

## Call out for Submissions!

### SCARSONGS

#### - An Anthology Articulating the Terrain of Trauma and Resilience

Trauma matters.

When safety and connection are shattered, when we live through pain and horror, when we experience mutual support and resilience, fault lines erupt across our lives and divide our communities. Exploring the fallout is not a sign of weakness; it is an essential part of preparing to rejoin struggles for sanity, peace, and liberation. When we spend time healing and articulating the contours of our experience, we become capable of illuminating the way for others and building a movement that can sustain itself in the long term.

We believe it is time for a reader that tells our stories and gathers our poems, radiates with our art and speaks our thoughts. Understanding and being able to relate, calling out and hearing other voices can help us to find individual and collective strength in the face of political, ecological, social and personal trauma.

Your input can be very valuable to other people.

This project is a collaboration of the Icarus project, the Bay Area Radical Mental Health Collective, and Activist Trauma Support. Our aim is to create a beautiful, creative, readable document about trauma and resilience, drawing from a diversity of communities and backgrounds and addressing a wide range of topics and experiences. We invite submissions in a range of formats, including, but not limited to, essays, interviews, stories, poems, songs, illustrations, photographs, paintings, and collage.

We understand trauma as self-defined and submissions can stay anonymous if desired.

The deadline for submissions is March 21st, 2010. You can also send us your ideas and ask for feedback.

For more info and submissions, email: [scarsongs@gmail.com](mailto:scarsongs@gmail.com)

[www.activist-trauma.net](http://www.activist-trauma.net)

[www.theicarusproject.net](http://www.theicarusproject.net)

[www.radicalmentalhealth.net](http://www.radicalmentalhealth.net)

### 10 good reasons why trauma matters in political activism:

**1. We're not immune:** We are behind the mainstream, which has long taken the issue seriously. Many of us still think we're not affected by traumatic experiences and that we don't carry all the shit we have lived through around with us. The truth is that we are human beings and our systems react to distress just like everybody else's.

**2. It can sabotage us:** Trauma impacts our ability to be efficient in our work and get along with each other. Developmental trauma (the way we have been shaped by hardship in upbringing and society) plays out in the way we behave in meetings, collectives, actions, demos... We have great ideas but are often stuck in deeply entrenched, unhelpful patterns of behavior. Raising our awareness around trauma can help us to align our behavior with our intentions and to free up a lot of energy.

**3. We care!** About the planet and its people, and especially about our comrades. We don't want to leave them alone when they are suffering; we want them to feel our support. When

somebody feels held, they are more able to really show up, connect with the people in their lives, invest their energy in the work, and take risks.

**4. Knowledge is power:** Understanding traumatic responses can help us understand dynamics in ourselves, in our groups and collectives, and even in wider society. Trauma patterns are also prevalent in history, especially regarding systemic oppression and internalized oppression. Integrating the lens of trauma into our grasp of history and the present moment is essential so that we can break the cycles and move beyond history repeating itself.

**5. More resilient movements:** After a shock trauma (meaning a intense traumatic experience) people can be unable to function for a long period of time. If we help each other and ourselves heal, we can move through it. If we ignore it, the symptoms will last longer, people will suffer more, often ending up disillusioned and leaving political work.

**6. Taking care of the whole person:** Though wounds from traumatic experiences are not always visible, they are often more painful than physical ones. They are also often accompanied with great shame and guilt. We need a paradigm shift that takes us into account as whole people and that supports taking care of ourselves.

**7. Trauma work is radical!** One – Social transformation goes along with personal transformation. One without the other is bound to fail. Two - If we believe in mutual aid, it needs to include a basic understanding of trauma and social context, so that we can support others and ourselves effectively. Three – trauma work challenges old and often gendered belief systems and messages like “just tough it out”, “pull yourself together”, “boys don’t cry”, “women do the emotional work”, etc. and gives us a chance to come up with new ways of behaving.

**8. You’re not alone:** When we acknowledge trauma, we don’t have to take everything personally anymore. Our psychobiological systems react to stress. It’s normal. It does not mean we are weak or bad activists. Just imagine how much more powerful we can be if we can do away with identifying with our symptoms and focus on healing them instead.

**9. Becoming strong:** Healing from trauma can be empowering for yourself and the people around you. Working your way through it can give you greater perspective, meaning and strength. Especially if you feel supported throughout the process. Stronger people make stronger movements.

**10. Compassion is a muscle:** Exercising this muscle is crucial on our way towards social transformation. It counters the destructive socialization of western civilization that teaches us to avoid strong feelings and isolate, withdraw, consume, and become alienated. And it builds our capacity for a felt sense of safety and connection that fuels our collective strength in the struggle.