

Left: Chico State professor Mark Stemen and graduate Kim Michl-Green interview Britt Wray, researcher and author of *Generation Dread: Finding Purpose in an Age of Climate Crisis*.

pregnant became a tightrope walk tinged with tragedy. And when I cried about the climate, it hurt like the wind was knocked out of me. It was real deep grief, like someone I loved had died."

Wray "became rather obsessed" with gaining a deeper understanding of what she was experiencing and why, and how she could validate it and cope. She wanted to do this not only for herself but for others suffering from climate anxiety who were also unsure how to handle it. That's when she tapped into her skills as a science communicator, journalist and broadcaster.

"It's been pretty head-spinning, actually, to see the need, the hunger for these resources that I was also desiring myself a couple years ago, just explode," she told the CN&R. This path wasn't one she planned for herself, "but it was really about following what felt deeply meaningful and urgent."

At the Q&A event, Kim Michl-Green—a Chico State graduate who interviewed Wray alongside professor Mark Stemen, vice chair of the city's Climate Action Commission—told Wray and attendees that she related with the intense feelings that prompted *Generation Dread*. Just before graduating with her degree in psychology, Michl-Green became increasingly conscious of the severity of the climate crisis, "talking about it constantly to anybody who would listen."

She recalled a discouraging interaction with a teacher who dismissed her desire to

discuss how depression and anxiety are related to the climate crisis. Michl-Green said she felt frustrated, helpless, apathetic and often betrayed by people in power, and she asked Wray for guidance: *What would she say to students who are feeling the same way?*

Wray replied: "You're not alone. Students who feel this way are not alone."

The author then pointed to disaster studies showing that humans can recover more quickly from acute trauma when they have strong social ties and a sense of connectedness where they live—and that belonging is "the antidote to the things that basically rip away our resilience."

Social movements are how monumental societal changes such as women's suffrage and the abolition of slavery happened, she added: "We have tools at our disposal, and they lie in community."

Similarly, Wray encouraged educators to empathize with their students and validate the moral outrage they are feeling. It's important that they "pierce the bubble of silence around the fact that [climate crisis] news carries this existential weight," she said.

"People feel really strained and stressed by it, and we can't continually deliver the science without addressing that," Wray continued. "Therefore, shifting educational norms, talking about emotional coping tools, talking about mindfulness, meditation, yoga, gratitude, forms of community building, contemplative practices—things that have always helped humans co-exist with difficult realities—are needed in environmental science spaces."

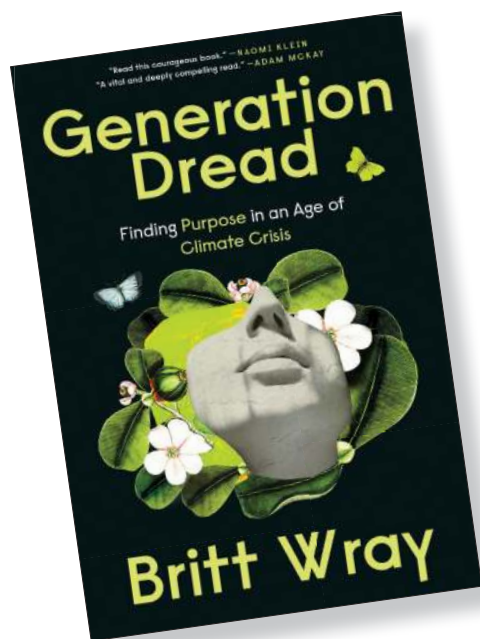
Putting in the work together

The day Wray spoke with the CN&R, her eco-anxiety was pretty much in check, she shared—she'd been speaking with colleagues about the topic and examining it from her lens as a researcher.

The importance of connection and a shared community highlighted in her talk is also a central theme in her book.

"It's a form of meaning-focused coping—being able to see others and surround myself with people who are similarly resolved and convicted is super strengthening. It fights this feeling of helplessness and powerlessness, which breeds inaction on the climate," Wray said. "It is really uplifting and hopeful even in the midst of devastating evidence. Without that, it's hard to feel one's actions do matter, if you're swimming out there alone and not connected to others who are similarly doing the work. ... which is why it's really important to find community, no matter where you are, to be able to take on some of these actions."

NEWSLINES CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



Dahlmeier
A Relation Company
LICENSE #0F89850

Trusted Choice

To us it's not just insurance...it's a relationship.

Learn more at Dahlmeier.com

Insurance & Risk Management Services for:
Farms • Business • Life • Health • Home • Auto

Chico 1368 Longfellow Ave 530.342.6421	Oroville 2080 Myers St 530.533.3424	Willows 305 N. Culver Ave. (Lambert Insurance Agency) 530.934.3361
--	---	---