

# Global Loneliness Awareness Summit

## Building a Culture of Connection

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## Introduction

A staggering and increasing number of individuals and communities are experiencing the devastating impacts of loneliness and social isolation, making it more urgent than ever to address this growing public health concern. To tackle this issue, the Coalition to End Social Isolation and Loneliness, together with the Foundation for Social Connection, invited advocates, researchers, practitioners, and stakeholders to a convening in Washington, D.C. in honor of Global Loneliness Awareness Week (GLAW). The third annual GLAW Summit aimed to mobilize participants toward actionable, evidence-based solutions and policies by leveraging the expertise of attendees to address the complex challenges within the social connection field.

Given the multi-faceted and interdisciplinary nature of social connection, a wide array of ideas, themes, and questions emerged throughout the three-day event. For those who could not attend, this report details the key themes and innovative ideas from the Summit, including Collaboration, Service, and Meeting Communities Where They Are. It also highlights how these themes were integrated into the event's structure, the ideas and innovations shared by speakers and participants, and the calls to action voiced during the Summit.

By sharing these insights and an overview of the event, along with the Coalition's and Foundation's broader calls to action and related resources, we hope to foster a paradigm shift toward a culture grounded in connection and prosocial values.

## Overview of Event

The **Global Loneliness Awareness Summit 2024**, the third annual conference hosted by the **Coalition to End Social Isolation and Loneliness (CESIL)**, was held in Washington, D.C., convening a diverse group of stakeholders committed to addressing the pressing issues of social isolation and loneliness. The event saw 168 in-person participants and over 500 virtual attendees, representing 19 countries and more than 100 organizations from across the globe. Attendees and speakers represented a wide range of sectors focused on social isolation and loneliness (SIL). These included public policy, urban planning, social enterprise, public health, philanthropy, technology, advocacy, and design.

Held through the collaborative efforts of Jillian Racoosin, MPH, Executive Director of CESIL, and Dr. Thomas Cudjoe, MD, MPH, MA, Assistant Professor, **Johns Hopkins University (JHU) School of Medicine**, and supported by generous funding from the **Johns Hopkins' Nexus Awards**, this third annual Global Loneliness Awareness Summit took place at the **Bloomberg Center** in Washington, D.C. The Summit aimed to foster connection, inspire interest, and mobilize actions in the areas of policy, research, and awareness to enable more socially connected communities. The event's theme, "Building a Culture of Connection," highlighted the importance of social connection in promoting public health, civic engagement, and community resilience.

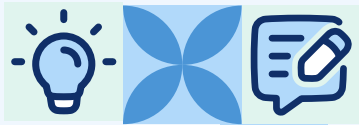
The Summit featured a series of networking opportunities, engaging speakers, expert panels, a reflective and connecting lunch discussion program, and an evening reception, all designed to encourage collaboration and the exchange of ideas. On the days following the Summit, CESIL members directly engaged with policymakers on Capitol Hill and the White House, advocating for policies that address social isolation and loneliness and advance social connection.



Speakers	Multidisciplinary Panelists
<p><b>Andrew MacPherson</b>, Founder &amp; Board Chair, Coalition to End Social Isolation and Loneliness</p> <p><b>Haben Girma</b>, World Health Organization (WHO) Commissioner on Social Connection</p> <p><b>Nina Goldman</b>, Human Geographer and Social Scientist, University of Manchester</p> <p><b>Adam Levine</b>, Associate Professor of Health Policy and Management, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health</p> <p><b>Patrick Kennedy</b>, Former U.S. Representative (D-RI) and Mental Health Advocate</p> <p><b>Young Pueblo (Diego Perez)</b>, Author</p> <p><b>Thomas Cudjoe</b>, Robert and Jane Meyerhoff Endowed Professor, Assistant Professor of Medicine, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine</p> <p><b>Jillian Racoosin</b>, Executive Director, Foundation for Social Connection (F4SC) and Coalition to End Social Isolation and Loneliness</p> <p><b>Cybele Bjorklund</b>, Vice President of Federal Strategy and Executive Director, Hopkins Bloomberg Center</p>	<p><b>Josh Penny</b>, Director of Social Impact, Hinge</p> <p><b>Ann Shoket</b>, CEO, The Li.st and Founder, 10 Minutes To Togetherness</p> <p><b>Frederick Riley</b>, Executive Director, WEAVE: The Social Fabric Project at the Aspen Institute</p> <p><b>Jared Seide</b>, Executive Director, Beyond Us &amp; Them</p> <p><b>Kristine Gloria</b>, Director, Strategic Partnerships and Innovation, Young Futures</p> <p><b>Conchita Hernandez</b>, Disability Rights Advocate, National Coalition for Latinxs with Disabilities</p> <p><b>Arif Kamal</b>, Chief Patient Officer, American Cancer Society</p> <p><b>Mark Meridy</b>, Executive Director, DOROT</p> <p><b>Philippa Pham Hughes</b>, Visiting Fellow, Johns Hopkins University Agora Institute</p> <p><b>Autumn Saxton-Ross</b>, Chief Education &amp; Equity Officer, National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA)</p> <p><b>Leigh Graham</b>, Senior Advisor for Innovation Research, Bloomberg Center for Public Innovation at Johns Hopkins University</p> <p><b>Erin Peavey</b>, Architect and Health &amp; Well-being Design Leader, HKS</p>

Capitol Hill Champions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• U.S. Senator Maggie Hassan (D-NH)</li> <li>• U.S. Representative Mike Flood (R-NE)</li> <li>• U.S. Senator Tina Smith (D-MN)</li> <li>• U.S. Representative Seth Moulton (D-MA)</li> </ul>





## Panel topics included:

- Places: Where Connection Happens
- Building a Culture of Connection: Bringing Prosocial Values into Practice
- People: Understanding Social Isolation & Loneliness Across Diverse Communities



Representative Mike Flood (R-NE) delivered remarks on rural community members' experiences of social isolation.



Yung Pueblo, author and poet, discussed how communities can mend and heal through connection during a fireside chat that concluded the convening.



Former Representative Patrick Kennedy emphasized the importance of service and meaningful work in fostering social connection.



Our panel on Place: Where Connection Happens. Speakers from right to left: Autumn Saxton-Ross, Leigh Graham, Erin Peavey, Moderator Philippa Pham Hughes



# Throughlines of the Summit

## Collaboration

### *The Event*

Our event involved three days of interactive events and activities. Our first day was a Summit of stakeholders from organizations and communities spanning the fields of public health, advocacy, urban planning and design, and more. On the second day, members of the Coalition to End Social Isolation and Loneliness (CESIL) met on Capitol Hill to engage legislators in prioritizing policies that increase the social connection of communities. On the third day, members of CESIL's Board and Steering Committee met with Senior White House Officials at the Domestic Policy Council to discuss the Administration's commitment to fostering social connection and innovative policy approaches to addressing social isolation and loneliness.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
Stakeholder Summit at the Bloomberg Center in D.C., with sessions on public health, advocacy, urban planning, and design.	CESIL members met with nine congressional offices on Capitol Hill to educate legislators on the need to prioritize policies that increase social connection.	CESIL leadership met with Senior White House Officials to discuss social connection policies.

"There is a strength in the diversity of the Coalition and it demonstrates that social connectedness touches lives in different ways. Events like this are so important to the momentum of pushing this issue forward in policy, research, and intervention...I was inspired by the work going on at such a variety of agencies/orgs including hospice, clubhouses for individuals with severe mental illness, and in university research."

*-Lori Murphy, U.S. Dept. of Veteran Affairs*



# Throughlines of the Summit

## ***Ideas and Innovation***

The Global Loneliness Awareness Summit 2024 highlighted a range of innovative ideas and key statistics that emphasize the importance of addressing social isolation and loneliness through diverse and inclusive approaches. Notable insights from the event include:

### Engaging Those with Lived Experience

Speakers highlighted the importance of involving individuals with lived experience in the innovation process. Haben Girma, a disability rights advocate and World Health Organization (WHO) Commissioner on Social Connection, noted that marginalized communities create solutions that benefit everyone when they lead innovation. This approach ensures that interventions are inclusive and effective for diverse populations.

### Engaging With Priority Populations

During the Summit, speakers and panelists highlighted key data findings from various studies published by speakers, partners, and collaborators. Two of these studies in particular underscored populations who experience loneliness more acutely: the 10 Minutes To Togetherness Research Report published in 2017 citing data gathered by The Li.ST, Berlin Cameron, and Benenson Strategy Group, and Addressing loneliness and social isolation in 52 countries: A scoping review of national policies published in 2024 by speaker Nina Goldman and colleagues. Speakers mentioned the following critical data points and findings related to priority populations:

- The prevalence of **loneliness in the workplace** was highlighted, with 80% of corporate workers surveyed for the 10 Minutes to Togetherness research reporting feeling lonely *because* of their job.<sup>1</sup> Strategies to reduce workplace loneliness include promoting inclusive cultures, supporting employee well-being, and encouraging meaningful interactions.
- **Younger individuals**, particularly those under 35, experience higher levels of loneliness compared to older generations.<sup>2</sup> This finding underscores the need for targeted interventions that address the specific challenges faced by younger populations.
- Experiences of loneliness throughout the life course differ across genders and racial groups, with **women experiencing worsening loneliness over time and people of color facing barriers to authenticity in social settings, resulting in the impact of loneliness on their mental health being greater.**<sup>3</sup> Addressing these disparities requires tailored approaches that consider the unique contexts of different groups.
- Nina Goldman's research on global policies that advance social connection highlighted the importance of understanding and addressing the unique needs of different communities. This approach involves avoiding assumptions about experiences and focusing on **intentional engagement and tailored interventions.**<sup>4</sup>

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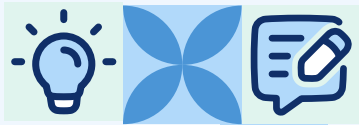
1. The Li.ST, Berlin Cameron, Benenson Strategy Group. (2017). 10 minutes to togetherness: Research report. <https://www.10minutestotogetherness.com/>

2. Ryan Pendell. (2024, January 23). Employees worldwide feel lonely at work. Gallup. <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/645566/employees-worldwide-feel-lonely.aspx>

3. The Li.ST, et. al, 2017.

4. Goldman, N., Khanna, D., El-Asmar, M. L., Qualter, P., & El-Osta, A. (2024). Addressing loneliness and social isolation in 52 countries: A scoping review of national policies. BMC Public Health, 24, 1207. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-024-16652-w>





# Throughlines of the Summit

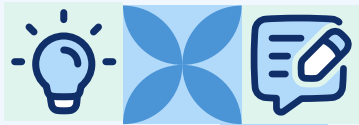
## Engaging Policy Innovation and Collaboration

Adam Seth Levine, during the opening plenary, discussed the “unmet desire to connect” and the importance of identifying relational barriers that prevent people from forming connections. He emphasized the bipartisan nature of social connection-related policies as an opportunity to foster collaboration across political lines.

Building on this theme, several Hill Champions shared their efforts and perspectives on addressing social isolation and loneliness.

- Representative Flood (R-NE) highlighted rural community members’ experiences of social isolation and the importance of advocating for personal connections and access to telehealth. He is working with Senators Murphy (D-CT) and Ricketts (R-NE) to request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) study the federal government’s efforts to address social isolation and loneliness (SIL) and understand where greater interventions are needed. Additionally, Representative Flood championed his belief that to address SIL, we must first better understand it. He also has worked with Congressman David Trone (D-MD), to introduce the Improving Measurements for Loneliness and Isolation Act ([H.R.6284](#)), which is a no-cost bill calling for the convening of a multi-sector working group dedicated to defining loneliness and social isolation, standardizing measurement in order to identify those affected, and develop more effective strategies to combat the deleterious impacts.
- Senator Smith (D-MN) discussed her efforts to ensure everyone lives a fulfilled life, highlighting her successes with the Older Americans Social Isolation and Loneliness Prevention Act which was signed into law in 2020, and the Strengthening Social Connections Act introduced in both 2020 and 2021. CESIL is proud to have endorsed both pieces of legislation. Senator Smith also highlighted her continued work on reauthorizing the Older Americans Act (OAA); she recently introduced the *Social Engagement and Network Initiatives for Older Relief* (SENIOR) Act with Senator Rubio (R-FL), which would amend the OAA to allow for greater intergenerational programs and research on the impact of loneliness on older adults.
- Representative Moulton (D-MA) highlighted the importance of community resiliency and outlined his intention to introduce new legislation, which focuses on three main pillars: the built environment, older adults, and youth and social media. His policy strategies include enhancing infrastructure, supporting mixed-use and intergenerational living, and regulating social media use among youth.
- Senator Hassan (D-NH) noted the paradox of advanced communication technology yet prevalent loneliness. She further highlighted bipartisan efforts and legislation to improve measurements of social isolation and loneliness, intergenerational programs, youth mental health, and social media. Senator Hassan also voiced her support for, and shared the work she’s done on the Improving Measurements for Loneliness and Isolation Act.

The variety of policy approaches taken by each member of Congress underscores the complexity of SIL and the need for multifaceted, whole-of-society, and inclusive approaches to address this pressing issue. At the Summit, CESIL encouraged participants to leverage these findings to continue developing innovative, collaborative solutions and advocate for policies that foster social connection and community well-being.



# Throughlines of the Summit



## ***Calls To Action***

- For Practitioners and Researchers: Learn from those with lived experience of SIL as well as communities most impacted by loneliness and social isolation. Invite members of these groups to the decision-making table and into research endeavors.
- For Policymakers and Advocates: Embrace the bipartisan nature of social connection and actively engage with decision-makers across the aisle. Focus on key themes such as standardizing the measurement of SIL, as exemplified by the Improving Measurements for Loneliness and Isolation Act of 2023 (**H.R. 6284**) - the first piece of bipartisan and bicameral legislation targeting this issue. Additionally, consider policy solutions to address the relationship between SIL and other challenges facing our society, such as behavioral health, community resiliency, and the changing role of technology in our lives.



Representative Seth Moulton (D-MA) previewed new legislation to address the built environment and intergenerational social connection.



Senator Maggie Hassan (D-NH) shared the work she has done on the Improving Measurements for Loneliness and Isolation Act.



Haben Girma, a disability rights advocate and WHO Social Connection Commissioner, spoke on solutions for marginalized communities that benefit everyone.





# Throughlines of the Summit

## Service: Everyone Has A Role To Play

### *The Event*

The nation's capital is home to some of our nation's most dedicated public servants. It was no coincidence that attendees from across the globe gathered at the **Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg Center**, located in the heart of Washington, D.C., with expansive views of the Capitol building. The Bloomberg Center serves as a hub for intersectoral collaboration, bringing together thought leaders from policy, business, academia, and nonprofits to address today's most complex challenges, including loneliness and social isolation. Hosting our Summit in this location underscored the importance of public service in fostering a more socially connected world and reminded us that everyone has unique roles and strengths to contribute.

"When you give people an opportunity to serve, the rest – a sense of belonging and social connection – will take care of itself."

– Patrick Kennedy

*Former U.S. Representative & Mental Health Advocate*

### *Ideas & Innovation*

Speaker Patrick Kennedy – a former U.S. Representative, person in recovery, lifelong mental health and addiction advocate, and founder of the **Kennedy Forum** – emphasized the importance of service and meaningful work in fostering social connection. He argued that addressing mental health and building more connected communities requires a shift in our societal perspective to recognize that everyone, regardless of their background or identity, has a role to play. Former Representative Kennedy highlighted the Peace Corps, originally established by President Kennedy, as a model program that promotes social connection and community-building through service. He stated, "When you give people an opportunity to serve, the rest will take care of itself," suggesting that when individuals have a meaningful role in their community, they naturally form social and community bonds. Further, establishing a culture rooted in compassion and collective well-being is integral to fostering a cohesive community that breeds connection. Integrating service and purpose into efforts to improve social connection at both the individual and community levels offers a holistic approach with numerous societal benefits – benefits that are experienced by those serving, those receiving service, as well as by the community as a whole.

#### Cultivators

Panelist Ann Shoket, CEO of **The Li.st** and Founder of **10 Minutes to Togetherness**, shared her framework on the various roles individuals play in fostering connection in workplaces and other environments. She suggested that every socially connected person either knows a 'cultivator' or is one themselves. Cultivators are those who use small, intentional actions to build connections and create networks in their workplaces and other spaces. Shoket explained that while we often believe



# Throughlines of the Summit



Our panel on Building a Culture of Connection: Bringing Prosocial Values into Practice. From left to right: Frederick Riley, Ann Shoket, Jared Seide, and moderator Josh Penny

connection is achieved through grand gestures, such as forming a social group at work, it is actually the micro actions—like a five-minute chat at someone’s desk or refilling a colleague’s coffee mug—that can be equally or even more impactful. It becomes the crucial role of others to respond and reciprocate in order to build a connected and supportive community.

## Community Weavers

Panelist Frederick Riley, Executive Director of **WEAVE: The Social Fabric Project at the Aspen Institute**, shared insights from his work with what his organization refers to as ‘Community Weavers.’ These ‘Weavers’ are individuals or groups dedicated to building trust within communities and bringing people together to foster more engaged and connected spaces. Riley noted that when his team asks communities to identify their leaders, the list extends beyond formal positions like mayors to include neighbors, leaders of community groups, and others who play these roles in a more informal capacity. Identifying and elevating the work of Weavers is essential to meet the true needs of communities and foster an inclusive and equitable system.



## ***Calls To Action***

- **For Practitioners and Researchers:** Integrate public service or work-related (e.g. employment, volunteering) components into SIL interventions and programs.
- **For Policymakers and Advocates:**
  - Champion the Community Mental Wellness & Resilience Act (**H.R.3073, S.1452**) which empowers communities to craft their own locally specific responses to the mental health problems caused by disasters and toxic stresses. The Act proposes the creation of a competitive grant program at the CDC aimed at developing, operating, or expanding community-based programs focused on building mental wellness and resilience using a public health approach. The bill includes a set-aside to specifically address mental health disparities in rural areas. Additionally, the initiatives will allow communities to develop their own culturally appropriate strategies, with a focus on supporting high-risk individuals, to sustain population-level mental wellness and resilience.
  - Support the National Strategy for Social Connection Act (**H.R. 8490, S.2350**), introduced by Senator Murphy (D-CT) and Representative Bera (D-CA). This legislation would establish an Office of Social Connection Policy within the Executive Office of the President. This office would be responsible for developing a strategy to integrate social connection policy across federal departments and agencies. The bill also appropriates funds for research on loneliness and social connection.



# Throughlines of the Summit

## Meeting Communities Where They Are *The Event*

Due to the intertwined and compounding effects of systemic racism, wealth inequality, shifting demographics, and other factors, social isolation and loneliness disproportionately affect certain communities and population segments. In planning the Summit, a key focus was ensuring representation from a diverse range of voices and lived experiences, including youth, older adults, and other key demographics. This included speakers such as Haben Girma, a disability rights lawyer and member of the WHO Commission on Social Connection; Arif Kamal from the American Cancer Society; Josh Penny and Ebele Onyema from Hinge's **One More Hour** initiative, which aims to increase in-person social engagement among Gen-Z; and Kristine Gloria from **Young Futures**, supporting youth empowerment and development through initiatives like **The Lonely Hearts Club**, which addresses the loneliness experienced by teens in the digital age. Incorporating these varied perspectives was crucial for developing a comprehensive understanding of loneliness and social isolation and tailoring effective approaches to meet the needs of different communities.

## *Ideas & Innovation*

### Trust & Intentionality

Multiple speakers, including Jared Seide from **Beyond Us & Them**, former U.S. Representative Patrick Kennedy and founder of the **Kennedy Forum**, and Frederick Riley from **WEAVE: The Social Fabric Project**, emphasized the importance of trust, intentionality, and vulnerability in fostering social connection at the individual, community, societal and federal policy levels. Seide noted that while many believe trust must come before vulnerability, the reality is often the opposite: "When there is a culture of vulnerability, trust gets built." Throughout the day, small group discussions repeatedly highlighted these values as essential for effective social connection work. Both attendees and speakers agreed that to identify and effectively engage those experiencing social isolation and loneliness, it is crucial to first build trust. Given the stigma associated with these struggles and the diverse experiences involved, addressing each community's unique context with intentionality is vital for advancing social connection initiatives.

### Alignment and Evidence

Representative Flood (R-NE) highlighted the difficulties of addressing social isolation and loneliness through policy due to their complex and multi-dimensional nature. He emphasized the diverse experiences of social isolation and loneliness across different communities and contexts, raising the question: "How can we address these issues in communities if we don't fully understand them?" Flood stressed the importance of defining social isolation and loneliness from the perspective of various community contexts before attempting to implement solutions. He also encouraged communities to collect data and personal stories to gain a deeper understanding of these challenges, which will help in designing interventions and programs that effectively meet the needs of community members.



Jillian Racoosin from the Coalition to End Social Isolation and Loneliness and Yung Pueblo, author and poet, discussed how communities can mend and heal through connection during a fireside chat that concluded the convening.





# Throughlines of the Summit



## *Calls To Action*

- **For Policymakers & Community Leaders:**

- Invest resources into standardizing measurements of SIL and encourage data collection to gain a comprehensive understanding of individual communities. Understand that definitions, measurements, and considerations may look different across the lifecourse and various cultures, races, and ethnicities.
  - Explore The Foundation for Social Connection's (F4SC) **Measurement Tools Inventory**, which includes the various measurement methods and evaluation tools related to social connection currently available.
- Explore F4SC's **Action Guide for Building Socially Connected Communities** for tools and resources on community assessments and data collection.
- Read about F4SC's **Systems Approach of Cross-sector Integration and Action across the Lifespan (SOCIAL) Framework**, and subsequent reports of how various sectors contribute to the Framework.
- Explore WEAVE: The Social Fabric Project's **Social Trust Index** to gain a better understanding of levels of trust in your community.



Attendees participated in small group discussions where they could exchange stories, strategies, and challenges to social connection across sectors and communities.



# Tying The Throughlines Together

## Calls To Action

### Collaboration

- Connect with one person you met at the event (or if you didn't attend, someone on your professional radar) via LinkedIn or email to talk about the work you're doing and/or connect personally.
- **Become a member of the Coalition to End Social Isolation** to contribute to the growing work of addressing social isolation and loneliness.

Collaboration Spotlight: Risa Wilkerson and Erin Peavey met at last year's GLAW event and went on to co-steer **The SOCIAL Framework in the Built Environment Sector**, in partnership with F4SC!



**Risa Wilkerson**  
(she/her)  
Executive Director  
Healthy Places by Design



**Erin Peavey**  
(she/her)  
Vice President  
Healthy and Well-being Leader,  
HKS Inc.

### Service

- Assign yourself a role: engage with a local representative or leader to advocate for a policy or issue that's important to you related to social connection, community- or trust-building, or otherwise. We invite you to review **the Coalition's policy priorities** for inspiration.

### Meeting Communities Where They Are

- Engage colleagues or partners in a brief review of your social connection work and ask the following questions:
- Which voices or communities are missing?
- Are people with lived experience at the decision-making table? If not, what new information or data might you need and who do you need to connect with to include these voices?



## Resources

We invite you to explore the wonderful resources and publications by our esteemed speakers, panelists, and community members.

- **The Action Guide to Built Socially Connected Communities**, The Foundation for Social Connection (F4SC)
- **Our Policy Priorities**, The Coalition to End Social Isolation and Loneliness (CESIL)
- **The SOCIAL Framework**, The Foundation for Social Connection
  - The Built Environment Sector
- **Social Connection as a Public Health Issue: The Evidence and a Systemic Framework for Prioritizing the “Social” in Social Determinants of Health**, Julianne Holt-Lunstad.
- **Social Trust Index**, WEAVE: The Social Fabric Project
- **‘Public Innovation: How 6 Local Governments Are Breaking Boundaries,’** Johns Hopkins Bloomberg Center for Public Innovation
- **‘Exploring the Intersection of Civic, Social, and Community Health’ Resource Guide**, Healthy Places by Design
- **‘Societal- and community-level strategies to improve social connectedness among older adults,’** Matthew Lee Smith, Jillian Racoosin, Risa Wilkerson, Ronald Matthew Ivey, Louise Hawkley, Julianne Holt-Lunstad, Thomas Cudjoe.
- **‘Social isolation, homebound status, and race among older adults: Findings from the National Health and Aging Trends Study (2011-2019)’**, Thomas Cudjoe, et al.
- **Haben: The Deafblind Woman Who Conquered Harvard Law**, Haben Girma.
- **The Big Life**, Ann Shoket.
- **Called To Serve**, Representative Seth Moulton.
- **Books by Former Representative Patrick Kennedy**
  - Profiles in Mental Health Courage
  - A Common Struggle: A Personal Journey Through the Past and Future of Mental Illness and Addiction
- **Books by Young Pueblo**
  - The Way Forward
  - Lighter
  - Clarity & Connection
  - Inward
- **Collaborate Now!**, Adam Seth Levine.





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