

# Dancing Resilience: A Symphony in Three Movements

Conductors and Choreographers:

John Graham-Pole & Dorothy Lander<sup>1</sup>

|                  |                        |                            |
|------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| First Movement:  | WITNESS                | <i>Sorry for your loss</i> |
| Second Movement: | BRICOLAGE <sup>2</sup> | <i>How to make do?</i>     |
| Third Movement:  | COMMUNITY              | <i>Together we build</i>   |

## Trans-disciplinary Exemplars of Art & Resilience

- Ellen Dissanayake, evolutionary anthropologist. *Art* and creative expression are human universals, hard-wired aptitudes that infuse all cultures and attend all major human transitions — “*a biologically endowed impetus ... [manifesting] the desire to make some things special*” ( p. 60). Dissanayake’s research casts evolutionary mother-infant interactions across cultures as “*not only a multimedia performance, but a multimedia duet,*” (p. 86), affirming diverse art forms as relationally constituted.

Dissanayake, Ellen (1995). *Homo aestheticus: Where art comes from and why*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

- Michael Ungar, Director, Resilience Research Centre ([www.resilienceresearch.org](http://www.resilienceresearch.org)). “*Resilience is both an individual’s capacity to navigate to health resources and a condition of the individual’s family, community and culture to provide those resources in culturally meaningful ways.*” This is reminiscent of bricolage — making use of the resources at hand— and building community.

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University of Brighton, April 6-7, 2011  
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<sup>2</sup> Bricoleur in the original French refers to handy women and men who provide a service by making use of whatever tools and materials are at hand . Bricolage applied to resilience arts-based research and practice engages multiple methods of inquiry and art forms that emerge naturally and spontaneously in the community.

- Andrea Rawluk and Velma Illsiak, adult educators and researchers in Canada’s North. There was no such word in either Gwich’in or Inuvialuktun [communities in Aklavik, North West Territories] that directly meant **resilience**, but if they were to translate ... “*Gihhàhtsaii/to be strong*”, “*Itqannaiyaq/to be ready*” and *Qapinnailaq/to never give up*” all in the face of oppressive forces and changes. ... [I]n the individual interviews, ... *several people responded that it was love, it was gratitude and that it was pride that brought them to be, and brings them to be resilient.* ... I am summarizing [**love**] as a care or tenderness for one’s ancestors, relatives, and future generations. (p. 290)

Rawluk, Andrea & Illsiak, Velma (2010). Resilience through love: Exploring community resilience through adult education and emotion. In Susie M. Brigham & Donovan Plumb (Eds.), CASAE-ACÉÉA National Conference Online Proceedings, *Connected Understanding: Linkages Between Theory and Practice in Adult Education*, Concordia University, Montréal, Québec, May 30-June 1, 2010. Available from: <http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/CASAE/cnf2010/OnlineProceedings-2010/Individual-Papers/Rawluk%20Illsiak.pdf>

- Sara Kinson , New Zealand geographer. In accord with relational aesthetics, **participatory video** “makes the gaze explicit. ... It highlights the relationship between researcher/researched, observer/observed, drawing attention to who is in control of the viewing technology, what is being framed and how the images are being produced or represented” (pp. 145 -146).

Kinson, Sara (2003). Participatory video in geographic research: A feminist practice of looking. *Area*, 35(2), 142-153.

- Tim Krochak (2009), *The Chronicle Herald*’s staff photographer. As an exemplar of participatory video as bricolage, two boys, one with his own video camera fashioned from a plastic bottle, mimic Tim at Camp Pinchinat in Jacmel, Haiti on January 24, 2010.



- Terry Tempest Williams, Utah-based environmentalist. The metaphor of the mosaic explicates the role of witness and storytelling in the resilience of the human spirit that Terry sees in Rwanda. “A mosaic is a conversation between what is broken. . . . The very language of tesserae tells us that this harmony is only achievable through the breaking and then rediscovery of the mosaic fragments” (pp. 6, 7). “We cannot understand social problems without looking at historical roots. It is impossible to change society without changing the societal stories. We must listen to the stories being told on the ground by those who have survived the abuses of power” (p. 285). *Finding Beauty in a Broken World* is Terry’s story of working with Lily Weh, founder of the Philadelphia-based *Barefoot Artists* non-profit arts organization ([www.barefootartists.org](http://www.barefootartists.org)), to paint houses in a genocide survivor village. Liberata speaks for the women of the village: “When the children greet us each day singing, *Turabishimeye* (We are happy to be together), we feel the same. *Kujenga pamoja*. Together we build” (p. 312).

Williams, Terry Tempest (2008). *Finding beauty in a broken world*. New York: Vintage Books.

- Ayalah Aylyn, sociologist in Canada’s North. Ayalah’s botanical metaphor frames her thesis on resiliency, art and meaning, drawing on horticulturalist Robert Dixon’s description of the **Resurrection Fern**, variously known as the "Resurrection Plant, the Robe of Jericho, or Siempre Viva (meaning Everlasting). “It actually will blow around, the roots will die away, it will blow around like the Tumbleweed, and if it lands in a puddle, or it rains, it will turn green, grow again, and then when it turns dry, it will curl up again” (p. 19)



[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/8a/Rose\\_of\\_Jericho.gif](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/8a/Rose_of_Jericho.gif)

Aylyn, Ayalah (2010). *Resurrection ferns: Resiliency, art and meaning constructs among survivors of trauma or difficult life events*. Thesis submitted to Department of Sociology for Doctor of Philosophy, Department of Sociology, University of Alberta, September, 2010. Available from

[http://repository.library.ualberta.ca/dspace/bitstream/10048/1413/1/Aylyn\\_Ayalah\\_Fall+2010.pdf](http://repository.library.ualberta.ca/dspace/bitstream/10048/1413/1/Aylyn_Ayalah_Fall+2010.pdf)

- Saundra Nettles, narrative therapist and researcher. Saundra's phrase "**zones of narrative safety**" describes sites of reflection and expression that foster **resilience**: "*listening in journals, creative writing, youth development programs, and therapeutic exchanges with supportive individuals*" (p. 360).

Nettles, Saundra M., & Mason, Michael J. (2004). Zones of narrative safety: Promoting psychosocial resilience in young people. *The Journal of Primary Prevention*, 25(3), 359-373.

- Judith Landau and Jack Saul, trauma researchers and practitioners. Their four themes of **community resilience** in the face of massive psychosocial trauma associated with natural, environmental or human crises include:
  - 1) Build community and enhance social connectedness as a foundation for recovery by strengthening the system of social support, coalition building, and information / resource sharing;
  - 2) Participate in collective storytelling and validation of the trauma and response, with the emerging story broad enough to encompass the many varying experiences;
  - 3) Reestablish the rhythms and routines of life and engage in collective healing rituals;
  - 4) Arrive at a positive vision of the future with renewed hope. (Walsh, 2007, p. 219)

Landau, Judith, & Saul, Jack (2004). Family and community resilience in response to major disaster. In Froma Walsh & Monica McGoldrick (Eds.), *Living beyond loss: Death in the family* (2nd ed., pp. 285-309). New York: Norton.

- Carol Bernstein, literary theorist and arts-based researcher. Amitav Ghosh's (1993) essay, "Dancing in Cambodia" provides Carol with an exemplar of community "resilience under fire, the drive to reconstruct" (p. 173). The Cambodian dancers and "sole archives" of their art practice after the Khmer Rouge genocide gave their first performance wearing improvised costumes. Bricoleurs! Ghosh describes this as "a moment when the grief of survival became indistinguishable from the joy of living" (p. 10).

Bernstein, Carol L. (2007). Beyond the archive: Cultural memory in dance and theater. *Journal of Research Practice*, 3(2), 1-14.