“PTSD Nation: Art and Poetry From Survivors of War, Gun Violence, and Domestic Abuse”

A Proposal to Educate a Nation

Introduction
PTSD Nation is an exhibit created to provide public education about trauma and the adverse health effects—and the eventual hope and healing—that frequently follow exposure to trauma. The teaching will be in the form of a two-year traveling art and poetry exhibit across the U.S. The founder of this project has a background in the arts, community organizing, and social justice—and is herself a survivor of trauma. In 2012 she successfully organized an educational exhibit about the after-life of domestic abuse survivors entitled, “Creating Freedom: The Art and Poetry of Domestic Violence Survivors.” The unexpected message from the artist-survivor participants—the need to have their PTSD challenges recognized and addressed—became the inspiration for the current exhibit, “PTSD Nation: Art and Poetry From Survivors of War, Gun Violence, and Domestic Abuse”.

Background
Almost 70 percent of Americans will experience trauma in their lifetimes (Sidran Institute). And of those, almost 20 percent will develop PTSD (Perkonigg et al). Yet our collective understanding of the adverse outcomes to trauma—commonly referred to as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)—and the need for adequate treatment, remains vague at best.

News reports tell us that up to 30% of veterans struggle with PTSD (Gore, 2008) that PTSD is generally bad news, and that existing treatment programs are insufficient. PTSD for gun violence survivors is 40 percent (Berkowitz) to 70 percent (Rich, Corbin) and for survivors of domestic abuse, between 40 to 84 percent (Hugh, Jones). But there is little public education on causes, symptoms, trajectory for healing, or on what treatment modalities work best for persons with PTSD.

This dearth of information about PTSD creates its own troubling outcomes including years of unnecessary pain for those with PTSD symptoms who endure ridicule, prejudice, and isolation—yet clueless to the fact that their changed behavior is not due to laziness nor lack of will, but a “normal” reaction to “abnormal” trauma. Lack of public understanding about, and inadequate treatment availability for PTSD also poses worrisome implications for society as a whole with large population swaths unable to both parent effectively and achieve their full potential—with families, and society, left to pay the bill. Nationally, the total annual cost for PTSD is 44 billion, with 23 billion in direct medical costs (Howard, Crandall).
A TWO-YEAR TRAVELING EXHIBIT

Opening, November 3, 2014
The Annex Gallery, Sacramento State University
Closing, 2016
Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, Eugene, Oregon

Call for Entries: Deadline—July 31, 2014

If you are a person with PTSD acquired through war, gun violence (yourself or a loved-one), or domestic abuse, now is your chance to help others understand what your life has been like living with and healing from PTSD. We are interested in individual or collaborative works in any medium (sculpture, paint, mixed-media, photography), as well as poetry. The exhibit will be juried, so not all works may be selected; however organizers will do everything possible to include all submissions that add to the public’s understanding about violence, trauma, PTSD, and healing. You do not need to be a professional artist to participate—only a desire to educate the public about a challenging, but relatively misunderstood, American epidemic in plain sight.

Guidelines

1. All participants must be residents of the United States who live with PTSD acquired through American military service, gun violence (to self or loved ones), or interpersonal relationships. There are no age limitations.

2. Because the intent is to make this a traveling exhibit, no work of art can be larger when framed than two feet by three feet, nor weigh more than 25 pounds.

3. Poetry cannot be longer than 25 lines (size of one letter page).

4. Submissions are limited to three in the fine arts field and three in the poetry field.

5. We are looking for submissions in the following categories:
   - **Our Harming Traumas—How PTSD Found Us**
     Illustrate an aspect, or a representative moment, or the actual event of your trauma(s).
   - **Our Brains (And Lives) On PTSD**
Illustrate one or more items on the laundry list of symptoms that effect you on PTSD: anxiety/agitation, sleep disorders, nightmares, lack of energy, irritableness/anger, pain (phantom, or otherwise), isolation/loneliness, shame, disassociation, flashbacks, sadness/tears, numb/detached/frozen, sense of imminent danger/catastrophe, easily startled, trouble focusing/organizing/staying on task, fear of others/groups/certain activities, substance dependence, suicidal ideation, foreshortened sense of future, and more.

- **What Impedes Our Healing: Re-Traumatizations**
  
  Illustrate the additional traumas that can compound and set healing back, including:

  *For All Cohorts*—loud commotions, toxic work/neighbor situations, rejection/unkindness of relatives and friends, financial/housing difficulties due to traumas/PTSD.

  *For Vets*—ceaseless beaurecratic hoops for services/benefits, homophobic bullying (especially during “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy), sexual assaults.

  *For Gun Violence Survivors*—new lock-down drills, encounters with criminal justice system/media, reports of new shootings, contemporaries’ milestones, anniversaries.

  *For Survivors of Domestic Abuse*—abuse and stalking after leaving, rough/disrespectful treatment by domestic violence agencies (blaming language, inappropriate restrictions, sham services), abuses of legal system (for self and children), endless dislocations, extreme isolation.

- **Healing: The Power Of Kindness And Other Modalities**

  Illustrate anything that helps you with your healing including, but not limited to, acts of kindness, creative projects, helping others, physical activity, music, comedy, nature, spiritual practices, sharing your stories of trauma with trusted others.

6. All entries must also be accompanied by a short narrative essay (no more than half a typed page), explaining your life with PTSD and the message or story you wish to illustrate through your art work or poetry starting with the prompt, “I want the public to know...”. If not sure on how to structure personal statement, feel free to contact PTSD Nation for assistance.
How To Apply

1. Art may be sent via email (PTSDnation@gmail.com) using digital jpeg images (up to 3 MB) as an attachment; or via mail as photographs/copies of work.
2. Poetry can be sent by email (as word doc attachment or in body of email), or by mail.
3. Make sure artist's statement ("I want the public to know...") is also included.
4. Clearly label each work with submitter's name (but real name does not have to be displayed for exhibit), phone, e-mail address, title of work, dimensions of work framed.
5. Mail your PTSD Nation Artist’s Agreement, and a check for $20 made out to PTSD Nation, 915 L Street #224, Sacramento, CA 95814. [Note: while PTSD Nation has substantial costs, we do not want lack of money to stop you from participating, so if you can’t afford $20, please pay whatever you can.]
6. **Deadline:** Submission(s) must be postmarked by Thursday, July 31, 2014.

Additional Information

1. PTSD Nation may be in the lucky position of having more submissions than display room. As long as your art/poetry increases the public’s understanding of trauma and PTSD, PTSD Nation will do everything we can to display additional art and poetry in either audio visual or book format.
2. PTSD Nation will contact all participants about their inclusion in exhibit, and instructions for sending work, by mid-September 2014.
3. PTSD Nation currently has four venues for exhibit. We are still trying to secure additional venues. Please contact us if you have tips on venues in USA with great light, around 200 linear feet, and a fair bit of traffic (particularly, art galleries associated with universities).

Questions?

PTSDnation@gmail.com

PTSD Nation, 915 L Street #224, Sacramento CA 95814.

*PTSD Nation is an educational exhibit sponsored by The Sacramento Poetry Center, Wellspring Women’s Center, and the California Chapters of the Brady Campaign To Prevent Gun Violence.*
PTSD NATION: ARTIST’S AGREEMENT

Artist’s Information

Artist’s Legal Name: ____________________________________________________________

Artist’s Name To Be Used For Exhibit (May Be Anonymous or Made-up Name):
____________________________________________________________________________

Artist’s Address: __________________________________________________________________

Artist’s E-mail: __________________________ Phone Number__________________________

Description of Work(s)

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Artist’s Responsibilities

Artist agrees to submit his/her art in good, bug-free condition, suitably framed (white mat, black frame) for a traveling exhibit from November 2014 to December 2017; artist agrees to be responsible for insurance, initial shipping, and removal at end of exhibit. Artist also agrees to allow work(s) to be reproduced for purposes of publicity, and exhibit book.

Limitation of Liability

By participating in PTSD Nation, artist agrees to release and hold PTSD Nation, its employees, agents, and volunteers (Released Parties) harmless from any and all liability whatsoever for all losses, arising out of participation in the Exhibit and claims based on publicity rights, defamation, bodily harm or invasion of privacy, whether suffered by artist or a third party, or while preparing for participation in the Exhibit. PTSD Nation reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to suspend, modify or cancel the Exhibit or to not use submitted work. PTSD Nation will not be responsible for lost, late or delayed submissions, and by submitting artwork for participation in the PTSD Nation Exhibit, artist hereby agrees to release, and to hold all Released Parties harmless, from and against any and all liability whatsoever arising out of any lost, late or damaged work(s).

______________________________________________________________________________ Signature  ___________________________ Date