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**The Nocturnists presents
*Shame in Medicine: The Lost Forest***



Series Illustrations by Beppe Conti

SAN FRANCISCO – September 22, 2022 – The Nocturnists, the award-winning medical storytelling live show and podcast, presents *Shame in Medicine: The Lost Forest*, a new 10-part documentary podcast series exploring medicine’s shame culture through the stories of healthcare workers. The series breaks the silence around shame in the medical profession by airing clinicians’ stories about the shame they feel related to training, testing, making mistakes, being sued, and failing to conform to the ideal of the “healthcare hero.”

New episodes are released weekly on *The Nocturnists* podcast every Tuesday between September 13 and November 15, 2022.

Shame in Medicine: The Lost Forest is hosted by Dr. Emily Silverman, UCSF internal medicine physician and Founder of The Nocturnists, and co-created with Dr. Luna Dolezal, Associate Professor of Philosophy and Medical Humanities at the University of Exeter, and Dr. Will Bynum, Associate Professor and Residency Program Director of Family Medicine in the Duke University School of Medicine. The series is produced by The Nocturnists in collaboration with the Shame and Medicine project at the University of Exeter.

Shame is everywhere in healthcare, but remains unnamed and unaddressed. While shame is a primal and pro-social emotion that can sometimes be appropriate and constructive, medicine's unrealistic standard of perfection has resulted in a widespread and debilitating culture of shame across the field. This contributes to a broad range of negative outcomes among clinicians including high rates of burnout, depression, suicidality, impaired empathy, diminished physical wellness, and unprofessional behavior – all challenges that intensified over the pandemic.

Despite the destructive effects that shame has on clinicians, there is very little research or public storytelling about shame in medical practice.

Shame in Medicine: The Lost Forest draws on stories from over 200 healthcare workers in the United States, the United Kingdom, and beyond, supported by commentary from leading shame researchers. In addition to illuminating medicine's dysfunctional culture of shame for the general public, the 10-episode series offers a framework that helps clinicians recognize shame responses in themselves and understand the larger institutional narratives that perpetuate shame dynamics. By creating a public forum where clinicians can speak openly about their shame experiences, the series enables both participants and listeners to acknowledge and resist unhealthy shame dynamics and seeds new narratives that generate catharsis, understanding, and a more humane medical culture.

Dr. Silverman says, "Shame is like the elephant in the room. Once we acknowledge and understand it, we can start healing from the harm it causes to clinicians and patients alike."

Alongside the podcast series, The Nocturnists have developed an impact campaign to encourage audiences to use the series as a catalyst for new conversations about shame in medical culture. The *Shame in Medicine* series website (thenocturnists-shame.org) houses discussion guides for each episode, tips for how to organize a conversation about shame in local communities, an outreach kit, resources

for further study on shame, a portal to share personal reflections about the series, and more.

About The Nocturnists

[The Nocturnists](#) is a San Francisco-based independent medical storytelling organization, which has uplifted the voices of 350+ clinicians through its award-winning podcast and sold-out live performances. Through storytelling, it aims to humanize healthcare, cultivate clinician wellbeing, and transform medical culture. Dr. Silverman founded The Nocturnists in 2016 as a burned-out internal medicine resident at UCSF. What began as a one-off intimate storytelling evening with colleagues, soon blossomed into an ongoing live performance series, and a podcast with a global audience.

Dr. Silverman's writing has been supported by MacDowell and published in *The New York Times*, *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, *JAMA*, *CHEST*, *McSweeney's*, and more. The Yerba Buena Center for the Arts selected Dr. Silverman as an Honoree of the 2020 YBCA 100 List, which celebrates creative changemakers building sustainable, equitable, and regenerative communities. Dr. Silverman serves as Senior Advisor to the U.S. National COVID Commission Planning Group and was named by *Podcast Magazine* as one of the top "40 Under 40 in podcasting" for 2022.

The Nocturnists' *Stories from a Pandemic* audio diary project, complete podcast, and website has been acquired by the U.S. Library of Congress for historic preservation. The *Black Voices in Healthcare* series was honored by the 25th Annual Webby Awards in 2021. *The Nocturnists* podcast won Best Health Podcast at the 2022 Quill Podcast Awards.

Co-Creators

Luna Dolezal is Associate Professor in Philosophy and Medical Humanities at the University of Exeter, where she leads the Shame and Medicine Project, an interdisciplinary research project funded by the Wellcome Trust which investigates the role of shame in health and medicine. The project is particularly interested in shame experiences within the professional practice of doctors and medical students, and within healthcare organizations. Luna also leads the Scenes of Shame and Stigma in Covid-19 Project, and has recently co-authored the book *Covid-19 and Shame: Political Emotions and Public Health in the UK*.

Will Bynum is Associate Professor and Residency Program Director of Family Medicine in the Duke University School of Medicine, where he also advises the Medical Student

Wellness Committee. Prior to his appointment at Duke, he served for seven years on Active Duty in the US Air Force, during which he served as faculty in the NCC Family Medicine Residency Program, senior medical director of a special operations command in East Africa, and traveling physician to multiple congressional delegations. Will's primary academic interest centers on the role of self-conscious emotions (shame, guilt, and pride) in the medical learning experience. He created The Shame Conversation, a resource hub to advance discussion and awareness of shame in medicine.

Supporters

Shame in Medicine: The Lost Forest is made possible in part by the [Shame and Medicine](#) project at the University of Exeter, funded by the Wellcome Trust.

The Nocturnists is supported by the California Medical Association.

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