today:tomorrow

ESSAY ONE: **EMERGING CIVIL SOCIETY THEMES**

"GETTING ON WITH IT" IS NOT AS EASY AS IT SOUNDS

Just a few months into 2021, it sometimes feels as if the year has already been endless. We were all so anxious to put the *annus horribilis* of 2020 behind us, but now we are discovering that we may be in the most challenging phase yet for individuals and organizations: the all-important "getting on with it" period. Whereas the past year was about collective adrenaline, family and work logistics, mourning, and pandemic response, now we need to inventory all the other pressing issues on our public and personal agendas. What has become too urgent to ignore any longer? Which issues have disappeared from the collective consciousness and need to be reintroduced?

In talking with NGOs and others, my colleagues and I have detected a great "shuffle" of priorities in 2021. Some NGOs tell us they feel they are fighting not just the usual noise of politics and misinformation but also "issue fatigue" and complacency. People are exhausted. Tired of bad news, of worrying—of feeling as though the world is inexorably moving toward some sort of cataclysmic conclusion. And even resentful that they are being asked to deal with "yet another" challenge. Isn't a global existential threat enough?

The only thing that is crystal clear from 2021's first few months is that this is a year that offers no straightforward pathway for advocacy. For those seeking to engage with and activate civil society, I recommend taking time to mull over these emerging themes:

COVID INEQUALITY AS THE "GREAT EQUALIZER"

The victory of billionaire capitalism resulting from the pandemic pushed inequality out of the traditional political lens. A once-partisan issue has crossed party lines as people have gotten an up-close look at disparities related to wealth, healthcare access, and personal safety. The fact that a universal basic income is even being discussed in the U.S. shows just how far the pendulum has shifted.

RESIGNED TO REMOTE

Remember when digital transformation promised innovation and social good? After a year of corporations and governments being run from couches and kitchen tables, much of the promise of our digital world seems to have given way to concerns over privacy, balance, and diminished creativity. Digital transformation now feels a bit like a forced bear hug from the big tech companies—leaving many resigned to make the best of it rather than invent something better. What needs to happen to fix this?

GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

For far too long, mental health was (at best) a secondary global health topic, pushed to the background if spoken about at all. Now it is front and center, considered a vital aspect of our pandemic defense—for citizens and companies—and sitting atop policy discussions. How can brands contribute to smart solutions?

CLIMATE ACTIVISM TO BIOREALISM

As acceptance of climate change science rises worldwide, a key challenge is ensuring that urgency and alarm not turn to resignation. The celebrated architect Richard Neutra defined *biorealism* as "the inherent and inseparable relationship between man and nature." As concepts such as greenvesting and energy innovation move deeper into the belly of our systems, how do we ensure the spirit of activism and embrace of biorealism remain?

A HYPERPOLARIZED WORLD

The divisions of the Trump era extended far beyond the USA. Globally, politicians and policymakers are rethinking alliances and whether to genuflect to or attempt to thwart the rising dominance of China. Even as the global consensus coming out of the pandemic is that we live in an interdependent world, it is one where walls are easily erected and borders quickly closed.

HOW DO YOU ESG—REPRIMAND OR REWARD?

Environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG) measures pop as a priority issue for very different reasons around the world. ESG's day has come as a global force for progress and collaboration. But in Europe, ESG most often is discussed in terms of regulation and compliance. In the U.S., it's about opportunity, reputation, and leadership. On both continents, people are quick to call out signs of hypocrisy or "greenwashing"—with some critics responding punitively

and others taking the opportunity to educate and correct. For brands, the trick will be to engage consumers in the process—and progress.

Though there will always be potential complications, unexpected pairings of and approaches to social issues offer fresh opportunities for communication and brand-building strategies. And, most vitally, for change.

ESSAY TWO: **UNCIVIL SOCIETY MUSINGS**

PUTTING HATE INTO PERSPECTIVE

On social media and beyond, there has been a growing trend of prominent people and even low-profile newsmakers being subjected to hostility, hateful abuse, and worse. Threats of violence and even death used to be the province of criminals. Now they have become commonplace in the wider population. Obscene screeds and blood-curdling threats are posted not only by the usual parade of outrage merchants but also by regular people. And their targets range from world leaders to the teenager next door. Even Dr. Anthony Fauci, head of the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, says he has had to beef up security after receiving death threats.

It is far from a uniquely American phenomenon. Reports of hate speech and threats are on the rise in France, Germany, Sweden, and other European countries, prompting Europol to coordinate a clampdown on online hate speech and incitement to violence. Hate also looms large in Australia, India, and Myanmar. In fact, there are few countries where hate in one form or another is absent from the media and public discourse. It's a global phenomenon, and it increasingly feels like a crisis.

Still, it is important to keep a sense of proportion. Despite all the vitriol your social media feed may be serving up, the evidence indicates that the world is not living through a particularly hate-filled period. Quite the opposite, according to some.

The prominent intellectual Steven Pinker has assembled extensive empirical evidence to argue that hostile and hateful behavior is far less common now than ever before. That claim may run counter to your own perspective and experiences. It may seem like unsubstantiated optimism coming from a person in a privileged position. For many people, such a rosy view of our present circumstances flies in the face of the constant stream of hate and suffering we see in the news. The apparent mismatch between the cold empirical evidence gathered by an academic and the hot news pushed out by the media has prompted hostility toward the Pinkerian "things are getting better" view. Many are convinced that societies have become more mired in hostility and hatred.

No wonder.

There are all those video clips of people shouting at each other or ranting to the camera, some of it making its way onto broadcast media. There are the millions of mean memes. There are the angry, threatening comments, the reports of other people making angry, threatening comments, and the discussions about reports of people making angry, threatening comments. And there are the extremes of hostility and hate manifested in events such as mass shootings, terrorist attacks, and political violence. Video images make the impact more shocking and the emotion more visceral. Thanks to smartphones, dashcams, and bodycams, it is all instantly documented. Nobody has to seek out graphic scenes of deadly violence—they're inescapable online. Because of humans' cognitive bias (the availability heuristic), all of these images amplify negative emotions and create the impression that hostility and hate are everywhere.

So, are hostility and hate really in long-term decline, or are they just metastasizing in different forms?

In the workplace and in most of our home communities, too, we see little evidence that hostility and hate are any more prevalent than they used to be.

My colleagues and I at PMI are experiencing this question from both sides. With our emphasis on assembling solid bodies of empirical data to guide our decisions, we can take a big picture view of the situation with a cooler gaze. We can see that violent hostility and hate are less pervasive than they might appear from media reports. In the workplace and in most of our home communities, too, we see little evidence that hostility and hate are any more prevalent than they used to be.

In contrast, in our capacity as PMI staffers, many of us have faced significant hostility and contempt. We must acknowledge that there are historical reasons for this. We must recognize that even as we invest the bulk of our efforts in creating a smoke-

[Some critics] share our goal of addressing the problem of smoking, but they fail to acknowledge how our presence in combustibles is funding the development of better alternatives and providing access to the very smokers we wish to convert to better choices.

free future—a future in which cigarettes have been replaced by better alternatives for those adults who would otherwise have continued to smoke—there are critics who demand nothing less than instant change. Smoke-free future? Why not a smoke-free present? Why not get rid of cigarettes today, this instant? They share our goal of addressing the problem of smoking, but they fail to acknowledge how our presence in combustibles is funding the development of smoke-free alternatives and providing access to the very smokers we wish to convert to better choices than continued smoking. Some of these people believe, incorrectly, that the only good tobacco company is a closed-down tobacco company, that the only good tobacco executive is one who has quit the industry, and that the only way to achieve these ends is by being implacably hostile toward PMI and its employees.

My most recent experience of this came from the Netherlands. I was invited to give the keynote at an annual Dutch trends event ("Together to get there") to discuss my "Zoomsday" predictions for 2021—nothing whatsoever to do with tobacco. Within hours of the event program being announced, I was canceled by media partner Adformatie. Hostile pressure from a small but vocal group on social media prevailed over reason and fact. As hostility goes, this was a long way from the worst anyone has experienced. Just another day at the office.

Experiences such as this make me no less committed to working at PMI to help transform the company and create a smoke-free future. On the contrary, they fuel my passion to communicate our mission and progress more persuasively. Like all PMI people, I must accept that honoring this commitment means I will inevitably face blasts of hostility and hatred. As long as it's no worse than cold shoulders and online insults, I can take it. It is a small price to pay for transforming the company and helping to put cigarettes behind us.

APRIL 2021

Marian Salzman

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS
PHILIP MORRIS INTERNATIONAL

MARIAN IN THE MEDIA

Forbes

From Y2K to Y2038 to Yleavethehouse
The marketing opportunities of the next decades will be tied to creating fresh ways to meet people's hunger for connection and community, emotion and beauty.

Marketing Through the Pandemic
COVID-19 has created a whole new ecosystem in which marketers can play.

What Alex Trebek and Jeopardy! Can Teach Us About Marketing
There is much we can learn as human beings and marketers from Alex's grace, humor, and audience engagement.

Medium

Building Trust and Ceding Control
My thoughts on the lessons that prepared me for my third brain surgery in 14 years.

FOX BUSINESS

IWD 2021: Let's Be the Difference and Ask, 'Can We Help?'
My colleague Suzanne Rich Folsom and I consider how to make things better, easier, saner for the young women who seek to follow in our footsteps.

marian salzman.com

click here to register for the **today:** tomorrow newsletter