Conventional therapies had little to no effect on these overwhelming symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). I was recommended to the Wasiwaska Research Center in Brazil. Through a combination of Conventional and Shamanic therapeutic techniques, I began experiencing breakthroughs in my healing process. These experiences drew me to this topic, where I explored the use of art to organize, process, and reintegrate traumatic memories to present visually what Carl Jung, a Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst who founded analytical psychology, calls the Individuation Process. In this installation, I utilized clay to document previously dissociated memories of the personal unconscious, process memories connected to my conscious recollections, and explored archetypal imagery tied to the collective unconscious.

The theme of fragmentation was incorporated into many facets of my work since it symbolizes my life experiences. Like a survivor of early childhood trauma, the clay body must go through multiple trials by fire, and has the potential to become fractured, cracked, or broken in the bisque and later the glaze fire. Through the process of building and firing large scale ceramic work, I embraced fractures, flaws, and imperfections. I incorporated rag rope into the installation for the same purpose by tearing sheets and clothing from my childhood into strips and twisted them together with strips of new fabric; symbolized piecing together remnants or fragments as part of my healing process. By binding them together into rope strengthened the material, just as the process of carving or writing fractured memory journals onto clay empowered my healing process through those traumas. I wanted the material to resonate with my own human experience.

My current ceramic installation work is driven by my desire to help others through the visual representation of my personal journey of healing. Survivors often feel isolated and internalize the blame. Connecting with other survivors strengthened my resolve to continue working with this subject matter and has given me a sense of community, which has assisted my healing through mutual support.

## [Gallery](#)

*“Grief is messy. It’s traumatic. Devastating. Confusing. Exhausting. Grief is a natural process of our human experience. May you find comfort in these unexpected places along your journey.” — Dana Arcuri*

*“When a person is down in the world, an ounce of help is better than a pound of preaching.” – Edward G. Bulwer*

12] [Moments That Matter](#) by author [Kate Butler](#)

Step into a world where emotions run deep and stories intertwine, as twenty diverse voices unite to

bring you an anthology that celebrates the beauty and complexity of the human experience. Moments That Matter is a captivating collection of short stories that illuminate the extraordinary impact of seemingly ordinary moments, each penned by a unique and talented author.

In this anthology, you'll journey through a tapestry of genres and perspectives, exploring the depths of joy, heartache, hope, and resilience. As you navigate through each unique story, you'll be struck by the depth and authenticity of the human connections woven throughout. The authors invite you to reflect on your own journey and the significance of the fleeting moments that often slip by unnoticed. Through their words, they remind us that every choice, every interaction, has the potential to alter the course of our lives in profound ways, called Moments That Matter.

*"If you get, give. If you learn, teach." – Maya Angelou*

*"Step out of the history that is holding you back. Step into the new story you are willing to create." - Oprah Winfrey*

13] [I learned to love my disabled body – why can't my non-disabled friends love theirs?](#) By [Lucy Webster](#) @ Health & well-being - The Guardian

I felt a lot of shame, and blamed my body rather than society for all the ways I was othered.

For years I blamed my disability for my adolescent unhappiness. Then, as an adult, I learned to embrace and celebrate my body. I wish others could do the same.

My friends and I are lounging by a beautiful pool in Oman, enjoying our girls-only break. There is lighthearted chat about jobs and boys and the stupid things we've done on nights out. It takes one mention of a dress worn somewhere, one adjustment of a bikini, for the conversation to turn to our bodies.

My group of friends are all gorgeous. But I sit and listen quietly as they list the things about themselves they do not like, bemoaning no longer being the same size or shape they were at 18 now they are in their late 20s. I try to interject, but this conversation, with its refrains of "I wish I had" and "if only I could wear", is almost a ritual now; these women have been conditioned to go through the motions of self-criticism in order to prove that they are aware of their supposed flaws.

"You all look amazing," I say. "Don't buy into this rubbish!"

They laugh and nod, agreeing that the patriarchy is obviously to blame, but their responses are still noncommittal. "I know I shouldn't care," one says, "but I do."

I look down at my own body, spreadeagled on a sun lounger. I look at my bent spine, my uneven hips, my hands twisted outwards – all symptoms of my cerebral palsy – and a wry smile crosses my lips. I look down at my body – disabled, ostracised and desexed by an ableist society – and I think: "Thank you, you have saved me from all this crap."

I have not always been so kind towards this body of mine. As a young child, I was largely insulated from ableism by my family and friends (little kids are remarkably unfazed by difference). But as a self-

conscious teenager in the looks-obsessed 00s, being bullied at school meant I spent a lot of time worrying – not about whether I looked pretty or cool, but a very specific worry about how visible my disability was (spoiler alert: very).

I have never felt as exposed as I did during year 7 swimming lessons; feeling the whole class watching and fidgeting awkwardly as I transferred into a hoist and then sat, shivering in my swimsuit, as the teachers worked out how to lower me into the water. This happened every week, and I am sure that eventually no one even glanced over, but by then it was too late. The shame had taken hold.

Beyond the pool, other insecurities multiplied. I was especially invested in whether a particular outfit I fancied from Topshop accentuated or hid my scoliosis-curved spine, as if that was more noticeable than the wheelchair I was sitting in. This manifested in some slightly quirky and certainly contradictory style choices, most notably a penchant for oversized but loud-coloured jumpers, which I wore as a quasi-uniform at my uniform-free school. They were my armour as I navigated the choppy waters of ableism for the first time – baggy so that the unusual contours of my body were concealed, but bright enough that I could tell myself people were staring at the luminous orange knit rather than my disability.

It never occurred to me to ask whether I liked how I looked from a non-disability standpoint. My body was a physical challenge to deal with, not something with any aesthetic value. While peers tried different styles and dyed their hair ever-changing colours, I wore the same jeans until they were faded, the same hoodie until it was too small, and never paused to ask myself whether this was what I wanted or if my clothes reflected who I was. When I got dressed in the morning, I was too busy worrying about the day ahead and whether my body was going to cause me any more grief to notice what I'd pulled from the drawer. [Read the entire article](#)

*"Owning our story can be hard but not nearly as difficult as spending our lives running from it." - Brene Brown*

*"It's not the person refusing to let go of the past, but the past refusing to let go of the person." – Sonawane Raj*

14] [Opinion: Sexual assault should never be part of a prison term](#) by Judge Reggie B. Walton @ CNN

*Editor's note: Reggie B. Walton is a senior judge on the US District Court for the District of Columbia. He was chair of the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission, tasked with identifying ways to curb the incidence of sexual assaults in prison. The commission was created by Congress as part of the 2003 Prison Rape Elimination Act. The views expressed in this commentary are his own.*

For decades, prison rape and other forms of sexual abuse were [an unseemly subject of humor](#) on television screens, in living rooms and in comedy clubs across America.

Hearings I chaired two decades ago of the [National Prison Rape Elimination Commission](#) helped show me and my colleagues on the panel the degree to which prison rape, far from being a laughing matter, is a serious and sometimes even tragic problem. People who have been the victims of sexual assault while incarcerated, however, deserve not derision, but our support.

For far too long, rape and other forms of sexual abuse were tacitly accepted consequences of incarceration. After President George W. Bush [signed into law](#) the [Prison Rape Elimination Act](#), or PREA, in September 2003, hearings we convened marked what I believe was the beginning of a change in the way that we talk about sexual abuse in prisons, jails and juvenile and other detention facilities.

Until the passage of the PREA, there were no comprehensive figures or studies on the prevalence of rape inside detention facilities. It would take years before the most meaningful data documenting the prevalence of sexual abuse in confinement facilities nationwide was available from the Bureau of Justice Statistics — research that was mandated by the legislation.

What we did have, before the passage of the measure and during the hearings that the commission held around the country after PREA's passage, was an endless stream of personal accounts.

Men and women described in detail to me and to my fellow commission members the abuse they endured while incarcerated, sometimes over many years. Some recounted how they were disbelieved, silenced or unofficially punished for speaking out and seeking help.

The formerly incarcerated people who testified spoke of the guilt, shame and rage that consumed them after being sexually assaulted and how the abuse cast a shadow over their lives even years after they were released — trauma evident in their voices, on their faces and in the tears many shed.

During sometimes harrowing testimony, I and my fellow members of the commission learned that such trauma and its wide-ranging repercussions could be the result of just a single night in jail.

One person described the lingering effects of being gang-raped and beaten by other inmates: "I've been hospitalized more times than I can count and I didn't pay for those hospitalizations, the taxpayers paid." We also heard heartbreaking testimony from relatives of detainees who had committed suicide to escape the brutality they were experiencing.

For the especially vulnerable — including incarcerated young people; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals; people with mental illness; and for those detained in jurisdictions where proactive measures had not been taken to address the problem — **sexual assault had become, in effect, part of their punishment.** [Read the entire article](#)

*"Repeated trauma requires you to create a system of defenses that protects you. And these protections were so important. They saved your life. They protected your real self."* – Gretchen L. Schmelzer, PhD

*"You can't patch a wounded soul with a bandaid."* – Michael Connelly

#### 15] [The Grassroots Collective Poetry Reading](#)

This is the fifth in a series of free online poetry readings by survivors of ritual abuse and/or mind control programming. As a group, we are very creative people, but there are few opportunities for us to come together and celebrate the creativity that runs through our lives. We write, paint, sing, and dance for ourselves, but seldom can we have the joy of knowing that others have heard our voices.

## Four poets will be reading their writing of Suffering and Healing:

There are two parts to the event, introductions and the poetry readings. Then, we will have a short break. For the second part, we will have a facilitated Q&A panel discussion with the poets. The event is open to all, not just ritual abuse survivors. As long as you want to stand beside us as we speak out, we welcome you with open arms.

To attend, get a **free** ticket through Eventbrite at [Grassroots Events](#)

Your name and email address will not be made public. To remain totally private, join ZOOM with your video off and change your screen name.

We hope to see you all on Saturday, September 30 at 4 - 5:30 PM Pacific Time

[The Grassroots Collective](#) - We collaborate together as a community of survivors on creative projects that will benefit us all.

Representing spontaneous community and connection for survivors of ritual abuse and mind control

*"A good compromise is one where everybody makes a contribution." - Angela Merkel*

*"Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth." – Mohammed Ali*

16] [Walk With Me](#) – Live performance @ You Tube

A song addressing the stigma & discrimination for those labeled, "mentally ill."

*"Dear Mike, I am touched by the power with which you share your most important message. It must have taken a lot of courage and strength to write and share this song. The world needs it. Thank you!"*  
- Janet F.

*"I love your lyrics. I absolutely feel the healing. You, my friend, rose above your dealings. Thank You!"*  
- WeRfamily

*"Thanks for posting this Michael I appreciate and enjoy these videos very much i relate to this treatment terrible system ty for what you do and who you are! You rock!"* - Crash H.

“WALK WITH ME” [c] Michael Skinner

When you look at me, what do you see  
Have you judged me, by the lack of a smile  
But come with me, step into my shoes  
Can you walk with me for one mile  
Then perhaps you'd see, another part of me  
I'm also a man who like to sing  
I too have hopes, hopes and dreams  
To be more than what you labeled me

*Chorus*

*So open up your eyes, clean out your ears  
Learn to listen, listen to learn, and then you'll hear  
And then you can get past your stigma and fears  
Of what has caused you to treat me so callously*

Can you take a chance, can you try to understand  
That I'm still a man, who has some plans  
Who can fall to his knees from agony,  
That can cripple me, but it's only a small part of me

I'm not a child to be patronized  
With all of your fake smiles  
I too have hopes, hopes and dreams  
To be more than what you labeled me

*Chorus*

Your prejudice and fears are quite clear to me  
And no double talk hides that from me  
Intelligence, insight still reside in me  
So come down from your throne, throw off the robe  
That gives you such abusive power and control  
Can you sit with me, can we talk a while  
Do you think you could walk in my shoes a mile

I'm not impressed with your titles and degrees  
Compassion and understanding do more for me  
Can you show me, show me your humanity  
Instead of talking, talking down to me  
Can you sit with me, can we talk a while  
And then I know you would see me smile  
Oh I know you would see me smile

Walk with me a while, walk with me a while

*“Never judge another man until you have walked a mile in his moccasins.” – Native American Proverb*

*“True compassion means not only feeling another's pain but also being moved to help relieve it.” –  
Daniel Goleman*

***Thank you & Take care, Michael***

PS. Please share this with your friends & if you have received this in error, please let me know – [mikeskinner@comcast.net](mailto:mikeskinner@comcast.net)

***Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter. Martin Luther King, Jr.***

***A diagnosis is not a destiny***

[The Surviving Spirit](#) - Healing the Heart Through the Creative Arts, Education & Advocacy - Hope, Healing & Help for Trauma, Abuse & Mental Health

[The Surviving Spirit Facebook Page](#)

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[@SurvivinSpirit](#) Twitter

[Michael Skinner Music](#) - Hope, Healing, & Help for Trauma, Abuse & Mental Health - Music, Resources & Advocacy

Live performances & more @ [Michael Skinner – You Tube](#)

***"BE the change you want to see in the world." Mohandas Gandhi***