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Editorial

Dear Reader

In the last six months, I have at times felt crushing despair at the human rights violations across the world. As narrative practitioners, how can we respond to the injustice we see in the world? How might we bear witness to people's acts of resistance, no matter how small, and how might we highlight and nurture the diverse and skilful ways in which people and communities enact their knowledges of survival and healing? How can we be allies as people do whatever they can to hold on to their dignity, kinships and lives?

The articles, videos and audio notes in this issue of *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work* are a testimony to ways we can stand alongside each other as some of us endure immense adversity.

Beth and Ben Shannahan offer an example of resilience in the face of the unspeakable pain of a family member ending their own life. Marnie Sather reflects on ways of speaking about bereavement by suicide in ways that foster accountability and honour people's experience.

Included in this issue are also rich stories of lived experience from sex workers. They model ways of upholding dignity and fostering mutual support in the face of marginalisation, stigma and isolation (Kaur Serendipity; Julia Sharp).

The creative "Rainbow of Life" methodology developed by James McParland and Jaymie Huckridge is used with young LGBTQIA+ folks with and a health condition, who are invited to share their wisdom for responding to oppressive storm clouds while witnessing and honouring each other's lives. The Episode of Your Life practice (Julie Stewart et al.) provides a playful example of scaffolding safety while having painful conversations. KJ Wiseheart has adapted practices of collective documentation to elicit and share the hard-won knowledges of people dealing with Autistic burnout in an unaccommodating neurotypical world. Also described is innovative use of poetic mirroring (John Stublely) and of AI technology (Lucy Van Sambeek). Through these diverse contributions we are reminded that sharing stories of injustice in particular ways can contribute to both healing and justice.

On February 6 2023, two major earthquakes occurred in Türkiye causing great destruction and leading to a significant humanitarian crisis impacting millions of lives. An article by [Mehmet Dinç and Canahmet Boz](#) highlights responses to this crisis. These embraced folk wisdom and collective action, transforming a “container city” into a space of healing and creativity and enabling people to make contributions to one another.

As [Muhammed Furkan Cinisli](#) writes, when there is a disaster, natural or human-made, there are dominant discourses about trauma that can rob people of their agency and sense of community. It therefore becomes vital to find ways to resist these discourses, reflect and take action that is in keeping with what we treasure most. In “[My Album](#)”, Chaste Uwihoreye et al. document the transformative journeys of young children engaged in healing clubs across multiple schools in Rwanda. Each artwork is a visual narrative of the painful landscape of hardships and aspirations for the future through vibrant colours, symbols and metaphors. [Noor Kulow](#)'s presentation about combining narrative ideas with games in work with children in Somalia who have lost their parents is another poignant reminder that we heal in kinships through culturally resonant practices of solidarity.

[Tileah Drahm-Bulter](#) shares ways Indigenous stories of wisdom, skill and meaning-making can be received and acted on, even in a medicalised space like emergency care.

All these themes are exquisitely present in [Tiffany Sostar](#)'s audio practice note about caring for the trans community, which asks “How can we stand against harm without standing against people?” [David Newman](#) reminds us of the importance of attending to the politics of language: which words get used by whom; which words are available to whom; and what sorts of language use muddies meaning-making?

This issue also includes a thoughtful review by [Tom Strong](#) that considers how we can join people as agents in their own innovative recovery, and two audio recordings of previously published papers. The first is a Mandarin version of Li Ming's explorations of Buddhism, Taoism and Chinese medicine as they relate to narrative practice. The second is a recording of Mary Heath's classic paper on examining silences, which could not have come at a better time: “Who is silent? Why are they silent? Who is silenced – not allowed to speak, not reported as speaking, not listened to if they do speak?”

An image that will stay with me is Beth's mother [holding the umbrella](#) tight for her daughter in the face of strong wind. What a tender metaphor for collective care and everyday acts of resistance.

In solidarity
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ABOUT THE EDITOR

Shelja Sen is narrative therapist, writer and co-founder of Children First, New Delhi. Her latest book is Reclaim Your Life and she is also a columnist with a national newspaper, Indian Express. Shelja has worked as a narrative practitioner and teacher for over 20 years in various contexts in the UK and India. She is an international faculty member at Dulwich Centre Foundation, Adelaide, and a clinical tutor at The University of Melbourne, Australia. Shelja is a curator of the unique skills, expertise and know-how of the children, young people and families she has the honour of working with, and is committed to building innovative, culturally aligned, ethical practices using a feminist intersectional lens.

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