

young loud proud

T&F India

July-August-September 24

What do young people have to say?

Stories from around the globe.

A LIST OF
ESSENTIAL READS

RESOURCES
AND MORE



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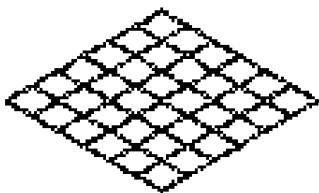
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GUEST EDITORIAL BY
**CONSTANCE MABIA &
DEBORAH OMAGE.**

YELL IT FROM THE ROOFTOPS

**WE ARE YOUNG, LOUD
& PROUD**

This has been a long time coming: a T&F India magazine. After two issues of newsletters we decided to push ourselves to make a magazine around the experiences of being young, loud and proud.

This issue has lived experience narratives of young people with mental health conditions, new launches, solidarity movements and resources.

We wish we could yell this from the rooftops, but this magazine would suffice for now...

YOUNG CHANGEMAKERS

Where does our voice belong? Navigating advocacy as young people with lived experience.

“When the world is just too loud all the time, I often ask myself, where does our voice belong?- as young people, as someone from the margins and more importantly as people with lived experience”

For the longest time I held tightly to the notion that young people are leaders of tomorrow. It was until very recently that I chose to move away from this idea of tomorrow. A word I soon understood held the passivity which decides when young people are ready to initiate change. Experience has equated agency; those with more experience were subsequently given preference when designing systems of society. In their own right, people who have ‘lived’ more were the ‘right’ people for the job, though there has been a remarkable oversight we rarely talk about.

There exists a binary understanding of youth- some reduce it to innocence while others to angst. Each of the two ideas posit that issues of the world are far too complex for young people to understand and participate in. Youth advocacy is then looked at as a departure from the life of a young person who periodically will go back to all things carefree.

This is not the case and young leaders with lived experience are examples of the same. At the age of fourteen Deborah Omaye first encountered mental health struggles, which came with stigma and a feeling of sheer disconnect. Fueled by the scepticism that came along her way as she tried to access help, Deborah became a national voice within Nigeria.

Today through her lived experience advocacy and mental health literacy campaigns, she has engaged policy makers and reached over thousands both nationally and internationally. Her motivation to mainstream mental health in formal education drives her non profit Mental Health Transformation, a space for young people by young people.

From a very young age Constance Mabiha has walked through life holding trauma. As a young person with lived experience of depression, self harm and suicide, she navigates life advocating for mental health at a national level within Kenya. Through her lived experience advocacy she aims to foster hope and resilience and uses her platform online to build the capacity of young people.

YOUNG CHANGEMAKERS

As a trauma survivor, today Constance is the voice of young people globally. Her story like that of Deborah is a testament to the power of young people driving change through lived experience. A power I have learnt to recognise in my own identity.

When I look at myself I see a hyphenated identity of a young queer non binary person with a disability. As a young person with lived experience, I navigate a world at the daily which was simply not built for me, yet is one I would be left with. Exhausted and discouraged, I was left with a choice to either be part of the systems that are built on oppression or resist the normative. At twenty three I started my own non-profit T&F India with only people from the margins around the global south and today with me stands a strong community of young women, queer, trans and disabled people becoming the positive representation that we never had growing up.

As young people we actively want to belong- to safe spaces where we can be heard, projects through which we can influence change and initiatives that see us for our whole capable selves. As young people, we no longer view ourselves as leaders of tomorrow, but as active change makers who are focused on unlearning and relearning systems that we are a part of.

While the world gets louder each day, it is in the community of young people with lived experience, where we find and place our voice. Voices that are now changing the landscape of advocacy.

This article is written by Parth Sharma, with lived experiences from Constance Mabia and Deborah Oimage.



T&F VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT

T&F Volunteer Sanya Bagga recently launched her own space: Unmasking Collective.



Unmasking Collective *Personhood over Pathology*

The Unmasking Collective is a community that embraces the lived realities of mental health through storytelling and non-pathologising care.

Our vision is threefold:

1. **Creating Communities of Support:** Through support groups, we focus on capacity building and making mental health accessible beyond individual therapy. Mental health cannot thrive in isolation.
2. **De-intellectualising Mental Health Knowledge:** We spread awareness through creative storytelling that captures the lived experiences of mental health, making it a part of everyday conversations, as accessible and natural as a discussion at the dinner table.
3. **Sociocultural Mental Health Services:** We provide mental health services through a sociocultural lens, recognising that mental health does not exist in a vacuum but is deeply shaped by the environments and communities we live in.

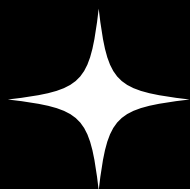
The Team Behind Unmasking Collective:

- **Sanya Bagga** is an MSC Global Mental Health postgraduate and the Founder, Chief Everything Officer, and Lead Creator.
- **Shagun Agarwal** is an MA Clinical Psychology postgraduate, Artist and Copywriter. She is our Co-Creator and Chief Imagination Officer.
- **Sanjana Sarin** is a postgraduate in Clinical Psychology and the Narrative Strategist, Consultant Psychologist, and Chief Organisation Officer.

-WORDS AND IMAGE BY SANYA BAGGA

T&F VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT

T&F Volunteer **Sanjana Nair** recently conducted a support group for women.



The flyer is titled "Support Group FOR WOMEN" with a decorative orange flower graphic on the left. The text describes the purpose of the group: "We are creating a safe space to talk about your emotions in light of the events unfolding at the RG Kar Medical College. If you identify as a woman, we urge you to join us on the 1st of September, 2024, at 5 pm." It includes a section titled "-The Intention-" which states: "This is a cathartic and reflective space where women can come together to share their experiences. We will explore our emotional responses to this event (and subsequent ones). This is a space to share your experiences with a safe group of people. Please note that this is not group therapy." It also lists the location as "Where: Online (Zoom)", the date and time as "When: September 1st, 2024, 5 - 7pm", and the fee as "Nominal Fee: Rs 200". A note at the bottom says "Since we have an art activity, kindly bring some paper and art supplies of your choice." At the bottom, there are two circular portraits of the facilitators, Sanjana Nair and Parvathi G, with their names and titles below them.

Support Group
FOR WOMEN

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When: September 1st, 2024, 5 - 7pm
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Since we have an art activity, kindly bring some paper and art supplies of your choice.

-Facilitators-

Sanjana Nair
She/her
Therapist & Researcher

Parvathi G
She/her
Trauma Therapist

Parvathi Ganesan and **Sanjana Nair** co-facilitated a support group for individuals identifying as women, who were triggered by the recent events at RG Kar Medical College.

The intent was not to provide therapy, but instead create a safe space where one could voice out their concerns, rage, grieve, and feel everything they would like to.

There was no narrative to align to, no feelings to regulate.

Only a space where women could come together, and share their experiences, without being judged.

A quote from the participant:

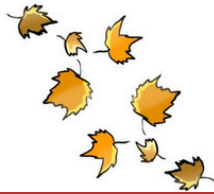
"It seems like the only message they're giving us is 'The more restrained you are, the safer you are.' And that's just terrifying."

WORDS AND IMAGE BY SANJANA NAIR



CHANGE

Change



1

Maybe that's one aspect of the ship that doesn't change.

But you feel unnaturally old and unsettlingly young at the same time. You have seen a pandemic, you have seen your family fall apart. But you haven't seen the world yet, your imagination still only spans the white mountains that shackle your subcontinent and the brooding sea that confines your imagination to the south. And deep down, you are terrified.

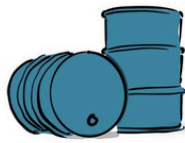
Terrified that you will grow grey and old without ever having the chance to expand your horizons. But, time is still there, you console yourself, before time runs out. Streaming sand through your fingers.



4

You watch as the road is being relaid for the 4th time in the last 5 years and wonder which contractor needs extra money this time. The perks of living in a city that is always under construction is that you can observe change from close quarters. But, paying attention has never been your forte has it?

You didn't notice when that shopping complex replaced the quaint little house near your mom's old school.

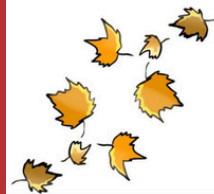


You didn't notice when an entire thicket of trees right opposite your house was cleared to lay the foundations of another one of those apartment complexes.

2

You have seen many dawns. You watched a God retire from the sport you loved and watched him lose the spine he never had. You watched another who came and laid a stake through his throne (with more of a spine, but still too little).

You have watched your country slowly transform from a deeply flawed democracy to a deeply flawed autocracy. And you've watched what once used to be whispers turn into screams on top of churches with saffron flags in hand.



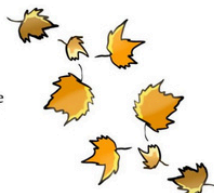
Reclaiming a civilization they say, but it reminds you of the death of something you loved for some reason.

5

And you didn't notice when all that made your city different was erased to make it more of the same.

They say you have turned 24. They say you're growing up fast, maybe you've already grown up. Or maybe you're still the cowardly child who hid from his father after breaking the clock in the house. But are you? Can you even remember that child anymore? You don't have his face anymore, with the sad excuse of a beard covering it up. Nor do you have his short and stubby fingers (stubby still, short no longer).

Hell, you don't even have the same body structure anymore, your torso being quite short and your legs awkwardly long. You're still pretentious though, thinking of some deep philosophical concept to define change.



3

They say your life has just begun, but then why do you feel like you've lived a few too many lives already? The life of a son, the life of a caregiver, the life of a breadwinner, the life of so many. But maybe that is the point of it all. To live as many lives as you can. And when you're 50, obese, with a failing liver and rotten teeth, you can remember all that you were and tick off some imaginary boxes of how they believe life should be lived.

Or maybe not. And the 'maybe not' keeps you going

And you feel a sense of peace. Knowing that your life is just one of the million as they go by. Not especially better, not especially worse. That's more than what you can ask for right? And no matter what happens, once the less-than-cold winter of this year ends, summer will come again.

And who knows, if you're especially lucky, you'll get to watch that road get relaid for the 5th time in 6 years and that will become a story of its own eh?

6

WORDS AND ART BY BHARAT HEGDE, REPUBLISHED HERE WITH PERMISSION FROM THE ARTIST.

SUPPORT GROUPS: AN EXHAUSTIVE RESOURCE LIST FOR YOU



If you're caring for an older parent or an adult with an illness or dementia, online and in-person support groups are available.

- Alzheimer's and Dementia Caregivers Support Chat Group: This Facebook group supports friends, family, and caregivers of loved ones with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia.
- Caring for the Caregiver Support Group: This Facebook group offers emotional support to caregivers and their family members.
- Dementia Caregivers Support Group: This group gathers on Facebook and focuses on caregivers for people with Alzheimer's and other types of dementia.
- Well Spouse Association: Well Spouse's services include support groups, online chats and forums, respite weekends, and a program for caregivers of a disabled or ill spouse or partner. Support groups are offered online and in person in some areas.
- Family Caregiver Alliance: This organization offers a range of online support groups for those caring for a loved one, as well as in-person groups in the San Francisco Bay Area. Their groups include a caregiver support group, an LGBTQ+ caregiver group, and a group for caregivers under 40 years old.
- Daughterhood: Daughterhood is a community of women who are caring for an elderly parent. They offer online connection circles each week, where members can come together to share their experiences and receive support.



CURATED BY AYUSHI SAHA

SUPPORT GROUPS: AN EXHAUSTIVE RESOURCE LIST FOR YOU



Support groups for caregivers of people with disabilities and mental health conditions

Many caregivers also provide care for someone with a disability or a mental illness. Support groups may help you find new resources and information, and offer you emotional support.

- Association for Autism and Neurodiversity (AANE): AANE has online discussion forums and support groups for parents and families of children and adults on the autism spectrum.
- Family Education and Resource Center (FERC): This California-based organization offers online support groups for caregivers of people with a mental illness in Alameda County.
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): NAMI offers family support groups and other resources for caregivers of those living with mental health conditions. Groups are held virtually and in person by local NAMI chapters.
- Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA): DBSA provides information and support for people living with depression and bipolar disorder and their caregivers. Online support groups for family, friends, and caregivers of people with mood disorders are also available.
- National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA): NEDA is an organization that spreads information and awareness on eating disorders. They also collaborate with local chapters to offer support groups for people with eating disorders and their loved ones.
- Partnership to End Addiction: Parents of a child struggling with a substance use disorder can visit Partnership to End Addiction's parent and family support groups and resources.
- Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD): CHADD seeks to improve the lives of all people living with ADHD. In addition to valuable information on supporting a child with ADHD, they have an online community for parents and caregivers.



CURATED BY AYUSHI SAHA

**WHAT AM I ALLOWED TO SAY?
WHO AM I ALLOWED TO BE?
AT WHAT POINT DO I BECOME 'TOO MUCH'?
HAVE I CROSSED THE LINE ALREADY?**

The constant cacophony in my mind when I am to self-disclose. My mind feels like a ginormous library with ceilings that are sky high, books stacked from the floor to beyond my eyes can see when I stare upwards. Each experience, each thought, each opinion stacked neatly on shelves arranged in sections based on the different identities they stem from. I am usually a pretty punctual person. I love being organized, having fixed deadlines, and having a routine that tells me exactly what I need to do and exactly when I need to do it. As I sit to write the article that you're reading right now, it's the afternoon of July 22nd - I can feel my heart shiver, my eyes well up, and I am two weeks late already. The long tail of my white satin dress drags across the wooden floor as I run barefoot down the hallways of the labyrinth of a library that is my mind, trying to collect my thoughts - quite literally in this metaphor.

I am a great listener. I think I have cultivated the art of holding space quite well, but when the space is mine to take up, I never know what to fill it in with. When some unspeakable things happen to you when you're young and silence becomes your armor as you crouch into a tiny little corner to try to take up as little space as possible, I think you forget how to speak, and to know what it's like to try to stretch your arms out once in a while.

"Hi Parth, is there an approximate word limit or something that I can keep in mind?" I texted on 15th July, trying to understand the box I can carefully fit my words in this time around. "Nah, write as much as you like, we'll design the layout around the article." Yikers. What in the world do I do with all of this freedom? The cacophony intensifies. My mind flashes back to the faces of people looking back at me, left clueless about how to respond when they caught a glimpse of some of my experiences, and especially when they saw some of my pain. I am left feeling like I just passed them a hot potato. Their hands turning red, burning - not knowing what to do; not knowing what to say. I learned to hide it all away, and to ask, always:

**TO BE
INCLUDED**

WRITTEN BY SMRITI KAMATH

**WHAT AM I ALLOWED TO SAY?
WHO AM I ALLOWED TO BE?
AT WHAT POINT DO I BECOME 'TOO MUCH'?
HAVE I CROSSED THE LINE ALREADY?**

Interactions can be exhausting when you're constantly running back and forth trying to carefully pick out just the right books to refer to be authentic, but at the same time try to edit the draft of what you've chosen to want to say by filtering out things that may be "too much" for other people - to mellow it down just enough.

"Maybe add a joke to lighten up the air. Don't make it too serious," I think to myself. Sometimes, as I'm running between these colossal shelves that never seem to end, it feels like people around me have a digitally automated e-library. I stand there in groups trying to carefully formulate what I have to say - climbing up and down tall shaky ladders finding the books I'm looking for, trying not to fall as the cacophony in the background gets louder and louder. By the time I finally build up the courage to say something slightly personal or vulnerable, the topic of the conversation has shifted, and I have to place all the books right where I picked them up from and start all over again - at times taking a stumble and crashing, scattering all the books around me.

Conversations feel like sprinting with five big suitcases and a huge camping backpack to catch a train while it's just about to leave the station. By the time I get there, the train is gone, and just like in the movie *Jab We Met*, I begin to sprint again, hoping to catch it at the next station.

As I complete this article, I have asked for an extension at least thrice, each time being met with kindness only. Heading to the station this time, I carry the same five suitcases and a camping backpack, but this time, I am walking at a comfortable pace and have the opportunity to sit down to sip on some water now and then, knowing the train will not leave without me. It feels nice to be included sometimes.



TO BE INCLUDED

WRITTEN BY SMRITI KAMATH

NIGERIA AND ME...



WRITTEN BY AKIN

Exploring the unseen journeys of caregivers and family members of individuals diagnosed with mental health conditions in Nigeria reveals a complex tapestry of emotions, challenges, and resilience. Often overlooked, these caregivers play a vital role in supporting their loved ones while navigating their own struggles.

Emotional Trauma: Caregivers frequently experience a whirlwind of emotions. They may feel love, frustration, sadness, and even guilt. The stigma surrounding mental health in Nigeria can intensify these feelings, as caregivers often fear judgment from the community. This emotional burden can lead to anxiety and depression, impacting their mental well-being. I had my first experience of this while I was working at a mental health home.

Cultural Challenges: In many Nigerian communities, mental health issues are misunderstood or stigmatized. Caregivers may face societal pressure to conceal their loved one's condition, leading to isolation. The cultural belief that mental health issues stem from spiritual or moral failings can further complicate their journeys, making it difficult for caregivers to seek help.

Socioeconomic Struggles: Many families in Nigeria are economically disadvantaged, and the costs associated with mental health care can be burdensome. Caregivers often juggle their responsibilities with work, leading to exhaustion. The lack of resources, including access to healthcare professionals, exacerbates their challenges.

Navigating the Healthcare System: The Nigerian mental health care system is under-resourced, with few mental health professionals available. Caregivers often have to advocate for their loved ones, navigating a complex and sometimes unresponsive healthcare system. This can be incredibly draining, both physically and emotionally.

Coping Mechanisms: Despite these challenges, many caregivers develop resilience and find coping mechanisms. They form support networks with others in similar situations, sharing experiences and advice. Some caregivers seek solace in spiritual practices, while others turn to hobbies, exercise, or community support groups.

Strength Through Advocacy: A growing movement in Nigeria advocates for mental health awareness and better resources. Caregivers are increasingly becoming advocates themselves, raising awareness about mental health issues and pushing for systemic changes. This advocacy can empower them, creating a sense of purpose in their journeys.

The journeys of caregivers and family members of individuals with mental health conditions in Nigeria are marked by love and sacrifice but also by struggle and resilience. Recognizing their experiences and supporting their needs is crucial for fostering a more compassionate society that understands mental health challenges.

**“OUR STORIES
ARE A
PROFOUND
REMINDER OF
THE STRENGTH
FOUND IN
CARING FOR
ONE ANOTHER
AMID
ADVERSITY”.**

ON REDISCOVERING YOURSELF

WRITTEN BY UDISHA JAIN



In our human existence we continuously re-discover ourselves, with ageing and the awaited impending doom in the mind of an anxious teenager, a psychiatric diagnosis.

The words “youth” “young” “reversible” are thrown around a lot in the beginning days after your 3-hour evaluation and first prescription. But you see in a country where Mental Health is stigmatized at a severe level, you can’t tell anyone without them looking at you with an entirely different foreign lens.

Thus enters the divide, the cognitive dissonance, the identity confusion. Is this coming from me or my anxiety?

An accidental walk in the evening leads to the discovery that the company of yourself isn’t that bad.

**“IN OUR HUMAN
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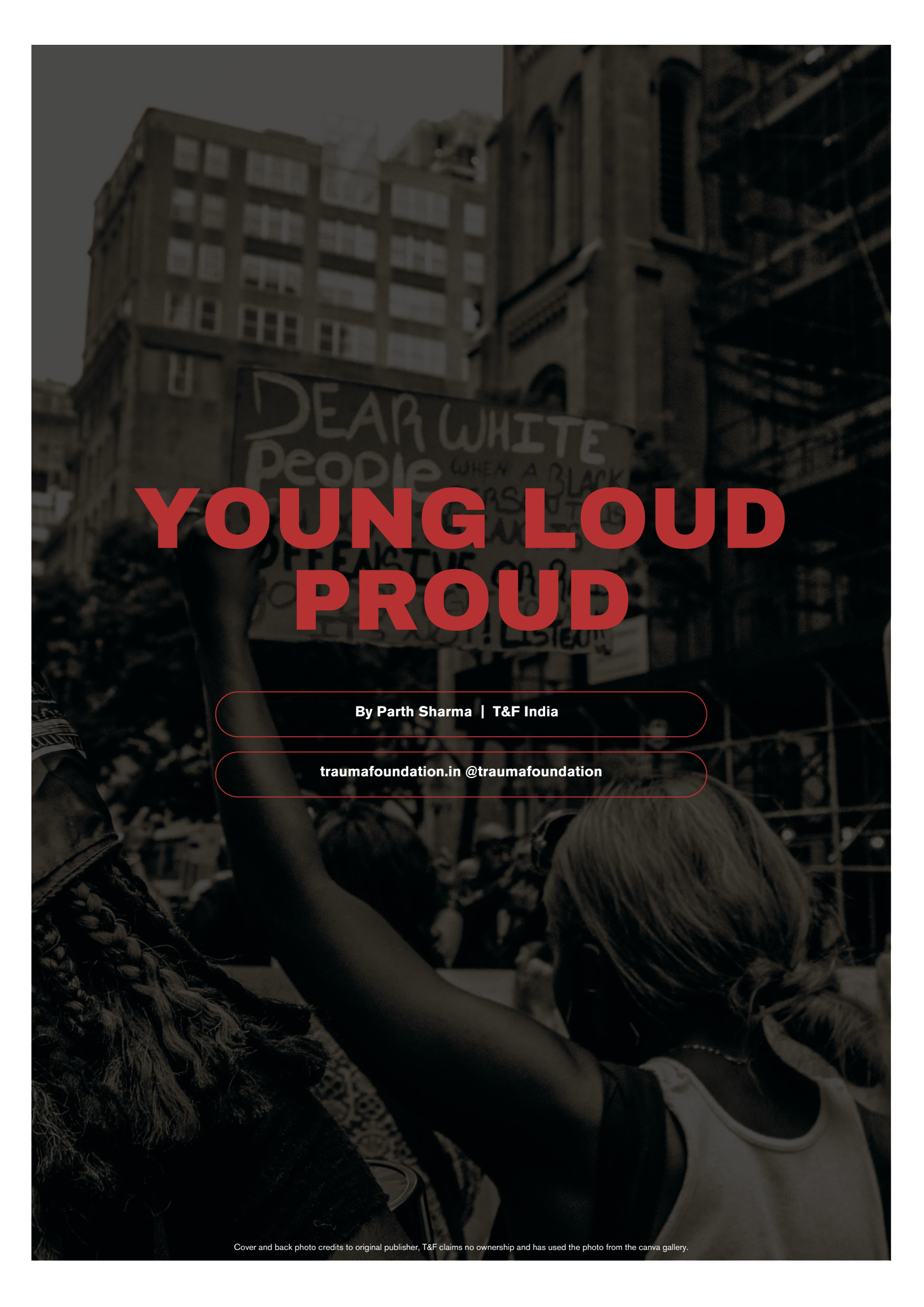
Research suggests that, overall, spending occasional time away from other people predicts life satisfaction and psychological well-being (Bates, 1964, Burke, 1991). Indeed, some have suggested that the ability to enjoy solitary activities is associated with mental health (Burke, 1991, Maslow, 1970). (citation below)

A diagnosis of a mental illness is very complex and different from a physical one. A hernia operation, your entire bloodline will know about it, a diagnosis of OCD at the age of 17 maybe no one will ever know about it. Shame is a big aspect yes because grown adults forget the concept of acceptance.

You don’t have anything to hide from you.

You don’t have to be ashamed of any labels medical science has given you.

That’s when a solo day out for a cup of coffee becomes your safe haven. A trip to the bookstore heals something inside you every single time.



YOUNG LOUD PROUD

By Parth Sharma | T&F India

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