

*The #MeToo Movement, the school shootings, the race riots and the pandemic have created havoc with the American way of life and unhinged not only the US, but us as a family. Americans are experiencing major mental health problems with all the chaos.*

## **US Unhinged**

By Dr. Shila Patel, M.D.

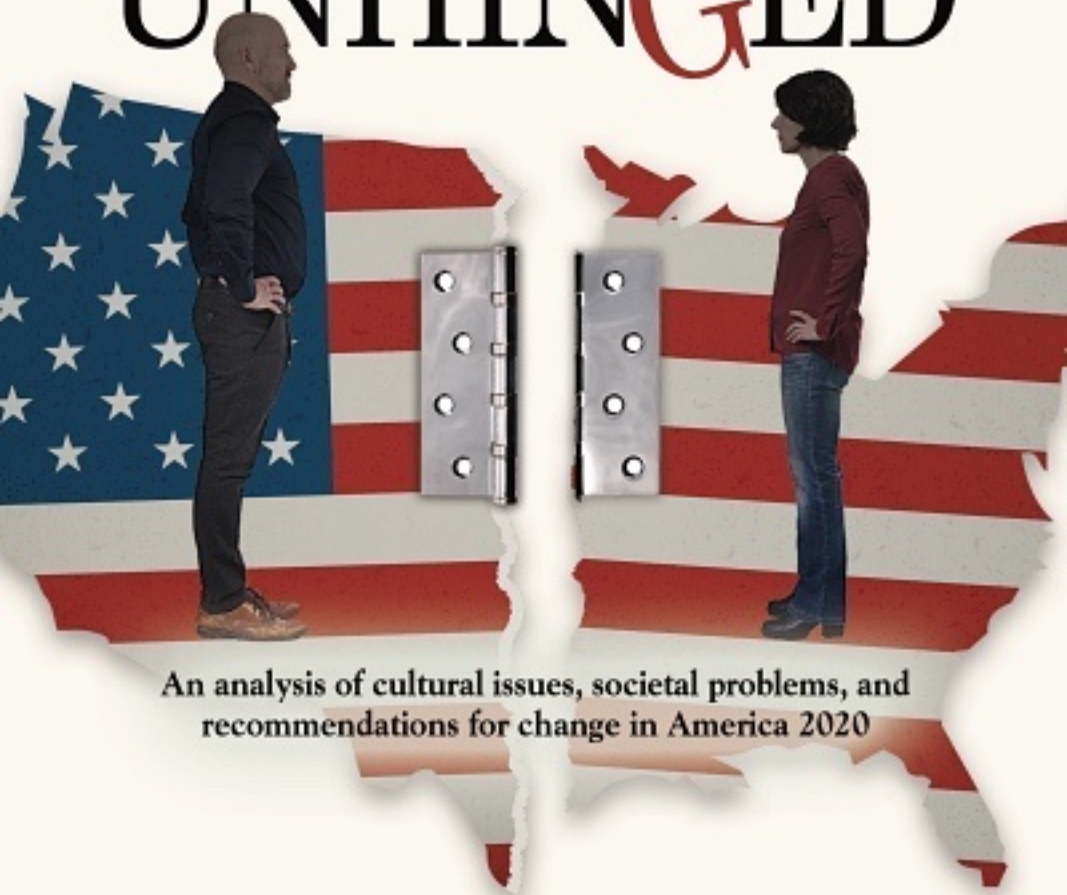
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Understanding the chaos and navigating the turbulence in our society,  
while learning how to thrive within our family and community today.

# US UNHINGED



An analysis of cultural issues, societal problems, and  
recommendations for change in America 2020

Dr. Shila Patel, M.D.

Dr. Patel presents a wide variety of current issues of American society. The thought-provoking topics offer a basis for discussions and in-depth analysis of modern culture.

- Judith Toscano RN. MSN Clinical System Analyst

I much appreciate how Dr. Patel unpacks her insightful, multinational approach and how it helps her reader gain a bigger picture view on the issues plaguing our collective society today. These are important topics that everyone needs to gain perspective on and to truly think about; I find this work to be timely, educational, and thought provoking.

- Jenifer M Brand, CMRP,  
Engineering Development Laboratory Manager

Dr. Patel takes you on a journey exploring the problems exhibited in American families today while offering a historical perspective and positive solutions for change. Her analysis of the workplace provides a look back at the widespread awakening of sexual abuse, discrimination, and the associated legal ramifications. Dr. Patel's sincere interest in analyzing the current, most severe sociological problems in the United States is to bring about change for a more compassionate, intelligent, and forward-thinking society. She attacked every problem with rigorous analysis, and most notably, offered recommendations. Dr. Patel is challenging all of us to reach for a higher standard of civility, morality, and responsibility to ourselves, our families, and our fellow citizens.

- Arthur D. Gottlieb, Retired Queensbury Middle School  
Principal, Queensbury, New York

US Unhinged delves into relevant challenges facing society today. Instead of turning to fear tactics, Dr. Patel turns to pragmatism and provides a language for important conversations; understanding how we got here and how we get out. Dr. Patel offers a dialogue rich in research and clinical experience.

- Catherine Kozen, Director Marketing & mom of 2

Dr. Patel's autobiography and perspective of our current American society illustrates and embodies the New American Dream. She is an immigrant from the third world; a woman of color who has faced and overcome immense challenges. Yet has maintained her levelheaded and fair-minded approach to life. For both the young and old, her ideas are a roadmap to acquire skills and achieve a mindset to face and overcome the challenges of our society.

- Paul Miller, Retired teacher

This book is wonderfully insightful, enlightening, frightening, and very sad in places. It has relevance today as it addresses many subjects from a professional, rather than a politically biased, individual's viewpoints. Everyone would benefit from reading it but especially parents. As a grandmother, all parts relating to children resonated with me. As I read the book, I found myself wishing my son and his wife were reading along with me. I gained insight and knowledge with a better understanding of what is happening in our country today. This is a very good book that hopefully, will reach many, many readers.

- Nancy Bray

*US Unhinged*

I found *US Unhinged* engrossing. This book has so much relevance today. It doesn't matter how talented or rich you believe you are. It's how you treat people. Integrity is everything. I have benefitted greatly from reading this book. I am hoping to be more tolerant and respectful with my daughter and 17-year-old granddaughter, who was adopted from China at the age of 18 months and has a lot of problems. The book made me realize that your life is shaped by the decisions you make and have made, not by the ones you didn't. We all need to adopt a better understanding of people and their problems and appreciate our differences.

- Angela Paporello

I loved it! This is a book I would keep in my night table by my bed. The chapters are self-contained, and it is not necessary to read them in order. I was definitely challenged but felt I agree or have a similar belief system as the author, Dr. Patel. I felt the section on loneliness is very appropriate at this time with social distancing and self-quarantine during the pandemic.

- Gloria Ragonetti

# **US UNHINGED**

Understanding the chaos and navigating the turbulence in our society, while learning how to thrive within our family and community today.

An analysis of cultural issues, societal problems, and recommendations for change in America 2020.

**Dr. Shila Patel, M.D.**

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# **Chapter Summaries**

## **Part 1 – Personal and Professional Journeys**

### **A Personal Journey**

What is it that defines us and gives meaning to our existence? My journey began when my father decided to leave India at a young age. Our family has lived on four continents, from India to Africa, then to Great Britain, and finally to Florida in the United States. Experiences from growing up in the Eastern Indian culture and working professionally in the Western world have defined me as the woman I am today.

### **Introduction**

Can we, as Americans, examine the ills that exist today and work together to create a healthier, more compassionate society for tomorrow's citizens? This analysis refers to all people, from the youngest to the oldest, promoting discipline, education, work ethic, family support, physical and mental health care for all, and respect for all human rights. This book is a sociological study of our American society today. It presents a discussion in understanding what has happened in our culture. Why have these beliefs and events transpired? How do we move forward to a more informed, compassionate, and disciplined society?

### **A Professional Journey**

How did I end up practicing as a child, adolescent, and adult psychiatrist? A review of these professional insights is presented. This knowledge has inspired me to examine and offer solutions to the ills of American society that plague us today.

## **Part 2 – Human Emotions**

### **The Biochemistry of Emotions**

Lust, Love, and Attachment

### **An Emotional Spectrum**

A review of how the body functions in response to human emotions is presented. Human behavior revolving around sexual and non-sexual relationships helps us form healthy and productive life partnerships and friendships. There are significant differences between male and female brains that affect our thoughts and experiences. Both physical and psychological studies of the human condition are explored. Topics discussed include:

Heartbreak

Loneliness

How to Deal with Loneliness

For a Better Marriage, Act Like a Single Person

Happiness

Laughter

Negative Emotions

## **Part 3 - Enough is Enough - Get Over It**

### **Changing the Culture**

What will it take for future generations to change from being self-centered with unrealistic expectations and minimal skills, while experiencing unhealthy emotions, to learn how to acquire the ethics of loyalty, character, and American sacrifice? The focus is on changing our future generations' personal attitudes to transform the inner and outer aspects of their lives. Why did the Black Lives Matter Movement cause so much chaos?

### **The “Do-Gooders”**

Many well-meaning people want to “do the right thing.” They propose changes but inflict and propagate their agendas without fully understanding the consequences or ramifications on society. The range of issues includes parenting, the education system, dealing with mental health, gun violence, corporate greed, student debt, climate change, corruption in the government, allocation of funds, religion, end of life decisions, pro-life issues and abortion, marriage, overpopulation, and resource allocation.

### **Sexual Abuse and Molestation**

When does sexual “banter” get out of control? How do victims deal with abuse and molestation? How have the church and society dealt with emotionally laden issues? Well-known athletes, celebrities, and medical professionals have been affected. What changes in behavior and thought processes can we anticipate for the future?

### **The #MeToo Movement**

Why was this movement started? What are the changes and resulting consequences that have occurred? Has enough light been shed on this issue to make permanent changes in the way men and women respect each other?

### **Men Accused of Sexual Misconduct**

A review of judicial cases related to the sexual misconduct of men, including prominent men who have also made contributions to society, and other individuals, when charged, had a long history of sexually abusive behaviors towards women in their professions.

## **Part 4 - Moving Forward**

### **The Raising of Girls and Boys**

An understanding of the biological differences in the brains of males and females is presented. Historical aspects regarding raising girls and boys are reviewed. Different parenting skills are explored and analyzed, in addition to suggestions on how to bring up an emotionally healthy child.

### **An Historical Perspective**

Differences in the way males and females have been treated in ancient Christianity, Asian Indian cultures, China, Japan, and Egypt are explored. Issues are addressed to provide perspective, and an analysis of what to expect in the future, regarding male/female relationships.

### **The Yin and the Yang**

Understanding the relationship between males and females from older traditions and how these values have served humanity well over the centuries are explored. Forward movement is usually positive but forgetting the past can have devastating consequences.

### **Sexual Behaviors and Why They Bond Men and Women**

#### **Friends with Benefits**

What is the purpose of sexual behaviors and what are some of the benefits of sexual activities? What changes are occurring in society regarding sexual behaviors?

### **Hope for Women and Society**

There are a lot of positive changes that have come about in our lifetime. Let us focus on them and foster these changes. We cannot let a few misguided individuals detract us. There is a lot of hope that things can get better for everyone if we get past the distorted thinking and anger.

### **Last Thoughts to Ponder**

Included are some personal issues highlighting some topics discussed throughout the book and how they affected my life. It is a challenge to move forward positively, rather than focus on negative aspects of life that leave humans feeling hopeless and pessimistic.

## **Epilogue: February 2020 in the United States –**

### **The Arrival of a Foreign Visitor, Coronavirus COVID-19**

All the cultural issues and problems in American society discussed in the preceding chapters of this book may or may not exist any longer. Our world, as we once knew it, has completely shut down due to the deadly virus, COVID-19.

### **During the Coronavirus Pandemic of 2020**

A comparison of this pandemic to past pandemics: How did this one start? How did the US government and Americans deal with this disaster? How did other countries perform in comparison to the US? What were our shortfalls? How did Americans feel while being challenged by the pandemic? What did people do to assist others?

### **After the Coronavirus Pandemic of 2020**

Lessons learned from other countries dealing with the pandemic are reviewed. Why did the countries with female leaders do better? Why is America #1 in the greatest number of infections and deaths? What is the emotional toll of the pandemic? What do we have to do better as a society? What happened in America due to poor leadership dealing with the pandemic? How should government officials prepare us for such future disasters? How will life change after the pandemic? What were the benefits in climate change due to the pandemic? What will people remember, and who will be affected the most from the pandemic? What will change within us and the US after the pandemic?

## **Acknowledgements**

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## **A Personal Journey**

My family history is no different from that of millions of others who decided to immigrate to the United States of America. Our journey was not a simple one, from India to Kenya, East Africa to Zambia, to Great Britain in Europe and then finally, to the state of Florida in America. Our story began when my father, Chhotubhai, known as C.N. all his life, was born in Pardi-Nogama, India, a small village of twenty-five houses in 1929. His name was shortened because non-Indians had difficulty pronouncing it correctly. In that same year, Jawaharlal Nehru was president of the Indian National Congress. Nehru called for complete independence from the British Raj, British rule.<sup>1</sup> In 1942, at the age of thirteen years, my father attended the congressional convention with his father, where Mahatma Gandhi delivered his “Quit India Speech.” Gandhi made this speech to foster support for a resolution, whereby the British would quit, leave India after almost two hundred years of rule. Gandhi stated that he believed “in the history of the world, there has not been a more genuine democratic struggle for freedom than ours.”<sup>2</sup> Other famous leaders in attendance on that momentous day, August 8, 1942, were Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai, and many other renowned congressional members.<sup>3</sup>

The following year, my father’s mother passed away. He moved in with his older sister who resided in a large city. During this time in India, Gandhi and his supporters pushed through their policy of non-violence, civil disobedience, and other campaigns to free India. My father focused on his studies and graduated from high school in 1947. It was an extraordinary year. Finally, after a tumultuous struggle, the Parliament of the United Kingdom passed the Indian Independence Act of 1947. British India was partitioned into two independent states of India and Pakistan.<sup>4</sup>



During this period, my father's older brother had already left India and settled in Kenya, East Africa. He sent my father a Kenyan work permit. As British subjects, Indians were able to leave India and settle in British colonies. My father was determined to leave India and secured a British passport. Less than a month after India became an independent nation on August 15, 1947, my father demonstrated outstanding courage. He left India with a friend and set sail for East Africa to join his brother. He was eighteen years old with twelve dollars in his pocket. The two friends traversed the ocean in the Amra steamer ship, which provided basic transportation and accommodations between India and Kenya. Their journey lasted twelve days, and they arrived in Mombasa, on the eastern shores of Kenya, East Africa.

My father had an amazing sense of adventure to take such an arduous journey at this time. This was before the time of cell phones, internet, GPS and even the land lines were very limited in Africa. He was not familiar with the geography of the world nor had knowledge about the available methods of transportation for travel. He had the will to complete the journey at a very young age. Back then, he understood that this was his chance to get out of extreme poverty. If he stayed in India, he would have been competing for employment with about 200 million other people. Somehow, he made his way over from a coastal port to Nakuru, in the Rift Valley of Kenya. His older brother was living and working there. Initially, my father began working with his brother in a store, in addition to taking some courses in bookkeeping. He felt it was his responsibility to bring his younger brother to Kenya and support his father financially, who still resided in India.

In 1942, my mother, Usha, left India at the age of eight years with her mother to join her father, in Jinja, Uganda, another British colony in East Africa. They had also crossed the ocean in the Karanja

steamer between Mumbai and Mombasa. My mother remembers how seasick my grandmother was during the eight-day journey. Her only memory of this trip was holding my grandmother's head as she continued to throw up. She was unable to keep any food down. My mother was trying to comfort her. After the arduous journey, the two of them boarded a train to Jinja. My mother grew up in Uganda. My grandfather had a retail fabric business; he sold clothing material to local Africans. My grandparents lived in the back of the store. As a young child, I remember visiting them often with my mother and sisters during our December school vacation every year. I have very fond memories of sitting with my grandfather for hours, listening to the news and Indian songs on the radio. He enjoyed giving us small bananas and peeled apples to eat. The women were always busy in the kitchen: cooking, grinding lentils, preparing flour in stone mills, and stocking up on food supplies for the year.

The distance from Nakuru, Kenya to Jinja, Uganda, is over two hundred miles. Through an arranged marriage by relatives, my parents met. My father agreed to marry my mother only after she completed high school. She was sixteen years old, and he was twenty-two years old. Once my mother graduated, they married, and within a year my twin sisters were born. My mother recalls that at that time health services were just about non-existent. Together the twins weighed six pounds at birth. They were brought home in two shoe boxes. There was no NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit) in those days; amazingly, my sisters survived. Three years later, I was born at home, delivered by a midwife. At a young age of twenty-one, she learned how to cook, sew, care for us, and became an excellent homemaker.

As far as gender roles, there was a clear distinction between my father's and mother's responsibilities. He provided for the immediate family's financial needs and shared the burdens of the extended family. My mother's role focused on raising the children and housekeeping. Growing up as children, we were free to roam and visit

other relatives and families in the neighborhood. All family members participated in raising the children.

We lived in Nakuru until I was three years old. At that time, my father decided to move to Nairobi, the capital of Kenya. There were more job opportunities in the city. My father worked three jobs and attended evening accounting classes. He aspired to study and work as a physician, but there was no family money, available educational grants, or scholarships in those days. He settled into a profession where he excelled, working with numbers and accounting. At the beginning of our life in the capital, conditions were challenging. There was no running hot water or modern conveniences like a washing machine and other household appliances. Every morning my mother woke up early to begin her household chores. She lit coal fires to heat water for baths, washed clothes by hand, and mopped the floors with rags. Both my parents struggled to make a better life for my sisters and me. Looking back at this part of my life, my parents were my mentors for work ethics. They worked long hours and I have the tenacity to do the same to achieve my goals. I have little tolerance for people who complain and try to get away with minimal effort, producing mediocre work.

Despite working extremely hard, my father found the time to help us with our homework. As children, my mother did not permit us in the kitchen, where she prepared meals on open coal fires. My parents enjoyed participating in family activities. Our favorite past time was walking down the streets, “window shopping”. We would look and admire the pretty things for sale but did not have to buy them. From an early age, we were taught that we could not get everything we wanted or be jealous of what others had. Instead, during our outings, we received a delicious treat of roasted corn or cassava chips, prepared by the locals to be sold to the pedestrians strolling by their stands. The aromas of the grilled vegetables filled the air. To this day, I enjoy corn, yuca or even peas in the pod roasted on an open fire. We

used to go on picnics in the park with other families and visit the surrounding natural sights in Kenya. My parents had a great sense of adventure. We traveled throughout Africa even when African tribes were still throwing spears at passing cars, driving on dirt roads. Thankfully, we never suffered any injuries. On occasions, we would see lions lounging or walking along the roadway.

My parents left us girls with other family members and friends when they took some overseas trips. At an early age of five or six years, I remember being in bed with my sister and a young man in his twenties. He was kissing us, and I felt very uncomfortable. Even at that age, I understood that what he was doing was not right. We were fortunate that he did not take advantage of us sexually. This event was never addressed with my parents on their return or ever. I was not traumatized by this incident, nor have I blamed my parents for leaving us with someone they trusted. My message to parents of younger children is that there is no guarantee that their children will be safe from abuse when they are left with supposedly trusted individuals.

Ironically, while living in Kenya, my father and our family again witnessed citizens uprising against the British. In 1952, the Mau Mau revolution shook the British colony. The British spent millions of dollars trying to suppress the rebellion. Several hundred thousand Kenyans were rounded up and sent to concentration camps. Many Kenyans were imprisoned and executed. During the war, British white coffee farmers were also slaughtered during this fight for freedom. On December 12, 1963, Kenya declared its independence from Britain. Jomo Kenyatta, who led the rebellion, became the first Prime Minister of Kenya.<sup>5</sup> To keep us safe during these dangerous times, my father and his friends carried cricket bats for protection and patrolled the neighborhoods, wary of the dangers of the warring political climate. In later years, I was working at a hospital in Valdosta, Georgia. Much to my surprise, one of the nurses, a woman from England, had played

soccer with Jomo Kenyatta. What are the chances of meeting someone with such an interesting historical relationship in your workplace?

When I was eleven years old, my father had an opportunity to move to Zambia working for the Ministry of Finance. My mother agreed to move, even though there were very few Indian families living in Zambia at that time. Indian families tend to move near other Indians for support and socialization. After our relocation, my mother found it difficult to find the groceries and spices that were needed to prepare our meals, so she started a vegetable garden. She was able to hire locals for domestic help who lived in another small house on our property.

This family move taught me an important lesson that we should be open to take advantage of opportunities when they present themselves. Sometimes the situation is uncomfortable, but the opportunity must be pursued to get further in life or career. At times, people are reluctant to move away from their comfort zone and then regret not achieving their dreams. Partners should be willing to support each other. My parents were direct opposites. My father was a “can-do” man while my mother was reluctant to try new ventures and take risks. In this situation, she was agreeable to do whatever was necessary for our family’s financial stability.

In Zambia, I attended a Catholic convent high school run by German nuns. The Indian teachers in Kenya were much harsher with their corporal punishment. Both were similar in their expectations. Every student knew that he or she would be punished if you did not behave in school. During this time, I had a favorite teacher, Mrs. Arrow. She was an older English woman who took time to give swimming lessons to another student and me before classes started. Swimming is still my favorite form of exercise. Some people play an important role in your life. Even though it may be for a very brief period, they leave a lasting impression. We should cherish these

individuals and be thankful for the connection. It is essential to give back to others, to take time to fulfill their needs, especially with those individuals who may be struggling or want to learn. I have cherished what my elders continue to teach me. And in turn, I enjoy imparting some knowledge to those younger than myself, be it cooking, sewing, exercises, medical or career advice.

When I was growing up, I did not get into trouble. Even as a very young student, I maintained a sense of self-discipline. I did not want to disappoint my parents or teachers. I took great pride in my studies. Throughout my career I worked with children. I still struggle to understand students' behaviors like truancy, bullying, making fun of other students, or outright aggression and disrespect towards teachers and parents. Some children are acting out trauma from their home life. Others are trying to fit in with the "cool kids." Within the medical field, there are studies examining if these children were born with dysfunctional wiring of the brain that makes them act out inappropriately. Many of the parents are hard-working individuals and provide for their children, but are dysfunctional in other ways, and do not demonstrate a positive role model for their children. I was very fortunate as a young person; I was not exposed to unruly, aggressive, and self-centered children during my school years.

While in high school, my mother spent a great deal of time teaching us how to cook and sew. I still admire the embroidery she did by hand on napkins and pillowcases. Now most ornate work is done by machines, and it does not hold up or appear as the beautiful hand-crafted work. We had cooking appliances and running hot water now. My mother taught us different Indian customs, traditions, festivals, dances, and other rituals. She focused on educating us about our roles as women. My mother's friend who visited us often, taught us how to enjoy life and have fun. Sadly, she passed away from breast cancer in her forties. I was able to connect with her before she passed away to

tell her what a positive influence she had been in my life. Even today, I encourage young people to acknowledge and show appreciation to adults who have offered their knowledge, advice, or monetary assistance. Their generation is more self-centered. They do not understand the value of shared moments until they become just a memory.

During my school years I was exposed to several languages. Education in school was in English. My parents were from the state of Gujrat in India, and we spoke Gujrati at home. Bollywood movies are in Hindi, which is also the official language of India. I learnt to speak, read, and write Hindi and Gujrati in school as well. French and Latin were offered as extra courses and since I enjoyed learning different languages, I also attended these classes. I graduated from high school with four languages and four science subjects, so I would be able to choose a career path in different directions, if necessary. It makes me sad to see so many children who do not speak their parents' or ancestors' language. The parents fear that their children will lag behind in their other school subjects due to the confusion of learning several languages at the same time. This situation could create a lack of communication with grandparents and hinder bonding especially if the elders do not speak English. Being multilingual may help immensely with their children's careers later in life. Older adults are encouraged to learn a new language to open new pathways in the brain, keep them sharp and ward off dementia.

After I finished high school, my parents decided to move to England. Indian children, who were British subjects, were either sent to India or England for further education. The educational degrees bestowed in Zambia would not have been recognized elsewhere in the world, so it was a logical choice to move to England. My mother was already in England with my two older sisters during my final year in high school. My father was in the last year of his contract with the

Ministry of Finance in Zambia. When it was time for me to travel from Zambia to England, I stopped off in Kenya to spend a few days with a family friend and his wife.

This visit turned out to be most unfortunate. The family friend was twice my age. His wife was almost eight months pregnant with their first child. I spent my days in the husband's company as he went around town tending to his business. One evening he took me to a drive-in movie and took advantage of me sexually. Instead of flight or fight to this sudden unexpected assault, I froze. I suspect many girls and women freeze during this stressful situation. I did not have the courage or the knowledge to fend him off. The next day I was bleeding, and he took me to a doctor's office and got me a "morning after" pill. The doctor was a friend of his and he never asked me what had transpired. I was in shock; I was not expecting someone in my family whom I trusted to behave this way with me. I could not tell his wife since I did not want to upset her. I also didn't know anyone else in Kenya with whom I could confide in. The man insisted I spend my days with him during the time I was in Kenya before leaving for England. He made the situation worse by bragging to his friends about taking advantage of me and telling me about other girls he had taken advantage of in India. I was very naive in these matters. I never thought that someone I respected and even admired for his outgoing and jovial nature would take advantage of me.

I left Kenya a few days later. I was upset that I let someone abuse me this way. He took away my innocence and left me feeling vulnerable. Like other Indian girls, I had been raised to respect adults and not talk back to them. Elders were always right. We were taught to not speak up, be subservient and tolerate what comes our way. I was responsible for my own destiny and had no one with whom I could share my sad or angry feelings. I decided that I would not let this short unfortunate incident influence my life going forward. However, I



would not remain silent in the future and would put a stop immediately to anyone making advances that made me feel uncomfortable. I learnt to be more aware of predators, and I have met several of them in my life since that week in Kenya. Nothing would have been gained or changed if I had informed my family of this most unfortunate event. I remained silent about what I had been subjected to at that time in my life.

There was a brief encounter with the offender at my sister's wedding. I had to resist going over to him and slapping the smirk off his face when he saw me. By this time, I was in medical school and more in control of my actions and emotions. I did not need to create a scene at a happy occasion. I did not inform my father of this incident until my late forties in an email. At the mention of this man, I had made an angry statement about him to my father. I felt my father was owed an explanation. He was very supportive and there was never again any reference to my perpetrator in our family. My mother and I have never discussed this event, nor do I feel the need to talk to her about it. She would be understanding but at this stage of our lives, nothing would change this unfortunate incident from my youth.

Once I arrived in England, I attended Copeland High School and studied pre-university courses. It was during the very first week at Copeland that I met my future husband, Bipin. He went off to a medical school in Scotland while I secured admission to the Dental School of London. However, Bipin encouraged me to follow him to the University of St. Andrew's medical school. We studied together and worked long hours during summer vacations to save money for the university. I have remained friends with several peers from that time as they were all hard working and responsible individuals. Importance of positive peers cannot be underestimated. Young people are led astray by friends who influence them to drink, do drugs, bully others, disrespect adults and other people's property. Power of peers

leading you in a positive direction, to be responsible adults, is invaluable. Bipin and I were the first students selected from our high school to attend medical school. It was a great achievement!

Sadly, around the time when I went to England in 1973, Idi Amin, the President of Uganda, asked all the Indian businessmen and their families to leave Uganda. This decree contributed significantly to the financial demise of the country. Many of the families arrived with only the clothes on their backs and one suitcase. The families were affluent in Uganda but had not been allowed to bring their financial wealth with them. Now they had to start their lives all over again. They were British subjects and were permitted to resettle in England. Many of my new friends at Copeland High school were in this situation. Through hard work and community support, these individuals became successful. In the beginning, they were upset about their predicament. Shortly thereafter, they focused on what they needed to do to achieve their goals in life. I have remained friends with some of these peers over the years. I am happy to see how successful they have become in business and their careers after pursuing advanced education. England has a great educational system. Students are assisted financially with the cost of a university education if their families are unable to afford this expense. However, students need to be motivated to study. In comparison, the cost of undergraduate college in the United States is high. Students can incur a tremendous amount of debt. This major loan expense after graduation from a two or four-year degree program deters many young people from continuing to pursue advanced degrees in graduate school. Although, there are many grants and scholarships available to students with excellent grades.

Medical school brings its own set of challenges. I was also navigating a personal relationship. It was tough for me at times. As a young Indian woman, certain expectations were ingrained into me. They were what I thought to be my responsibilities. I shopped for

groceries, cooked, took care of the laundry and other household chores, in addition to my medical studies. Bipin and I did some chores together, but Bipin could focus mainly on his studies and play cricket for the university. Halfway through medical school studies, my parents moved to Florida in the United States. There were no care packages from my family to help me. I became self-reliant and independent without my parents in the U.K. Today I know of several Indian mothers who constantly send packages of prepared meals to their children in college, perpetuating dependence on parents rather than learning to rely on their own ability to cope. To this day, I am guilty of taking on more of the household chores than I should. My 86-year-old mother chooses to spoil me now, making me several food items to bring home after my visits with her. I appreciate all she does, but I have no expectations.

My father chose to leave England at this time because there were no real opportunities for him to start a business. Also, he did not like the weather in England. He had been used to warmer temperatures living near the equator in Kenya and the steady temperatures all year round while living in Zambia. He had always talked about wanting to immigrate to the United States, the land of opportunity. Both my sisters completed their education in England and moved to the United States with my parents to start a new life. My father was able to make the move to the United States due to his profession in accounting. He realized that the only way to make a decent living was to have his own business. My parents settled in Cocoa, Florida and opened a small motel. At that time, many Indian families came to America and opened small “mom and pop” businesses. My father improved the property, and later, sold it at a profit. He then moved to Lakeland, Florida, where he invested in several properties and companies. He helped to settle many relatives in Florida and to establish their own businesses. My

parents have lived in Lakeland, Florida for forty plus years, since 1979. Sadly, my father passed away in 2014.

After nine years of dating, Bipin and I married. We were both twenty-five years old, older than most people, who married much earlier in those days. It was a lavish affair with close to four hundred people in attendance. Bipin was an only son, and our culture required a grand celebration. After I completed my medical internship, we decided to immigrate to the United States. In England, it was difficult to establish a private practice as a physician, due to a pyramidal system. In the United States, we could complete our residencies in our specialty, start a private practice, and work for ourselves. Moving to America was a better option for both of us. We had often visited my parents in Florida. I had always intended to move closer to my family. Bipin's parents came to live with us in Augusta, Georgia where we started our residencies. We initially shared some of the housework, but my mother-in-law did most of the cooking. It was helpful that my in-laws were living with us while maintaining a household, but we had little privacy as a married couple. After we completed our residencies, we moved to Valdosta, Georgia to establish our private practices.

Eventually, Bipin and I divorced. After much discussion and sadness, he realized that he should have contributed and assisted me with maintaining our household partnership. Sadly, that was not the only reason for our separation. I had gone through numerous infertility tests to try and conceive a child. I ended up with an ectopic pregnancy. Bleeding from this event caused endometriosis and fibrosis. This medical emergency led to my inability to get pregnant again and left me feeling like a failure. Bipin was an only child, and we had always talked about having a large family. I was a successful physician in my career but felt inadequate in my inability to conceive and have a family. Not having children was not part of our life plan. I used to babysit from a very young age in Zambia and loved babies. This wrench in my

personal existence left a gaping hole. Professionally, I was working long hours, starting a private practice, and studying for Medical Board exams. I separated from my husband. I had nothing left to give to the relationship. We lived apart for two years, and then we divorced. At the time, I realized that although we were no longer partners, I still loved him. I have learned through experience that although you may not live with someone anymore, you do not stop loving or caring about this person. After our divorce, I had to make personal adjustments and become fully responsible for myself. During our marriage, Bipin had handled all the financial matters, including our investments. I became adept at managing my affairs. This skill has served me well throughout my lifetime, assisting my father when he became ill and passed away, and now with my mother's financial affairs. Over the years, Bipin and I have remained dear friends which is a great comfort to me. He has known me since I was sixteen years old, a lifetime!

I met my present domestic partner, Stephen, at the hospital where I practiced. We have been together for thirty-one years. We are compatible; we enjoy traveling, sharing similar interests in the foods we enjoy, what shows to watch, exercising and staying fit, and caring for our parents. Most of all, he makes me laugh. We are opposites in many ways as well. I was brought up in a conservative, Indian household while he grew up in the deep South. He is outspoken, and at times, speaks with a brash tone of voice that bothers me. He is independent and hardheaded. However, I sincerely appreciate how caring he is to me and know that we will age gracefully together. Sometimes, he worries too much, which is difficult for me since I pride myself on being self-sufficient. When we are together, we enjoy each other's company, but also give each other space when needed.

In relationships, it is essential to understand what makes your partner happy. There are many couples who are attracted to opposite personalities. This partnership can be very successful since each

individual brings different strengths to the relationship. One can provide for the family financially, while the other excels at homemaking and tending to the children's needs. On the other hand, opposites can also become involved in situations leading to 'warfare.' Both parties adopt different priorities. Conflict arises when each person has their own way of doing things. One is organized and the other is disorganized. One is emotional and the partner is stoic. One is a caretaker and the other is needy and wants all the attention. One likes to spend money and the other cannot set limits on the partner's spending habits. One is outgoing and likes to socialize while the partner is reclusive. One has healthy eating habits and exercises while the other is not interested in this lifestyle. Partners with different priorities can create problems for their children. They receive mixed messages from their parents and are confused. They don't know which parent to emulate without causing emotional turmoil with one parent or the other.

I have been retired from my medical practice as a psychiatrist for fourteen years. From the beginning of my practice, I worked long hours and saved for retirement. I was able to retire at the age of fifty-one. I wanted to enjoy life. Too often, doctors continue to work late in life and die shortly after retirement. I did not want to be part of that sad statistic. Ironically, six months after I retired, my father had a severe heart attack. I was devastated and prayed for his recovery and survival. At the time, I realized that I would be responsible for overseeing his business dealings and financial affairs. Fortunately, my father lived another six years. I would drive down regularly from Georgia to take care of my parents in Florida. I was grateful that one of my sisters lived in the same town as my parents and was a tremendous help in day-to-day care of our parents. She still assists in caring for my mother and visits with her every day. My other sister lives in California and is not available. Stephen and I have continued

taking care of our parents as they have aged. Role of caring for elderly parents usually falls on the female but there are men like Stephen who are caretakers as well. He travelled from our home to his parent's home regularly for fifteen years tending to their needs. My mother is the only parent who is still alive today.

Eventually, we sold our house in Georgia and moved to the beach in Cape Canaveral, Florida. My father loved visiting us here at the ocean. One of my biggest regrets in life is that he only lived six months after we moved into our home. My partner and I were most fortunate to live for several months with my parents before we moved to Cape Canaveral. During that time, I was able to talk with my father and learn about his life, simplify his financial affairs, and assist my mother. I will always cherish this time together. When my father became very frail, my mother grew stronger emotionally. As I look back on their relationship, they truly complimented each other. My mother never dealt with any paperwork, mail, or writing checks in her life. On the other hand, she teased my father about his inability to make her a cup of tea.

Indian parents are not forthcoming with their emotions. Fortunately, my father had no problems telling us how much he loved us. Both my parents have always been emotionally available, more so after my divorce. They just wanted to see me happy. My mother is now eighty-six years old and chooses to live by herself. It is almost unheard of, for an Indian woman of my mother's age to live by herself, especially when she never learned to drive. With my help and my sister's support, she is happiest in her own home. I stay with her ten days a month. It is a special time for both of us as we spend time talking, cooking, doing yard work, shopping, and watching shows together. American culture has often been described as 'a throwaway society'. It also relates to how many adult children do not take care of their parents in their old age. They place them in nursing homes and

rarely visit them. Spending time with our elderly parents and relatives can be such an enriching and rewarding experience filled with cherished memories. We should not waste this valuable time before their passing. Even in medical school, there is an emphasis on curing people. In reference to the aging population, medical students should focus on how to manage their disease, slow its progression, and make them comfortable in order to benefit from additional time with their families.

Looking back on my life and my parents' expectations, my father perceived me as a competent individual, not a male or a female. My mother always refers to me as the son, "she never had." In Indian culture, parents were almost always taken care of by their eldest son. This practice has fallen by the wayside now that the daughters also take care of ailing parents. My father believed that education was paramount to get ahead in life and pushed us to achieve to the best of our abilities. Both my mother and father believed strongly in helping other people to get ahead in life. They had families in need come and live with them or fed them, until they were able to become independent. I have also inherited this quality to assist others with their life journey.

I believe in being tolerant and forgiving to individuals who have hurt me. Remaining angry and unforgiving only hurts yourself. You have to take full responsibility for your mistakes, accept the consequences, and learn from those experiences. You must accept disappointments and not dwell on them. You have to focus on working hard in order to succeed. Do not be complacent with mediocre work. It is important to always show appreciation to those individuals who have assisted you in your personal and professional life. You must take care of yourself, including your physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. You should remember often to reach out to your parents and elders who sacrificed throughout their lifetime to enrich your life.



Most parents do their best to meet the needs of their children but obviously some fall short. Sadly, these may turn out to be the children that become society's problems. Most of all, be happy with your family and what you have accomplished in life. Surround yourself with positive people to enjoy and celebrate the various milestones and rewards in your life. Work on being an excellent role model with integrity to influence others. Be strong enough to deal with negative peer pressure and stand up to bullies. Become involved in your community to assist others. Take charge of your own life and destiny!

Now, as I look back, I have lived a happy life. I had many mentors in my life from a young age. My parents, teachers, friends of parents, peers, my ex-husband, old and new friends, and my partner, all have provided me with love and constant support. I continue to challenge myself. Recently, I found the news events around the world and in the United States most disturbing. I decided to write this book about social issues today, including the school shootings and the pandemic that has left so many people dead and injured for life. There is such a division among the citizens in our country. The sexual revolution of the sixties has affected the enormous outpouring of sexual abuse cases in the country. There are issues revolving around people who have and those who do not. Race relations that should have been settled in the 60s, still rage on as documented by the protests and riots following the death of George Floyd in 2020. We are in turmoil about immigration. How did we arrive at this place in 2019 where chaos reigns? The year 2020 brought even more distress with the COVID-19 pandemic, the riots and looting.

*“Chaos in the world brings uneasiness, but it also allows the opportunity for growth and creativity.”<sup>6</sup>*

*Tom Barrett*

## Introduction

Like millions of other people before them, my parents came to the United States of America seeking a better life. America is the land of freedom, opportunity, and democracy. I, too, became a citizen of the United States. I am an American, not an Indian, African, or British citizen based on my family's unique ancestry. Nor do I personally identify myself solely in terms of the female gender; my identity is the sum of my life experiences. However, gender does matter. Men and women experience the world differently. Although gender colors the way we perceive the world around us, we can change that mindset and be open to explore new paradigms.

I find that there is an urgency to write this book now. The “#MeToo Movement” was sweeping the country in 2018. It may be derailing the long-established relationship between men and women. Standing up to an individual who is abusing you physically, sexually, or emotionally is imperative for your total well-being. However, getting carried away with the movement and accusing men of all sorts of abuse and causing the demise of their careers must be addressed. A voice has to be given to those who are too afraid to speak up to the masses. The men and women who are silent, do not necessarily agree with the direction that the movement has taken to uncover every hint of abuse from many years ago. Thousands of women have joined this campaign because it is politically correct. Many of them may fear retribution from the boisterous women leading the charge. In turn, men have stayed deafeningly silent. Individuals have to stand up and be the voice of reason. Their concerns must be heard. Additionally, American culture and the relationship between men and women have changed significantly from the middle of the twentieth century after World War II to today in the twenty-first century. Social behaviors in the

workplace and within the family that were acceptable then, are no longer tolerable today.

Professionally, I have a deep understanding of this subject matter, not just because of my training as a psychiatrist, but also from my twenty plus years of experience treating numerous patients (children, men, and women). It is essential to understand my background. I was brought up in a very conservative Indian household until the age of sixteen years old. Then I moved with my family to the United Kingdom and eventually, to the United States. By that time, I was fully indoctrinated into western culture. I had exposure to psychiatric patients during medical school rotations in the United Kingdom, four years of psychiatric training in the United States, followed by private practice, which allowed me the opportunity to understand human behaviors in a variety of dysfunctional situations. In my practice, I treated numerous patients who were exposed to a range of abuses. Since I was the only female psychiatrist for fifteen years in my community, abused women sought my help in recovery. At that time, there was no #MeToo Movement. Everyone came with her own set of problems describing how she had been affected, and together, we worked on how she could become healthy again. Some women chose to wallow in their misery and focus on how unfair their life had been. I stayed busy helping patients who wanted to move forward and not let these past abusive incidents control them for the rest of their lives. During an initial evaluation, I would assess the patient's motivation to heal from the trauma she had suffered. Some patients refused to let go of the dysfunction. Refusing to move on allows the patient to use past abuse as a crutch. I set specific goals for each patient. If a patient was unwilling to work toward those goals, I gave the individual the option to come back when she was ready to get help. I would also recommend that additional assistance was available.

It takes a very courageous individual to take that first step, ask for help, and to be receptive to therapy for recovery.

I have always preferred the one-on-one approach to address life issues. However, this topic and many other current topics are too important to reach solely one individual at a time. It is essential to reach as many people as I can through the written word. I am fearful, as are others in this country that we are losing the principled values upon which this country was established. Children need to learn discipline. The mass shootings and sexual harassment need to stop. No one should support individuals who abuse others because of their position of power. Both men and women must be empowered to do the right thing and always act appropriately.

Just as the #MeToo Movement has unhinged us as a couple, the anger and racial divide, fueled by politicians who cannot agree on anything and continue to tear at the fabric of American society has unhinged the US. It has made us appear weak, undisciplined, and a laughingstock for others around the globe. Culture refers to the shared attitudes and actions of a particular social group. Social media has created a “Cancel Culture,” in the form of group shaming. It refers to the popular practice of withdrawing support for (canceling) public figures and companies after they have done or said something considered objectionable or offensive.<sup>7</sup> People must be held accountable for their actions and behavior, and receive the consequences when they break the rules of society and decency. However, many young people have no knowledge of the history of this country or what their predecessors had to endure to make America the country it is today. They want to rewrite history without even knowing what it is, other than the headlines or few words spread on social media as the gospel truth. When did Facebook and Twitter and other social media outlets become judge and jury, causing many individuals to lose their careers, reputations, or work opportunities after being outed? And

with respect to the #MeToo Movement, many people effectively lost their reputations without having the opportunity to clear their name.

Other figures were getting canceled for past racist and anti-LGBTQ remarks.<sup>8</sup> Students were trying to get a professor from the University of Chicago fired because of the remarks he made, but after an investigation by the staff at the University, he was reinstated. Some staff members at Hachette Publishing refused to work on J.K. Rowling's next book after she was smeared as being a "transphobic." She had made a comment about women and her publisher spoke up for her stating "Freedom of speech is the cornerstone of publishing." Social media allows all sorts of freedom of speech, but the cancel culture has gone too far. Critics of canceling feel that people are too quick to judge and ruin lives over mistakes made recently or from many years ago, without knowing all the facts. It has become a way of rejecting anyone you disagree with or someone who did something you did not like. People do not get a second chance. Former President Barack Obama argued that rash social media judgments do not amount to true social activism. The solution is to challenge these people, and those of us who can, must speak up.

Indians believe in destiny and Karma, the spiritual law of cause and effect.<sup>9</sup> This law states that our actions in this life dictate the rewards that we will receive in the next. "You reap what you sow."<sup>10</sup> Good things generally happen to good people. Unfortunately, some people suffer many misfortunes even though they are leading a good life. Indians believe that you pay for the consequences in this lifetime or in the next life for your infractions. This is Karma.

*“Karma moves in two directions. If we act virtuously, the seed we plant will result in happiness. If we act non-virtuously, suffering results.”<sup>11</sup>*

*Sakyong Mipham*

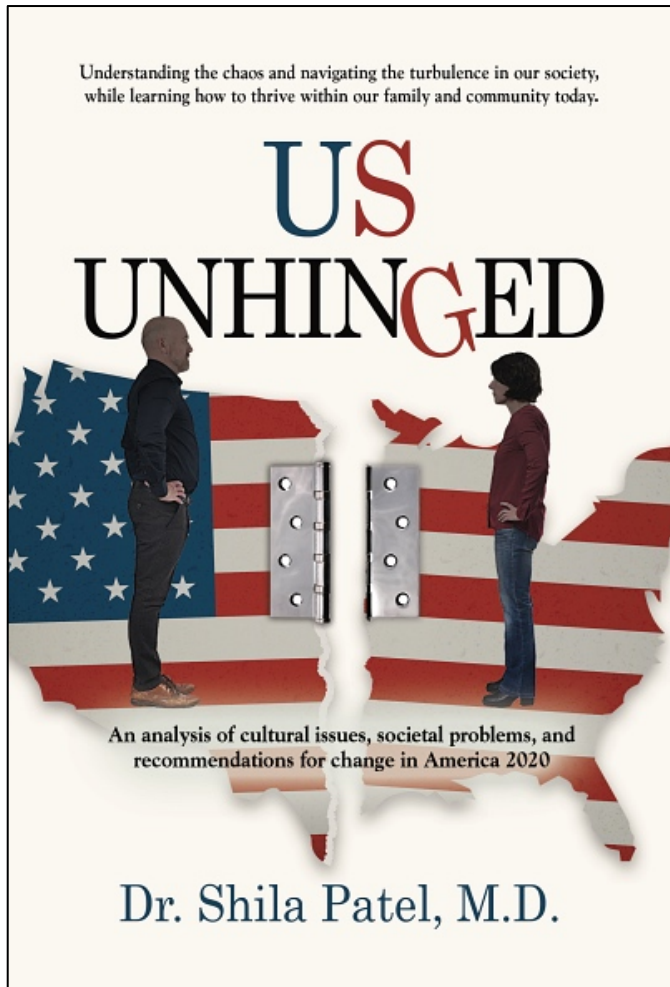
Recently, a friend of mine encouraged me to read Paul Coelho’s book *The Alchemist*. I have struggled with various obstacles in my life which I needed to overcome. Writing this book is one of them. “We are told from childhood onward that everything we want to do is impossible!”<sup>12</sup> Now, it is time to put down on paper what concerns me the most in our society today. I questioned whether I had the expertise to be an author. Medically speaking, I am qualified to analyze and treat psychiatric conditions, but was I capable of discussing the social issues of today?

Paulo Coelho writes about: “Fear of realizing the dream.”<sup>13</sup> I have spent hours discussing these issues with family and friends. Everyone encouraged me to write what I thought. They felt that what I had to say was necessary to be heard, to be listened to by a broader audience. They realized that I had a passion for these social issues of today. It was time to act. The ideas put forth in this book are my beliefs, in addition to the views of other individuals, results from documented studies and academic articles. I hope my presentation challenges you to look at human behavior from a different perspective. I want to provoke discussions about the issues of sexual ethics, relationships, gun violence, parenting, childrearing, the damage that social media is inflicting, and other societal vows. My hope is that this book will provide you with an understanding of human behavior and tolerance. It expresses different viewpoints about stressful situations in our society. I am asking you to be open-minded and to believe in forgiveness. It is time to contemplate the direction our country is taking. It is up to all of us to make our world a better place.

*Dr. Shila Patel, M.D.*

*“Society grows great when old men plant trees  
under whose shade they will never sit.”<sup>14</sup>*

*Rabindranath Tagore, Indian Poet*



*The #MeToo Movement, the school shootings, the race riots and the pandemic have created havoc with the American way of life and unhinged not only the US, but us as a family. Americans are experiencing major mental health problems with all the chaos.*

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