

Art can heal us

To live in a community like Butte County that blossoms with the creativity of many artistic souls as it sprouts back from wildfire devastation is inspirational.



by
Jess Mercer

The author is an arts educator and community activist who implements trauma-informed practices into programs in Butte County.

During this time of successive community traumas, I have discovered a platform that can bring individuals from all walks of life together and allow for personal and group healing and growth: "co-creation." Shortly after the devastating Camp Fire that consumed my hometown and parents' home, I started to use art in this way in an attempt to tether our shattered community.

When my father tossed his keys on my kitchen table in Chico the night of the fire, he knew he had no home to return to, that its locks no longer existed. In the months that followed, I made a call

for art to anyone vulnerable enough to join me. I asked them to relinquish their keys, those tiny precious totems of familiarity, so that I could create a sculpture for us all. I set out glass jars all over the county, provided a mailing address and soon gathered thousands of keys—to homes, schools, workplaces, cars, boats, diaries, even some that once belonged to those whom we lost that day.

In a small bedroom in my apartment, I crafted a large phoenix from more than 18,000 keys. Both the project and its social media page united my community, provided a platform for the scattered to communicate and eventually brought many back home one last time during the unveiling of the "Ridge Key Phoenix" on the one-year remembrance of the fire.

After the key project, I've refocused my career to use arts education for healing, driving the Butte County Art On Wheels van to schools, companies and public spaces to co-create with the community impacted by disasters.

The arts and the process of creation may

GUEST COMMENT CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

THIS MODERN WORLD

UGH, I'VE BEEN OUT OF COMMISSION WITH A BACK INJURY ALL WEEK, AND NOW IT'S DEADLINE TIME! I MEAN, I DON'T LIKE TO COMPLAIN--

YES, "NOT COMPLAINING" IS DEFINITELY A THING FOR WHICH YOU ARE WIDELY KNOWN.



THIS WEEK ALONE, WE LEARNED THAT THE WIFE OF A SUPREME COURT JUSTICE WAS ACTIVELY ENCOURAGING SEDITION! AND THAT THERE ARE SEVEN AND A HALF HOURS MISSING FROM TRUMP'S WHITE HOUSE SWITCHBOARD LOGS-- TALK ABOUT CLEAR CONSCIOUSNESS OF GUILT!



OKAY, FINE. BUT YOU HAVE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT IT'S A WEIRD JOB, TO TRY TO BE AMUSING IN PUBLIC WEEK AFTER WEEK, NO MATTER WHAT'S GOING ON IN YOUR PERSONAL LIFE.

IT'S LIKE WALKING A TIGHTROPE WHILE BALANCING A GLASS OF WATER ON A POLE--FOREVER.



THERE ARE WEEKS WHEN I'M EXHAUSTED FROM IT ALL. JUST OCCASIONALLY, I'D LIKE TO WRITE ABOUT--WELL, LITERALLY ANYTHING ELSE. WHAT IT'S LIKE WHEN AN ELDERLY PARENT BECOMES COMPLETELY UNTETHERED FROM REALITY. OR, I DUNNO, HOW MUCH DATING APPS SUCK.



BY TOM TOMORROW

JUST IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, I'VE BEEN THROUGH A ROUGH DIVORCE, AS WELL AS MY FATHER'S DEMENTIA AND DEATH--ALL DURING TRUMP, AND THE PANDEMIC, AND THE IN-SURRECTION, AND THE WHOLE CREEPING ONSLAUGHT OF FASCISM IN AMERICA. IT'S BEEN RELENTLESS!



WELL, GOSH, IF ONLY YOU HAD SOME SORT OF FORUM IN WHICH TO DO THOSE THINGS.

YEAH, WHAT CAN YOU DO, HEY, WHAT IF I DREW CLARENCE THOMAS WEARING A MAGA HAT? THAT WOULD BE PRETTY WACKY, HUH?



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Call for Submissions

Diverse Minds North State Journal

Poets, artists, authors and photographers who have experience or help others with mental health challenges are invited to submit creative works for the 8th Annual Diverse Minds North State Journal 2022.

Poetry, short stories, essays, photography, collage, paintings, and drawings are all welcome.

Submission guidelines and entry forms available at: nvcss.org/diverseminds or scan the QR code

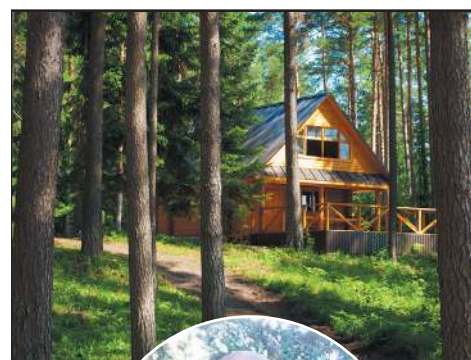
Questions? Call the Iversen Center at 530-879-3311 or email diverseminds@nvcss.org

Diverse Minds promotes mental wellness through the arts in Northern California, initiated by the Iversen Wellness & Recovery Center in Chico.

Journal Deadline: July 31, 2022



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