



David Grand Projects His Trauma Expertise onto Movie Screen



Playwright, director, acting coach, teacher, author, psychotherapist, trauma expert—these are only some of the titles that **David Grand** '76W, PhD, lists on his long and impressive resume.

Recently, the accomplished Dr. Grand added yet another title to the list: film documentarian. In the weeks after Sept. 11, 2001, he treated many traumatized firefighters, police, and emergency medical technicians using “brainspotting,” a method that he developed to identify and relieve neurophysiological pain.

Now, five years later, he has made *Come Hell or High Water*, a cinema verite-style narrative documentary that follows the healing journey of three trauma survivors from New York who, with the filmmaker/trauma therapist, travel to post-Katrina New Orleans. The three survivors include Rose, the mother of a firefighter who died on 9/11; Judy, a singer who survived a nightclub suicide bombing in Tel Aviv; and Dennis, permanently disabled in an industrial accident.

According to Dr. Grand, a crucial aspect of a trauma survivor's recovery is telling his or her story, but the acknowledgement of the effects of trauma on its victims has been historically short-lived. As an example, Dr. Grand cites the fleeting attention given to traumatized soldiers returning from the two World Wars and from Korea and Vietnam.

“Hurricane Katrina and 9/11 were remarkable events in the sense that they brought attention to the effects of these existential traumas, which made their mark on millions of our citizens,” he says, explaining that when trauma is repressed, it leaves its survivors with symptoms such as flashbacks, hypervigilance, and exaggerated startle response.

Come Hell or High Water, which highlights in detail some of the aftereffects of trauma, was shown at the Metropolitan New York Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church on Riverside Drive in Manhattan on the 5th anniversary of 9/11. **Thomas Taylor** '06W, a Lutheran minister and fire chaplain who graduated from Wurzweiler's clergy program in July, referred many of the survivors of the attacks to Dr. Grand for treatment.

“The film shows how we were touched and affected by the people we met, the places we visited, and the experiences we shared,” says Dr. Grand, who lives in Massapequa Park on Long Island with **Nina Cohen** '75W, his wife, also a graduate of Wurzweiler and a professional singer. ❖