

**UPDATE****Spring 2025**

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www.langandassociates.net*Serving individuals, communities, business, government, and organizations since 1992***Weathering: A Penalty of an Unjust Society****By Marsha M. Lang, MS, JD***Custom strategies and programs to support how we live, work and interact*

Today's Lang & Associates first began as *Healthy by Design* in 1992. Based on my experiences in law, education and healthcare, we focused on aspects of preventing problems and improving performance. Emphasizing prevention over cure spoke to individuals as well as a business' bottom line. It promoted a *better* quality of life, health and wellness through scientifically informed choices.

As time passed, I was surprised to discover my concept was not relatable to all. Some of my colleagues' life experience did not include choice. I saw patients who seemed more "vulnerable" than others to all manners of disease, and at younger ages. More recently, working with clients addressing issues related to racism has left no doubt of the deep, longstanding structural impediments to a *basic* quality of life.

During a presentation by Dr. Arline T. Geronimus, I learned that her decades of research, results and conclusions, captured in her 2023 book **Weathering: The Extraordinary Stress of Ordinary Life in an Unjust Society**, provided a context for many data points, observations and perspectives I have gathered through the years.

The "weathering hypothesis" was first proposed by Geronimus in 1992 after investigating inferior birth outcomes for Black women as their maternal age increased. She postulated cumulative racism to be the cause. Subsequent research extended the concept across the life course for men and women in a variety of culturally, socially and economically oppressed groups in the United States.

Geronimus coined the term "weathering" to describe a process that encompasses the physiological effects of living in marginalized communities that bear the brunt of racial, ethnic, religious, and class discrimination. Weathering afflicts human bodies – all the way down to the cellular level – as they grow, develop, and age in a racist, classist society.

Geronimus contends that health and aging have more to do with how society treats us than how we take care of ourselves.

The good news is by properly identifying a phenomenon that runs through historical, political, material, environmental and psychological dimensions, the possibilities expand for moving entire populations toward health equity and more. Geronimus offers key steps (sidebar) for disrupting ideologies and processes that activate weathering. The choice to evolve is ours.

The Way Forward

from **Weathering** by
Arline T. Geronimus, ScD

- **Think Biopsychosocially: Address stealth inequities that surround us**
- **Think Holistically: Transcend departments, compartments, and determinants**
- **Do Not Erase Oppressed Stakeholders: Do nothing about US without US**
- **Reorient public health science and practice to better address needs of working reproductive-age adults**
- **Recognize all our fates are linked**

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