

# RESEARCH IN PAIN

BY SALLY CAMPBELL GALMAN ★

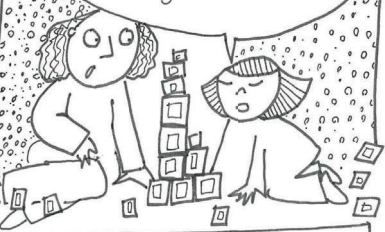
I recently took a data collection trip to Chicago to spend time with the transgender children in my study\* and their families.



The kids and their families greeted me with smiles and hugs, and open arms, like ALWAYS.



We played... "This kid at school says that the new president will kill all the transgender people."



... and we talked. "She has been waking up at night, with nightmares, afraid the president is going to make her be a boy."



BUT THE THING IS: MY STUDY IS ABOUT RESILIENCE, not terror, not trans kids and families as victims of policy. NOT those SAD STORIES.



At least until last November - but I am still finding the same strength... EVERYWHERE the children are.



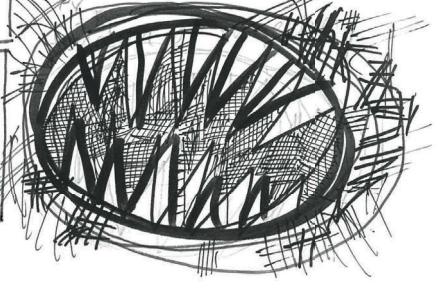
And it is still the story I am hearing and telling. Here's me at the big protest!



BUT THE other STORY is there and it HURTS

And I am not really used to talking about PAIN as a part of

RESEARCH, as part of the researcher's ROLE to absorb it, or as a part of subjectivity.



\*generously supported by the Spencer Foundation

I left the kids' homes that night and turned on the radio and I cried the whole way home in the darkness.



My child is also trans. So that is also part of it.

It is not pity or romantic adultism or unchecked, wild sentimentality. It is real PAIN. And I feel the guilt and the indulgence and the horror of it.



I collected data from before the U.S. election, through the campaign...

The participant experiences were overwhelmingly positive—a rosy future ahead for transgender kids...

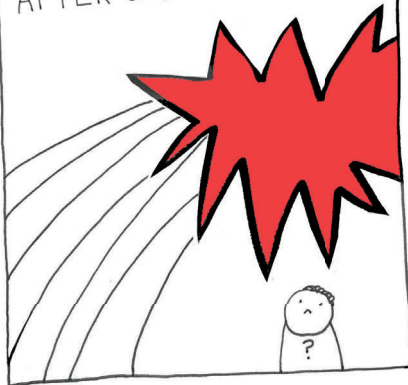


It felt like an instant—when it was interrupted...



The positive trajectory wasn't destroyed—but the skies got a hell of a lot darker.

So, I got to learn about BEFORE and AFTER and DURING the



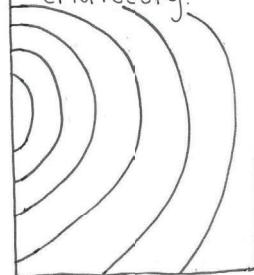
MOMENT OF IMPACT

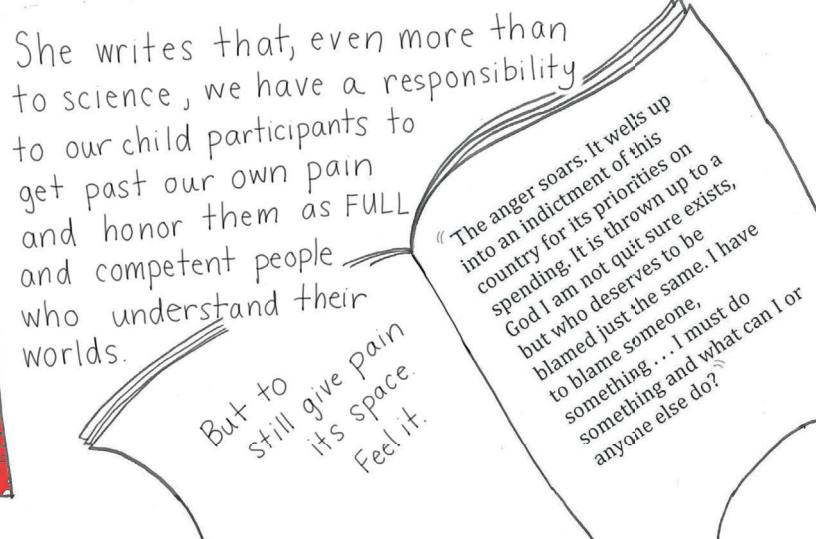
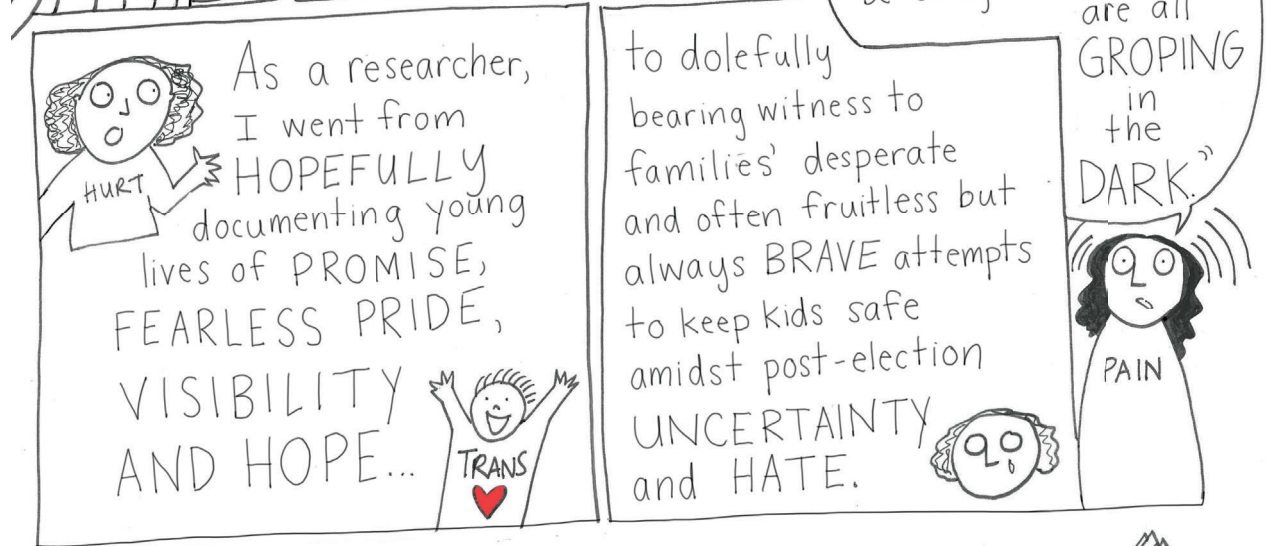
and all that followed.

And now I go over and over it like some kind of Zapruder film of our HIGH SPEED COLLISION WITH HATE.



And even so, the shock waves keep coming endlessly.

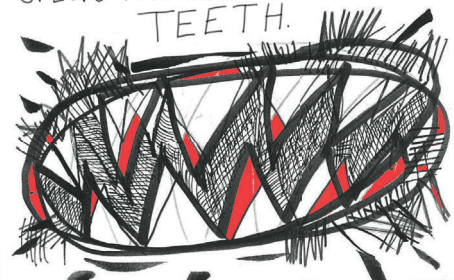




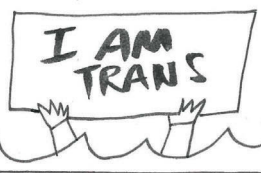
Of course, the children in my study are not dying- They are resilient even in the face of these events. BUT they are not as safe as we thought, or as we imagined.

As researchers, many of us are more used to UNCOVERING and UNMASKING inequalities, shining LIGHT on OPPRESSION.

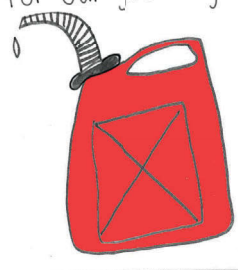
BUT now it is utterly UNMASKED and my training has not prepared me for what to do when the lion's mouth OPENS AND BARES ITS TEETH.



As Douthat (2017) observes, this populism will certainly be brought down by its own chaos and incompetence — but watching children in its rising waters is painful.



Kenji Miazawa wrote, "We must embrace pain and BURN it as FUEL for our journey."



Under the best circumstances, Research takes stamina and FUEL, and we must also use pain to resist the tendency to NORMALIZE JUSTICE

And this is shaping up to be a long journey.

