



The Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention (ATOP)

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International Symposium: Humanitarian Relief in Times of Global Crises: Challenges & Lessons Learned

Eastern Psychological Association Annual Meeting; Boston, MA

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Nicole K. Bulanchuk

What is the impact of natural or human made disasters? What can we do to prepare? How do we engage in helping communities recover after mass trauma? How many kinds of trauma are there? Meaningfulworld's proposal was accepted to deliver a panel discussion on the impact of disasters, and discuss multiple challenges facing us in recovery, and humanitarian relief service. Our symposium at the Eastern Psychological Association annual meeting addressed these and many other questions to address multiple collective traumas facing us locally and globally. Our symposium addressed ***Humanitarian Relief in Times of Global Crisis: Challenges and Lessons Learned***. COVID-19 pandemic continues to bring about massive devastation in both physical and psychological wellbeing across the globe.

Close to 7-million people worldwide have died from the virus. Significant, too, has been the psychological toll of lockdowns, loss, economic insecurity, and social isolation, with noted increases in levels of stress, anxiety, depression, suicide, drug abuse, violence, and uncertainty. In many regions of the world this was also compounded by increasing intergroup conflict, war, displacement, and natural disasters. During the symposium, numerous banners of positive messages that MeaningfulWorld has nurtured around the world were displayed around the room; as well as a small table with Dr. Kalayjian's publications, MeaningfulWorld literature, flower remedies, and essential oils.

Dr. Kalayjian invited **Ms. Nicole Bulanchuk**, M.A. to assist in presenting on ATOP MeaningfulWorld's efforts in Armenia. Ms. Bulanchuk began our discussion on humanitarian relief missions in Armenia during 2019 and 2021, focused on developing, implementing, evaluating the suicide prevention lifeline. The audience was engaged, and after the presentation, there was a lively discussion featuring several questions regarding the research findings of the Armenia sample.



We then showed the YouTube video of ATOP MeaningfulWorld's humanitarian missions in Haiti. Dr. Kalayjian spent a bit of time discussing the 7-step Integrative Healing Model. This model helps us to heal our minds, bodies, spirit, and mother earth and is the only psychological model that integrates ecology, spirituality, and forgiveness. Dr. Kalayjian emphasized using this model in MeaningfulWorld's work in Armenia, Haiti, and in 50 countries and 26 states in our humanitarian missions, as well as locally in our free, virtual, weekly support groups, and monthly educational workshops. Especially when these missions must address the impacts of earthquakes, hurricanes, natural disasters, and human-made disasters like war, genocide, and terrorism, which influence individuals' mental health and well-being in areas all over the world. Because of the trauma associated with the work in Haiti particularly, Dr. Kalayjian also demonstrated how to use herbal healing oils and flower remedies and shared them with attendees, so that they could try for themselves. Indeed, immediately following the Haiti presentation, another meaningful discussion sparked by attendees, particularly about traumatic responses and mental



health care of volunteers during and after humanitarian missions. Dr. Kalayjian utilized her expertise in trauma to discuss its impact and applicability in humanitarian work. She led the discussion regarding how MeaningfulWorld supports volunteers before, during, and after all humanitarian missions.

Dr. Chris Steet from the UK Psychology Center was our discussant and shared his thoughts and remarks at the end of presentation of the symposium. Dr. Street discussed forgiveness and how it relates to MeaningfulWorld's work with humanitarian issues worldwide. With the attendees engrossed in the content, Dr. Kalayjian moved into briefly discussing MeaningfulWorld's humanitarian mission in Nigeria. Dr. Kalayjian concluded with photographs from the humanitarian mission and inspirational messages that there is much more work to be done in these areas, but MeaningfulWorld will continue their important, lifesaving efforts.

