

Reclaiming Youth Seminars

July 20-22, 2023

Featured Presenters



The Trouble with Trauma

Howard Bath, Allambi Care Australia

Recent years have seen a flood of publications on trauma, and it has almost become dogma that all staff working with youth must be “trauma-informed.” What that means is less clear. The presenter is an enthusiastic participant in exploring the research and practice on working with children and youth who have experienced trauma as seen in his book: *The Three Pillars of Transforming Care: Trauma and Resilience in the Other 23 Hours*. While most trauma models are directed at mental health clinicians, this book is not just another

trauma training for therapists. Instead, Bath speaks to those working directly with traumatized youngsters in foster care, residential treatment, schools, youth justice, and the family. Adults need therapeutic strategies to meet the needs of young people whose behaviors can be baffling and challenging. The “three pillars” simplifies a mass of research to target safety, connection, and coping. Much healing from trauma occurs beyond formal therapy in the natural environment of “the other 23 hours.”

In an article titled “The Trouble with Trauma” in the *Scottish Journal of Child Care*, Dr. Bath notes that trauma theory has taken center stage in all fields serving children and youth. Yet this has brought some serious concerns, including the belief that trauma-informed approaches provide the answer to most or even all the challenges faced by persons showing problem behavior. There is also a lack of clarity about the definitions and nature of trauma. And, narrowly focusing on trauma can obscure strengths and resilience. When rigid, unthinking applications of trauma theory are imposed on staff, practitioners on the “front line” are uncertain about how to maintain safety and order while still reacting in trauma-sensitive ways. In this presentation, Dr. Bath balances the contributions of trauma research with cautions, arguing that therapeutic environments are much more than trauma treatment programs.

Howard Bath, PhD, is a Consultant of Research, Training, and Program Development at Allambi Care in Australia and trains internationally. He is a Clinical Psychologist with extensive work with children and young people in the child welfare and youth justice systems including as a youth worker, therapist, and agency director. For seven years, he served as the first Commissioner for Children in Australia’s Northern Territory, a homeland of Aboriginal peoples.



Walter Cortina, Age 19
President and Co-Founder



Cole Stevens, Age 20
Vice-President and Co-Founder



Jose Perez, Age 22
Board Secretary-Treasurer

Deeper Learning for Prevention & Potential

Bridgemakers Youth Leadership Team (Walter Cortina, Cole Stevens, & Jose Perez with Larry Brendtro and Jon Bacal, Bridgewater Youth Coach)

Without the support of caring adults, youth often lack purpose in life and become ensnared in problem behavior. While educational engagement is a powerful predictor of positive life outcomes, schools seldom are oriented to meet the growth needs of students at risk. Research shows these youth thrive in relationship-rich settings that cultivate Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity – pillars of the Circle of Courage resilience model. How can youth facing adversity experience such life-changing support in school and community? This is the vision of Bridgemakers: a world where problems facing youth are solved with youth.

The nonprofit organization Bridgemakers enables Twin Cities youth who are at risk of entering treatment or correctional programs to access lifesaving student-centered schools for violence prevention and recovery. Bridgemakers is led by youth with justice system experience, supported by mentors and coaches. Young people share their stories and work with diverse stakeholders and mentors to create “micro-schools” designed to cultivate potential and build resilience. The result is Deeper Learning for Prevention & Potential. Presenters from the Bridgemakers youth leadership team share their experiences creating a positive peer culture and partnering with adults to change their lives, schools, and communities by embracing these restorative goals:

Belonging — Including all as valued persons in a community of support.

Mastery — Building strengths by using problems as learning opportunities.

Responsibility — Empowering youth to build positive futures for self and others.

Generosity — Contributing to others as the foundation for a purpose in life.

Walter Cortina became homeless at 13 after his parents were deported to Mexico. The Minneapolis native worked three jobs to support himself and his family, one of which resulted in his interaction with the juvenile justice system. Mentored by his school leader, Walter launched a school improvement team at 15 and Bridgemakers’ statewide work to amplify the voice and mentor the leadership of under-resourced youth at 17, the same year his best friend and classmate Eduardo was shot and killed. Walter’s journey is featured in Sam Seidel’s *Hip-Hop Genius 2.0: Remixing High School Education* (2022). He is a graduating senior from High School for Recording Arts.

Cole Stevens is a Minneapolis native, a biracial son of two artists, and an entrepreneur. Cole had contact with the juvenile justice system and struggled with addiction and mental health challenges. Similar struggles took the life of his best friend Gabe while Cole worked to lift his family out of debt. After losing their jobs in the 2020 pandemic shutdown, Cole and Walter led a statewide campaign that generated 65 media features and a bipartisan coalition that brought \$33 million in benefits to 20,000 eligible students and changed Minnesota's benefits law.

Jose Perez is the youngest member of the Ramsey County Transforming Systems Together Committee and the Saint Paul City Council Reparations Committee and has twice testified at the Minnesota Legislature on removing barriers to teachers of color. An English learner with dyslexia, he failed first and ninth grades and interacted with the justice system. An R&B singer and High School for Recording Arts graduate, the St. Paul native is the son of a single mother, a Guatemalan immigrant. His father was deported to El Salvador when Jose was one. Jose is a first-generation Political Science student at S. Paul College.



Systemic Circles: Partnership with Marginalized Youth

Arlene Kee, Education Authority of Northern Ireland

The presenter provides leadership in The Education Authority which includes thousands of professionals and volunteers serving in schools and youth development programs across Northern Ireland. Aspiring young professionals are trained in the Circle of Courage and Positive Peer Culture principles. They, in turn, reach out to vulnerable youth who are at risk of involvement in antisocial

behavior. A particularly challenging problem is the resurgence of paramilitary gangs which are vestiges of the earlier era of the “troubles” in Northern Ireland. Arlene describes “Systemic Circles” that create a culture of change by giving young people a voice in their own lives.

Arlene Kee (Masters in Personal and Social Education) brings a rich background in education, youth work, and counseling to her leadership role with the Education Authority of Northern Ireland, serving over 45,000 children and young people aged 4-25 years, focusing on engaging those most marginalized. The goals are to support educational attainment, explore values and beliefs, and engage youth as active citizens within their community.