NO EVIL PROJECT
2020-2021
Founded in 2011 and becoming a nonprofit organization in 2018, the No Evil Project uses art and humour to challenge stereotypes and help people find commonality and understanding despite cultural, socio-economic, religious, racial, gender, physical and mental health, occupational, political, and ethnic differences.

Read what we’ve done in our third year!
2020 is the year of NEW OPPORTUNITIES for The No Evil Project! While most of us continue to cross paths on Zoom, I’m delighted that I got to see a small bunch of you here and there, even if I was behind a mask. I do choose to Breathe No Evil, and we continue to make it through. We have shifted, re-calibrated, made adjustments, and it’s allowed us to continue to share precious moments in our utterly new world.

We were five (5) months in when I wrote to you last, and the No Evil Project has experienced many milestones!

Our Conversations Series launched to bridge the isolation for five (5) dynamic groups of exceptional individuals. With our Conversations Co-founder, Amy, we have 5 trained co-leads ready to lead upcoming groups.

The Fitchburg Art Museum invited us back!!! We had a new exhibit in the Community Gallery featuring many of you, 105 on our banner and additional sets printed and added as more people participated after the exhibit started.

We have our own office and “studio” to photograph new members of the Project by appointment. Many thanks to the Pakachoag Center for opening its doors to our new workspace and to the many partner organizations who have welcomed us with open “air hugs” and big waves.

Speaking of big waves, I get to THANK YOU for all that you’ve done in the last three years.

I say this - and I mean it - We are a movement! Together. We are a consistent source of strength and empowerment, proving that good remains firmly alive! In 2020 and 2021, we took significant cautious steps, wearing our masks and managed a massive shift in our lives and how we relate to others. We responded and began living a completely new life in new work environments, jobs, scenarios and experienced an entirely new awareness of the value of life.

I continue to see you spread LOVE, the deep love that each of you has for humanity! I am touched by all of your thoughtful purpose statements.

I'm in the spirit of all these 5s, so here's a HIGH FIVE TO YOU!! 👍

I am committed to continuing to purposefully spread goodness everywhere you go and especially when you meet our new Board President, Tamisha Thompson. Tamisha has been leading our educational outreach and facilitating powerful conversations, workshops, and educator seminars since our inception. She now will facilitate the next phase of our Project. I’m 100% confident in Tamisha and have always found myself inspired by her leadership. She is a true warrior for goodness, and I’m glad to join her as a member of the new Board and continue our incredible work with you!!

Best wishes of continued safety and wellness to you, AJ
Letter from the Founder & Executive Director

Ten years ago in 2011, I started the No Evil Project using photography to challenge stereotypes and help people find commonality with others despite their differences. We’ve photographed people at festivals, photographed people at colleges, photographed people at schools, and photographed people at many other organizations. We’ve photographed over 9,000(!) people from 38 countries.

Except now, we haven’t had a photo shoot since October 2019.

Due to COVID-19, the festivals we participate in haven’t happened, and most colleges, schools, and businesses haven’t been in-person, or if they are, they aren’t having events that get people together. And I’m willing to bet that getting your photos taken during a company-wide group video chat, is probably quite the opposite of your idea of a fun time. Not to mention the photo quality of the average webcam makes professional photographers cry.

But even though our main method of running the project was impossible, continuing our mission was not.

For starters, if we couldn’t take the photos, we encouraged people to continue to take selfies for Breathe No Evil. Many people shared how they were helping others during the pandemic, and in April and May, this culminated in an exhibit at the Fitchburg Art Museum Community Gallery.

We also saw many people isolated in 2020, and wanted to bring people together in our own special No Evil Project way. So along with Amy Ebbeson, we created No Evil Project Conversations that was the next step to our photography program. Now, rather than only being able read about people that were different from you through what they wrote with their photos, we brought them together online so they could tell their stories, have conversations, and learn from each other.

Our work caught the eye of the forming Pakachoag Center, and while many organizations are scaling back during the pandemic, we’ve now been given dedicated office space outside my house. Our amazing supporters quickly stepped up and helped with furniture and studio lighting for the new space. Through the Center, we will also have shared meeting, programming, and exhibit space to further our mission.

And we now have our own mini photo studio... so we can photograph people whenever we’d like.

I would like to think that after ten years of doing the project, we’d be out of a job, but clearly there is much more work to do. While the pandemic has created fear and conflict, it has also encouraged compassion and brought people together. More widespread awareness of racial inequities in the past year have also seemed to make a wider range of people comfortable talking about differences, and the more we can challenge stereotypes and bring a variety of people together, the better we’ll be at solving the problems we face. This is our mission.

Thank you again to everyone who’s taken masked selfies, been part of conversations, our donors, sponsors, volunteers, and our board for your support in all ways and being a part of this movement. Let’s see what we can do!

[Signed]

Joe Thompson
Our Team

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Treasurer, Board of Directors

Tamisha Thompson
Secretary, Board of Directors

Troy B. Thompson
Founder & Executive Director

Volunteers
- Amy Ebbeson
- Bil Gardiner
- Kelsey Hopkins
- Raphael Rojas

Photo Shoot Stats

While this year’s stats are... not as impressive as the others, it's a pandemic, what can you do?

Events

People Photographed

Online Stats

Facebook: 1,326 Page Likes
252 Breathe No Evil Page Likes
Twitter: 151 Followers
Tumblr: 111 Followers

Instagram: 243 Followers
Pinterest: 853 Followers
E-mail Newsletter: 1,412 Subscribers
Website: 19,012 Users, 36,664 Page Views
Connecting through No Evil Project Conversations

Over 9,000 people have been photographed for the No Evil Project so far and shared a little bit about themselves, but that’s just part of their story. We’ve had great conversations at photo shoots with people about their labels or why they became part of various groups and we wanted a way to continue those conversations and share them with others. At the same time, social distancing and stress of the pandemic has made many people feel isolated and deal with anxiety and depression that they may not be used to, so together with Amy Ebbeson, a friend of the project and mental health expert, we created No Evil Project Conversations.

We got a diverse group of strangers together online once a week for five weeks to talk about what was going on in their lives as well as talking about differences. The theory being that as we got to know each other more, we could talk about dicier topics. We started with age the first week, then moved to mental and physical differences, then race, then religion, and finally politics.

So even though people were physically distancing they were meeting people they wouldn’t normally run into and learning more about people that are different from them. Rather than debating, people share their personal experiences so you can learn where they’re coming from even if you don’t agree with them or can’t relate. But many times, we find a lot of commonality as well.

It worked even better than planned and we had a great time. In addition to learning more about people that were different from them, participants helped others in the group connect with resources and experts, and we also learned about some great new restaurants and movies to check out. Many people have continued to meet after the five weeks were over, and we’re growing a community that will extend to in-person meetings in the future.

The opportunity these gatherings allowed for folks to reach out, to listen, to support, and to share, was wonderfully intimate and humanizing. I loved how it made me feel connected, especially in these more isolating times. Technology and focusing on NO EVIL in all those around us has been a gift for these times.

— Nancy McBride, Conversation Group 4

Sign up for a conversation group at noevilproject.com/conversations
Breathe No Evil in Fitchburg, Massachusetts

April 14th 2021 - May 10th 2021

Breathe No Evil is our COVID-19 friendly selfie version of the photo project created after we couldn’t do our usual events photographing people ourselves. Participants still choose labels, but there is just one pose: covering your mouth… with a mask, and many people choose pandemic related good deeds.

In 2018-2019 we had our first art museum exhibit at the Fitchburg Art Museum in Fitchburg, MA and it was a big success. So much so that we were invited back to showcase Breathe No Evil this year. With the pandemic, the museum was closed to the public, so it would be an online exhibit. That was easy, it was already an online exhibit.

As the opening grew closer, though, places started to reopen, and our virtual exhibit expanded into a physical exhibit. It would be the first in the Community Gallery since the museum reopened so we went all out. To get more local participation, the museum even created “Selfie Spots” that were placed throughout the building to encourage people to take photos of themselves for the exhibit with their favorite pieces in the museum.

With the pandemic, we weren’t able to have an opening reception, but there were still over 340 people who saw the physical exhibit in that month, and another 330 online. All of the exhibit text was available in English and Spanish. The museum’s gift shop even featured No Evil Project merchandise to support the organization and we sold a lot of shirts, mugs, pins, and of course Breathe No Evil masks.

In addition, as the online exhibit is always growing, we wanted to do the same at the museum as well. So even after the initial banner featuring 104 people and one dog was hung, we continued to print out new submissions and hang them on the wall throughout the length of the exhibit. Our first growing physical exhibit!

See it & participate at breathenoevil.org
Finding a Home in Auburn

Since starting in 2011, the project has been run out of our homes and coffee shops, and the photos we take have almost all been at festivals or at the organizations that want to participate.

This year, that changed with our collaboration with Pakachoag Center at Pakachoag Church in Auburn, MA. We now have a physical office and a mini photography studio so we can photograph people whenever we’d like and aren’t dependent on a venue having an event. Plus, anyone can setup an appointment to be photographed for the project without having to be part of a group, letting a wider variety of people participate.

As part of the growing Pakachoag Center, it will also allow us to interact and join forces with other organizations that bring people together. With the wide variety of spaces available from small rooms to large, we can have in-person group conversations, panel discussions, and other events, as well as have space for our own exhibits.

Introduced by a mutual colleague, conversations led to an explicit realization that the No Evil Project and Pakachoag Church share many common values and a sense of similar purposeful outreach to the wider community. We anticipate that mutual benefits will derive from operating in proximate space, prompted by ongoing interaction of personnel, the dynamic exchange of ideas, and program events either co-sponsored or open to the other organization.

I foresee that the “No Evil Project” will enhance the effectiveness and visibility of Pakachoag’s continuing community service efforts, which have included in the past such major efforts as establishing the first and primary AIDS support group in Central Massachusetts [the genesis of AIDS Project Worcester] as well founding and sustaining for many years the Pakachoag Community Music School of Greater Worcester. Pakachoag in turn can offer established institutional framework and physical identity which will offer footing for the “No Evil Project” as it seeks to grow its program and increase its visibility.

Pakachoag Church further views this cooperative arrangement as a potential model for engaging others in common dialogue, shared programming, mutual support and/or advocacy, and mindful awareness, and we welcome the sense of added institutional strength such a measured partnership can offer each participant.

— Dennis Knight, Senior Minister Emeritus
Pakachoag Church

Learn more about Pakachoag Center at www.pakachoagcenter.org
Thank You to Our Contributors

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- Troy B. Thompson Photography
The 2020-2021 Fiscal Year was significant in a number of ways. While many institutions found their programming halted, deferred or even suffered closure, NEP expanded its programming to address mental health and public wellness. The nimbleness of the institution is reflected in the budgetary numbers, which remained consistent with modest, continued annual growth since the creation of the non-profit. With only a slight deficit, funding received from private and institutional donors supported the expanded programming of the Conversation Series and the Breathe No Evil initiative, both of which will continue as programmatic offerings.

For the coming year, due to the continued uncertainty surrounding group events and in-person school partnerships, we are recommending a conservative budget based on the current level of income and expense. With the new location and in-kind donations of space and services, we are committed to maintaining current program expectations and hope that in the coming new year, we will be hosting on-site events and photo shoots as well as virtual curricular programming, which may contribute greater revenue. However, as we are facing the effects of the Delta variant on mandates, we reserve the option to revisit our budget, should need be, at our second 2021-2022 Board Meeting.

—H.N. Kurtz, Treasurer