



# MBRLC NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2021

[WWW.MBRLC.ORG](http://WWW.MBRLC.ORG)

Hilary K., Idony Lisle, and Janel Tan,  
Editors





Danielle Daniel

Welcome to the Summer Newsletter! We have a juicy group of offerings for you this time around. Readers under the age of 14 should be cautioned that mature language and complex situations exist herein—In other words, please be grownups, because we are! ;-)

As always, we welcome submissions; please contact Idony at [idony.lisle@bmc.org](mailto:idony.lisle@bmc.org) for the details of when the next issue will come out. (Tentatively slated for Labor Day.)

A note for the typographically observant: We switched to a different font (Verdana) for our body—please let us know if it's improved readability! (Or if you hate it and want to go back to Friz Quadrata, whatever. We're easy.)

***Miscellaneous Art Credits:***

*Pages 9, 11, 12—Idony Lisle; Pages 3, 10, 13—Andromeda Lisle;  
Page 13—Photo: Hilary K; Page 15—submitted by author*

## **..anxiety (january 22 2021..**

*Mary Phillips*

I fall  
I reach out  
and grasp  
only what is false  
and yet seems  
so real to me  
the anxiety  
comes again and again  
and I try to fight it  
seeing faces  
of those pilgrims  
on a similar journey  
in the battle  
for their lives  
i need the strength of God  
to move on  
to be the one  
shining like the sun  
in these dark days  
life is so precious  
and everyone is a spark  
i need to support  
to encourage  
to be a light  
with all my might  
separating myself  
from my anxiety

and saying no more  
at God's door  
do I lay my plea  
to be free  
to serve him  
and to love  
and not doubt  
and to share  
what I've learned  
not to get burned  
by Satan's wicked schemes  
who means  
to destroy us all  
the darkness that descends  
the silence that ends  
our days  
with this pandemic  
covid 19  
it seems  
can't keep me down  
won't make me frown  
as I work and play  
not to stray  
from the holy word of God.

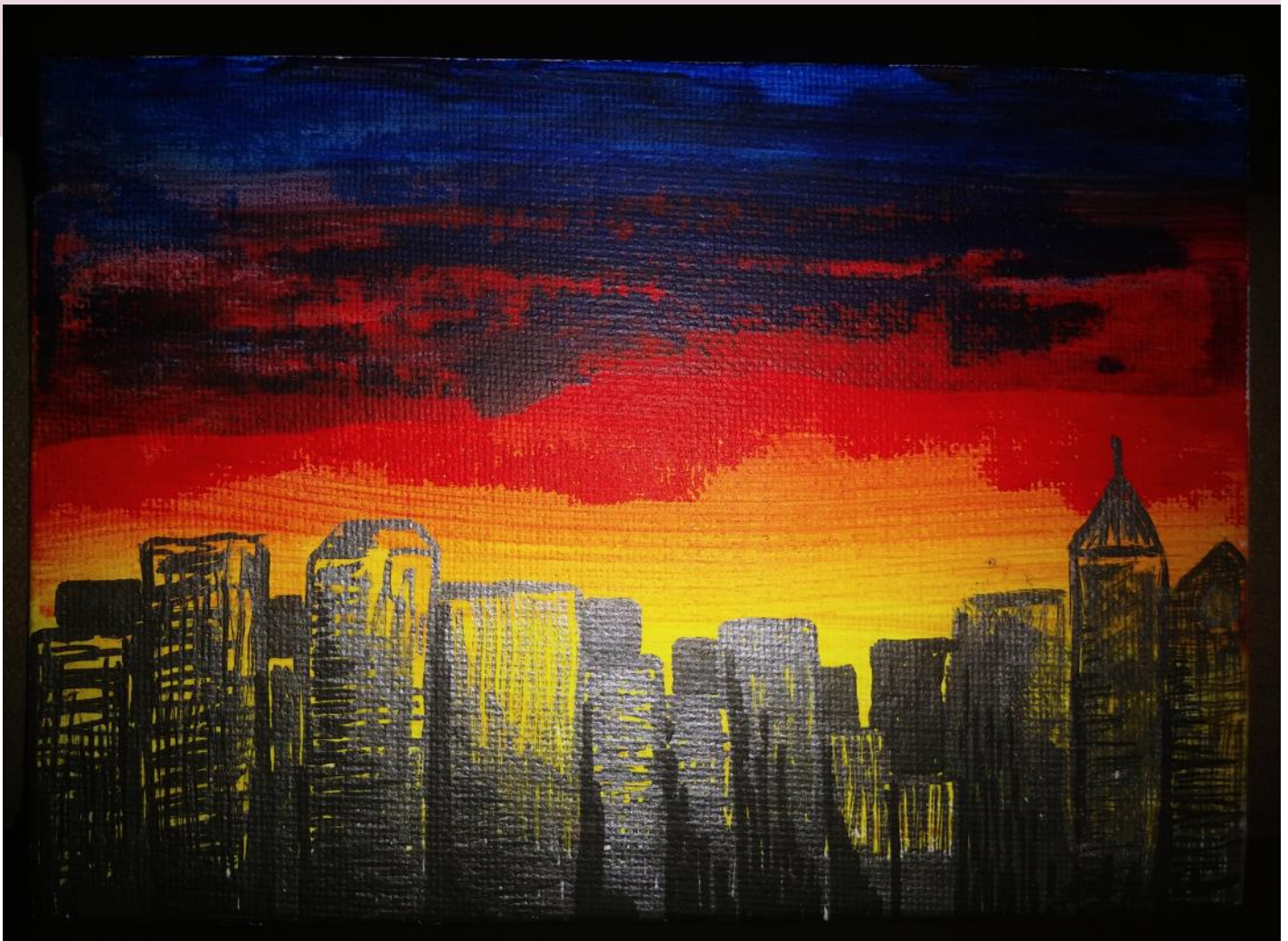


# Peer-Run Programs of NAMI

NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, is the nation's largest grass-roots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. (For important contact information and websites, please see the end of the article.)

NAMI was founded 40 years ago by family members who were having trouble getting access to mental health treatment for their loved ones. Today NAMI has signature programs for family members and friends of people living with mental health issues, as well as those living with a diagnosis of mental illness.

NAMI has developed programs run solely by those who have been diagnosed with a mental illness. We refer to these individuals as "peers." NAMI has found that the peers' empathy and lived experience provide unique insights that can help others cope with difficult and sometimes confusing challenges that come with living with a diagnosis of mental illness.



"Sunset" by Stacy Shorr. 5x7 multimedia on canvas board.



Greater Boston Peer Support and Advocacy Network (PSAN) is such a peer-run organization. Originally known as the NAMI Greater Boston Consumer Advocacy Network, it was founded by peers Howard Trachtman and Kim Holt in 2004. The name change better describes the organization's mission to provide peer support to those with mental illness in the greater Boston area.

In 2014, under the leadership of the director Ewa Pytowska, PSAN has helped NAMI develop the following peer programs in Massachusetts:

**In Our Own Voice speakers' bureau:** NAMI features In Our Own Voice anti-stigma presentations by peers. We are always looking for new venues to speak at and new people to be trained to be presenters. Presentations are done by 2 peers along with a video of culturally and diagnostically diverse peers.

**NAMI Connection Support Groups:** NAMI offers 90-minute structured support groups open to all peers. These groups are facilitated by trained peers who receive a small stipend. Many group members later become facilitators. Currently groups are on Zoom.



### **Peer-to-Peer educational classes:**

This is an 8-week free recovery-focused program for people who wish to establish and maintain their wellness. Taught by trained leaders with lived experience, this program includes activities, discussions, and informative videos. The class values the individual experiences of each person. The participants are empowered to share their own stories and the coping tools that have worked for them.

**Opening Doors to the Arts:** This organization supplies free and discounted tickets to concerts and theater with NAMI support.

**PSAN weekly meetings:** Support staff and volunteers together meet weekly to provide support and learn about current issues and mental health advocacy events around town. To learn more about PSAN including their weekly meetings, contact Howard Trachtman, whose info is at the end of this article.

**Access to current mental health related articles in the rapidly changing mental health field:** For a listing of current articles about mental illness contact Howard Trachtman.

### **Useful Links**

If you need help navigating the mental health system or want information and referral, please contact NAMI Massachusetts COMPASS helpline:

[compass@namimass.org](mailto:compass@namimass.org)

617-704-6264

<https://namimass.org/nami-mass-compass-helpline/>

In Our Own Voice: For more information, see

<https://namimass.org/nami-in-our-own-voice/>

PSAN Groups:

<https://namimass.org/nami-connection-recovery-support-groups/>

Peer-to-Peer: <https://namimass.org/nami-peer-to-peer/>

NAMI Massachusetts is the state chapter located in Charlestown. Their website is [www.namimass.org](http://www.namimass.org). The state office supports local affiliates including Greater Boston Peer Support and Advocacy Network (PSAN).

A monthly business meeting with speakers had been taking place at Center Club monthly before COVID and has been temporarily replaced with a Zoom Speaker Series on the 3rd Thursday of each month from 6:30pm-7:30pm. See more details at <https://www.mbrlc.org/zoom-speaker-series>

(Note several of the groups are sponsored by the Metro Boston Recovery Learning Community, <http://www.mbrlc.org>; see additional support groups at that website.)



NAMI is a membership organization. Regular dues are \$40/year but we also have the "open doors" low income rate of \$5.00.

See <http://www.OpeningDoorsToTheArts.org> or email us at [Info@openingdoorstothearts.org](mailto:Info@openingdoorstothearts.org)

To become a NAMI member, please mail check or money order payable to NAMI Massachusetts and with NAMI PSAN in memo line to:

Howard D. Trachtman, BS, CPS, CPRP, COAPS  
co-founder and President Emeritus  
NAMI Greater Boston Peer Support and Advocacy Network  
776 Main Street #541481  
Waltham, MA 02451



"Castle Island" by Dhyana

# Don't Define Me

*Heidi Lee*

angry asian bitch or  
submissive exotic doll  
which shall I be for you today

anger is not quite the word for it  
built up rage  
within the inferno

but I must wait  
use my words strategically  
for I am allowed less  
than what is necessary

be articulate  
be outstanding  
cover all your bases  
go above and beyond

just to be the norm

and do so with calm  
grace  
and composure

I will do  
what is expected of me

but not because  
you expect me to

I will do it  
because it hurts those Im speaking  
for  
if I don't

and I will do it  
with honesty and  
perhaps even  
humility

in all my rawness,  
I will live out  
before you

my worth  
my value  
my unwillingness  
to remain silent  
come as you will  
join as you please

but do not dare  
stand in my way







## Yankee Spring

*CD Collins*

O my New Englanders, you fib,  
you tell tall tales, you make myths.  
O why do you lie about the weather?  
Why do you say that spring is just  
around the corner. When I first  
moved to Boston from Kentucky, I  
became enraged as the promised  
season failed to materialize. I swore  
at leafless trees, and heirloom furni-  
ture saving parking spaces between  
colossal snow drifts.

And so to you myths: ***Spring  
is just around the corner.***

As though a few green tongues  
slicing up through semi-frozen soil,  
or iron-hard buds poking out like  
thumbs, trying to hitchhike their way  
south, were signs of spring.

Myth Two: ***We have four seasons.***  
We have two seasons.

Season One: **Winter**— an 8 month  
period lasting from November

through June

Followed by a raw stretch of  
....morning showers tapering off to  
snow squalls in the afternoon,  
...scattered thunderstorms moving  
through to make way for steady  
rain,  
...and for the weekend a cold snap  
with brisk sleet showers.

this unpredictable medley is punctu-  
ated by

the blossoming of a lone weeping  
cherry tree,

its sweet pink confetti tumbling  
across the parking lot,

random 90 degree sunny days.

Call these blessings, my friends,  
but do not call them spring.

Season two: **Construction**—



10 weeks of superheated atmospheric inversions and jackhammer dust, a time of desolation in the metropolis when the students leave for Europe, or go sailing on the Cape and the Islands.

Leaving only construction workers wearing hardhats and earplugs,

And scruffy, displaced artists who must sublet their dwellings in

Rockport and Provincetown because they cannot afford the rent in their artists' colonies.

Which leads us to Myth Three: ***We have an Ocean.*** Technically that's true, but one must rise at 5 a.m., drive for two hours to pay \$20 before the parking lot fills up, splash on Skin So Soft to repel the vampirish green heads and no-see-ums which like invisible airborne barracudas gnaw chunks of human flesh.

While lugging your beach chair and cooler along the sandy path,

You will read signs  
admonishing you to

Stay Away

from the dunes, the grass, the trees or any living plants,  
to wear long sleeved white clothing and long white pants  
tucked into white socks inside white tennis shoes.

to continually scan  
for moving freckles

And, obviously, to burn your clothing the moment you  
return home.

These signs have a scolding tone,  
as do the Pollution Indexes warning us to stay inside.



Which seem to shift the blame onto  
us,  
The breathers.

Myth four: ***We have foliage.*** No,  
that one is true. And it's spectacular,  
but you must be quick because the  
appearance of the first flaming ma-  
ple leaf in Boston signals that  
branches are bare in Vermont, Maine  
and New Hampshire. It's all corn-  
flakes on the ground now, my sweet,  
and covered in a foot of snow.

But Spring is just around the  
corner.

Hope is cruel, thus I have de-  
serted it. And now I am at peace, my  
New England. When I hear your mi-  
nor myths: Boston wears an emer-  
ald necklace. Boston is a very livable  
city, or You can just hop on 93 and  
be there in no time...I smile. I know  
now that hand gestures at stop  
lights and flipping over of out-of-  
state vehicles by sports' fans is a  
type of communal theater. "Go Sox,  
Go Patriots!" I yell, honking in  
unison. Now, I love your cappuccinos  
and your concerts, your tabernacles  
and your theaters, your rowdy fans  
and your rivers. Oh my New Eng-  
land, my Boston, my Cambridge, my  
Somerville, my Methuen, my  
Worcester, you awaken spring in my  
Southern heart.



# Medications

*Ishmael Shaheed*

What's your medication?

We're talking about those stimulations that help you ride out life while living.

That help you breathe easier while breathing.

Medications

Whether you're spending hours with the radio on, just listening, that can be another form of medication.

Pacing, walking back and forth thinking, Meditating.

Just naming off different forms of medications.

Patiently waiting while working towards things you will

make happen. Yoga classes, sugar, cigarettes, sex,

water, excessive TV watching, quick to spend money, like

if you had a million dollars in savings.

Medications!

What's absorbing up your conscious?

Boy! What's your medications?

Is it helping? Stabilizing, improving onto whatever you're doing.

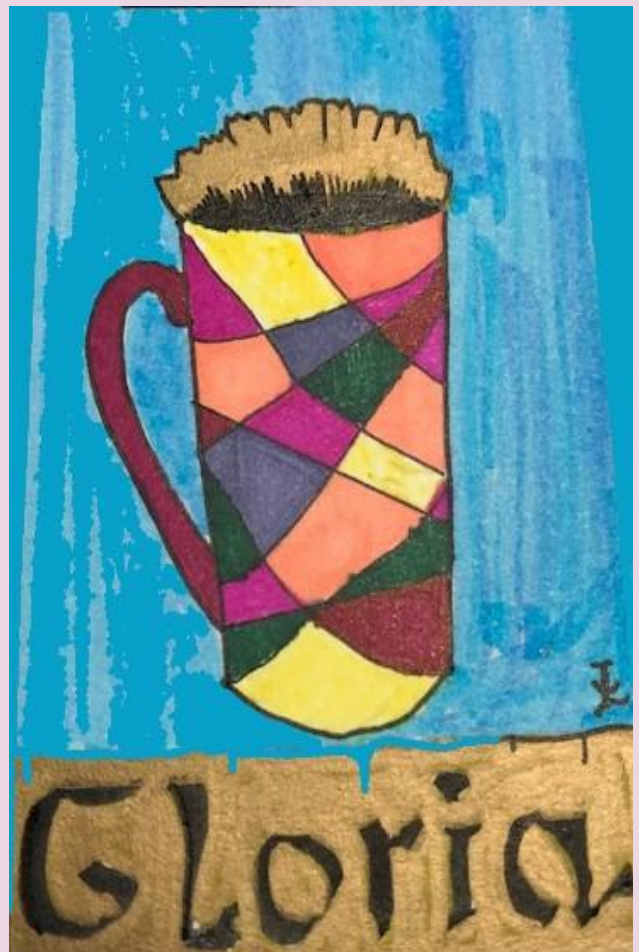
Girl! Why you taking them medications?

If it isn't enhancing your emotions

Increasing comfort, happiness in abundance.

I just hope you're getting better at taking your medication.

So we can keep getting better at taking our Medications.







Chilton and John Winslow, who were pilgrims. By legend,

Mary Chilton was the first passenger to step ashore at Plymouth, so excited that she jumped out of the small boat and waded ashore onto Plymouth Rock. She arrived on the *Mayflower* and would have been present for the time of the first

Thanksgiving. Her

parents passed away in the first winter. Mary married John Chilton, who had arrived on the ship the *Fortune*. He had come from Plymouth to Boston. They had 10 children. So far, our walks each week always turn out to be interesting.

## A Bit of History

*Hilary K.*

As part of our weekly walking group in Boston, we visited the graves of our community member Matt's distant relatives. Six of us from the combined PSAN/ Boston Resource Center Walking Group traveled through the busy streets to arrive at the oldest burial ground in Boston, the King's Chapel Burial Ground. We learned about his relatives Mary



# Untitled

*Jon Gottlieb*

What's wrong with having a mental illness you might say to me.

Don't knock it til' u try it; it can be one big promising history.

It'll make you a better person, even a writer, an expert in the arts.

One thing is for certain; you'll touch a lot of hearts.

You may have your down days; the type you can't control.

Don't worry; you'll meet plenty who will console.

But when you feel better you can't help but to be and feel bold.

It'll take a lot of doing to some people in the fold.

Forget all the innuendo, stigma, talking behind your back.

Stopping the naysayers is not easy when they attack.

Just be yourself as best as you can, turn around and walk away.

Smile, go about your business, and enjoy the rest of your day.

You don't have to be perfect;

don't even need to be great.

Look around and compromise; why just by improvising you will create!

Sickness is just a state of mind.

You can do much if you want.

Be your best friend and others will follow.

Give and take, be free, love, live, converse and borrow.

For its a big broad wonderful world out there from which to share from.

You can do so much.

You're ailments won't keep you back.

Get up and do the very best that you can.

Mind over matter is the healthiest plan.

Empowerment is what you should be shooting for as well as a little healing.

Once you reach even the smallest of goals; that should give you the greatest feeling!



# Last Minute

## I Witness Something Horrible on the Upper West Side of NYC

*Terianne Falcone*



I steal a glance at my art deco Kit-Cat clock, eyes flitting side-to-side in time with the pendulum tail wagging beneath. Yikes. I squeeze myself into my turquoise linen form-fitting dress, wrong for the weather but right for the audition. I throw on my heaviest coat and fur hat, shove aside the Manhattan White Pages on my unmade bed hoping to find my keys — dammit, not there...oh right, my handbag, let me check, YES! — scurry down the narrow orange and yellow painted hallway, cram the last piece of buttered toast in my mouth and grab the script off the coffee-stained kitchen counter.

I run down the four flights of my apartment building and pass my upstairs neighbor and her dog. I tell

her that I can hear that she's dating. She replies, "No, dear. Fucking. Just Fucking." Her Rottweiler shoves me playfully as I continue down the stairs without breaking stride. I'm still laughing when my heels hit the sidewalk.

I move briskly. Weave in and out of people on the sidewalk. The New York Walk. I anticipate potential obstacles and shortcuts and dodge wide-loads — both people and deliveries. Avoid bits of snow that won't last until Christmas. Shoot, haven't even started shopping. Back to the task at hand. Okay, now it's just a left on Broadway, past Best Buy, Payless Shoes and Filene's Basement, then down the steps to the subway. I smell fresh bagels from the corner bakery and then I smell piss. I am tense. I purposely take deep breaths. When will I learn not to spend so much time cuddling with the cats when I wake up. I hustle as fast as my tight uncomfortable pretty two-tone pumps permit. Halfway down the block. I hear the subway coming into the station below. I explode down the street, wincing from shoe pain, bumping into other pedestrians.

Then I halt because I notice that no one else is moving. It's rush hour and no one is stirring.

The man up a bit to my right in a grey suit, the teenager holding a

skateboard on the corner, the career women in business suits and sneakers, a tall guy with a jogging suit, a pair of construction workers: everyone is stock still. There are lots of people on the other side of the street and on all corners of the intersection — all as immobile as a photo. Like a fifties sci-fi movie when an alien has landed and all eyes are fixed.

In the middle of the spectators there's an accident scene.

Well, nothing new, right? Big white van, Domino's pizza bike... one of the delivery boys must have collided with —

Then I see it.

The shoe. A man's black walking shoe. And there's something dark and wet on the ground behind the mangled bike, but the police officers are blocking a clear view of the inky liquid. The last piece of the puzzle comes when I realize how slowly the ambulance staff is working.

I trudge to the subway. I am late for my audition.

There's no hurry.



"Town Diner" by Kim Collins, Acrylic on Canvas, 22 x 28.





By Tony