All that you touch you change.
All that you change changes you.

Reflection

- Octavia Butler
Sometimes I wonder, what is the maximum capacity of the heart and mind of the Fools? How many creative and essential programs, how many meetings and personal conversations and doorbells can we host or attend to within 24 hours? How far does the purple ball of yarn extend as we toss it to yet one more new person or group that appears in our circle as we ask their names and what has brought them into this community of Fools? With each toss of the yarn, the web of relationships and the work of Faithful Fools grows richer and broader and more wonderfully diverse and complex. To have room in our hearts and minds, to have the necessary trust and discernment, requires constant reflection. Kay Jorgensen’s voice is ever-present reminding us that “our reflection must be as intense as our action.”

Kay and I used to say that it was a good thing that we never made a 5-year or 10-year plan because our imagination did not contain all that has come to be a part of the life of Faithful Fools. We had ideas and wrote a mission statement. We desired to be present on the streets and to creatively respond to the needs around us. We walked with a deep trust and we were open to being surprised. We would often read aloud the poem by Rumi that ended with the line, “Your deepest presence is in every small contracting and expanding, the two as beautifully balanced and coordinated as bird wings.”

The tremendous energy and expansion this past year in all areas of our work have felt similar to our beginning years. Our advocacy work has become extremely important as San Francisco now struggles with an income inequality that is growing faster than any other city in the U.S. It is people who are being displaced. This means our work of accompanying of individuals who need housing and services has intensified. It requires more people to pay attention and care. It requires more financial resources to cover basic needs, and continuous reflection as the social dynamics and the economic forces in the city are complex and even brutal on the lives of so many people and neighborhoods. Students from our educational partner, the University of San Francisco, together with residents from the Tenderloin neighborhood have become part of this conversation and advocacy as their service-learning commitment with Faithful Fools.

The capacity of our hearts and minds and what all happens within 24 hours amaze and surprise us all. We thank you for your contributions and ask for your continued support as donors, volunteers and participants in our day-to-day work, which extends into streets throughout the U.S. and Nicaragua. May we know that together our capacity to act and reflect as a global community of faithful and committed people is as boundless and as beautifully balanced as bird wings.
POLISHING THE MIRROR

With reflection

When someone at the Fools announces that there will be a reflection, I usually have a tickle of excitement. I am always curious about the path that any reflection will take. There are a few aspects of reflection that I find particularly interesting.

First, when I am in a reflection with a group of people, I often find that what I take for granted might not be true at all. For example, last week we were reflecting on the word “hope.” Turns out that two of us had one idea about the beauty and utility of that common word. The other two thought “hope” was a set-up for avoiding the present moment and turning away from reality. So, what do we really mean when we say, “I hope everything turns out okay?” In another group, we were looking at the idea of spirituality. Wow, what a confusion of ideas came up through which lens to see yourself. To be seen.

Reflection is a review of what we are doing, what we’ve done, and a preview of the next possible moment. Reflection is a review of what we are doing, what we’ve done, and a preview of the next possible moment. To see yourself reflected in loving eyes. The best eyes through which to learn who you are who you can become. Whose eyes are on you? Who sees themselves in yours?

A Meditation For Hope

Can we separate ourselves from others and their experience without feeling isolated or schizophrenic? Or are we, of all things, indifferent to the other’s eyes and now cast adrift in a strange hermit existence? And are we afraid to go to the Tenderloin because of people living in cardboard boxes on the streets? Why? Because we’ve become more insensitive to people, unaware that by doing so we’re further isolating ourselves and our spirit. Maybe by looking in each other’s eyes, the conflicts we have here will recede, wars abroad will abate, our children will have new hope and we will all live more abundantly.

A Special Note to Rev. JD Benson

We Fools are so very grateful that JD has been with us this last year and a half. It is due to her efforts and considerable talent that we now have a street chaplaincy program, which had been but a dream before JD brought it to life. She also brought our most recent poetry book into being. And so much more! It hardly seems enough to simply say, “Thank you!” So we will tie that purple yarn about your wrist to keep you connected to all the faithful Fools around the world.

One of the things I love about this place is that you get this understanding that reflection is part of our everyday life, our everyday relationships and choices. I notice that opportunity, a space allowing this reflection to happen, while I am in the Street Zendo, while I participate in the Bible Study, while I enjoy Write Now! While I talk to my neighbors around me, while I read a book, while my community member and I sing together at home, while I cook and clean, while I talk to my family and friends back home in Chicago. Reflection allows me to just be me; reflection shows me a form of hospitality and it is how I show hospitality for myself. In this relationship with reflection, I continue to grow and expand who I am; then it also welcomes others around me to do the same. I am very thankful for being part of Mercy Volunteer Corps because this experience has allowed me to reflect as a young adult on many topics, stirring up my thoughts and ideas, and creating deeper reflection in solitude and in community.

Faithful Fools Welcomes Bianca Huerta

Our First Mercy Corps Volunteer

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From nearly the beginning, when Kay and Carmen first walked the streets, I took to heart the message: Once we know we’re really Fools—and that it’s a good thing (!)—that’s it. The switch is flipped and there is no permanent escape from that consciousness. It’s not always easy to speak truth to power. It’s not always the choice any of us makes. As Faithful Fools, we delight in play and folly. We take issues seriously and take ourselves with a huge grain of salt. It all adds up to finding our way, together, in a kind of balancing act.

Kay Jorgensen has been my guide, more than she can know, holding a lantern before me, leading me toward that switch! And now, as I prepare to leave the company of the Fools at the end of December, I know the light she carried so artfully will stay with me. Kay and Carmen and all of you will travel forward to what comes next.

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Announcing

The Fools Fantabulous, Incredulous Most Amazing, Handy-Dandy Emporium of Gloria Emporia!!!!

We know you have been longing for your own Fools’ most fashionable T-shirt. Your hankering for Fools’ poetry is not easily denied; we know that too. So you, your friends, your family can now go to the Fools’ online Emporium and find Fools’ merch (as they say in swanky circles). Go to the Fools website (www.faithfulfools.org), click on the Fools’ Store button and make a suggested donation. Your dollars will support the work of the Fools and your desire to be Foolish high style fashion or have Fools’ Poetry gracing your coffee table will be fulfilled.

The Institute for Street Level Learning

Interns!!! Interns!!!

Interns continue to enliven and enrich the life of the Fools. The general definition of an internship is a temporary position with an emphasis on learning as you go (some folks call it “on-the-job training,” but we know it’s “on-the-spot-learning,” don’t we?). The Institute for Street Level Learning, which is the name for the education arm at Faithful Fools, has interns from our academic partners and from the community.

Over this last year, we have been fortunate to have Elizabeth Frey, now a graduate of the University of San Francisco, and Kevin Mann, now in his last year at Starr King School for the Ministry, as our student interns. And Jackie Hider, whose focus is on learning with us about Buddhism and chaplaincy, and Thomas Atwood, who focuses on accompaniment and community organizing with Fools Mission, continue as our community interns.

Service Learning: Reflection Meets Poetry Meets Students

What better way to learn about Tenderloin poets than to read their work and create an anthology? That’s what the Martín-Baró Scholars (MBS) did last year. They curated the poetry of the first five volumes of Living in the Land of the Dead into one extraordinary collection. For the first time (that we know of), Fools’ poetry was the textbook for a college literature class, as the MBS students studied Tenderloin poetry in preparation for creating the new book. Then they interviewed the poets in order to understand the poetry from “the inside out,” as one student put it.

This is service learning at its best: Students study poetry, poets engage students, and poetry takes on a new life in a new volume.

Finally, this project was the subject of a presentation for the National Society for Experiential Education in October. Presenting to a national audience gave us the chance to reflect deeply on how studying and publishing poetry creates ever widening circles of reflection and learning.

We Have An ACE!!!

The University of San Francisco’s McCarthy Center for Public Service and the Common Good appointed an ace of an ACE to help us out this year with service learning. As a site that serves multiple classes each semester, we found we were a bit breathless until Dylan Moore, a former Martín-Baró Scholar, came our rescue. She is our Ambassador for Community Engagement (ACE). In her role as a student liaison, she helps students schedule their service learning activities, helps us create meaningful projects and activities, and conducts on-campus reflection to help students make strong, meaningful connections between the service work they do and their academic studies. We are so grateful to have her with us.

Dylan Moore, Ambassador for Community Engagement (ACE)

Elizabeth Frey, Kevin Mann, Jackie Hider, and Thomas Atwood, our student and community interns

Seeking shelter during the Seven-Day Street Retreat

MBS Students with noses of course!
NEW NEWS

The Healing Well

The Healing Well is a wonderful new presence in the Fool’s Court and in the Tenderloin Community. In June 2015 Kathy Curran, the Executive Director, and Jordan Bouchard, together with a magnificent group of volunteers and program participants, arrived at our door, and we welcomed them in. They came with a vision to be “a safe community for healing, renewal and growth.”

Since June The Healing Well has been offering classes in Movement, Mindfulness and Contemplative Practices, Substance Abuse Support Groups, Creative Arts, Physical Fitness and Healthy Eating at the Fool’s Court and St. Francis Living Room.

They love the community and the wholehearted welcome they have received at Faithful Fools, and we love their programs and kindhearted presence that is offered to all who walk through the door.

A Street Chaplain!!!

We are street level learners and street level practitioners, so it makes sense that we would partner with St. Francis Memorial Hospital, The Gubbio Project (a safe place for those without housing to sleep during the day), and the St. Francis Living Room (a senior drop-in center) to provide a street chaplain. Rev. Laurie Lyter Bright has taken up the challenge to fulfill her Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) training hours both on the streets of the Tenderloin and at St. Francis Memorial Hospital.

A New Home . . . 10 Years Later

It was June 1, 2005 that Ray first put in an application to get housing, and it was Aug. 5, 2015 that the room became a reality. For Ray, who spent time in and out of the shelter system, the road was long in part because staying in a shelter long enough to get a room was fraught with the risks that go with being in a shelter: having possessions stolen, rarely being able to sleep, encountering people who threatened physical harm. While the shelter system has much to offer, it wasn’t a route inside for Ray.

The room finally came when a chance visit to an SRO (single room occupancy hotel) revealed that Ray’s name had come up but the contact info was out of date. That was in May. Then the longest road of all began: getting through the paperwork, the inspections, the delays. Each week began with the promise of “just a few days more,” but then ended in disappointment, “Not yet.” So each week it got harder and harder to stay with the process, but we did. Ray and Sam together overcame the discouragement, the frustration, and yes, the tears (Sam’s and Ray’s alike).

Then it happened! The key to a room with lots of light streaming in a huge window. Ray is at home now . . . more than 10 years later. Ray wasn’t alone in this because the Fools are a presence here in the neighborhood, willing to go through the process together. We are grateful to all the people whose contributions make this presence possible.

Goings On

Over the last year

Celebrating Birthdays

Our dear friend Richard Kander celebrated his 80th at the Fools with family, fools and friends.

Charles Blackwell and Bisola Maringay perform Charles’ poem for the launch party of In Plain Sight.

Carmen Barsody, rAmu Aki, and Sam Dennison receive a Community Partner Award on behalf of Faithful Fools from University of San Francisco McCarthy Center for Public Service and Common Good.

Ray signs rental papers

Sam and Ray hang in there together

Ray sign rental papers

Play, Mary guns, play!

Peace Pole

Oscard’s Garden Party, June 2015

Oscard invited a few hundred favorite friends, including Peace and Alfonso, over to the Demonstration Gardens to celebrate Fathers Day, the Summer Solstice, and the Tenderloin. People sat, made a map of TL Hopes & Dreams, and played, played, played. A good time was had by all. Thanks to Judi Eranny for these fine photos.

And more highlights by the hundreds of Abobo’s Kitchen, which celebrated its 10th birthday in partnership with the Demonstration Gardens with Peace and Alfonso among the participants. Mary Smith served dinner. Grace of Body.


Conversation at the Fool’s Court: Above: Kay and Jesse Johnson enjoy a moment in the great room. Below: Kathy Curran and Carmen in the kitchen.

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Bisola Maringay and Charles Blackwell perform Charles’ poem for the launch party of In Plain Sight.

Mary guns, play!

It’s an ebb and flow of attention, like the open and close of bird wings. Human beings are enormously creative, making new things, making new meaning, making new life constantly. Yet we are capable of destructive creativity as we are of life-giving creativity. This is the hope and tragedy of human life, is it not? The consequences of our actions are not always evident, nor are they predictable.

When I was very young, my brother and I took on the task of removing a very heavy iron vise from the workbench in the garage. My part in the task was simple enough: unscrew the last bolt until the vise came loose. I did it diligently and then suddenly, the vise fell and it landed on my brother’s foot. He let out a howl of pain that still echoes in my ears. I remember how I just twisted it, humming away, laughing and playing, we merrily. It’s an ebb and flow of attention, like the open and close of bird wings. Human beings are enormously creative, making new things, making new meaning, making new life, is it not? The consequences of our actions are not always evident, nor are they predictable.

That is a childhood instance of going through the motions, casually and thoughtlessly. The adult away at that bolt until it let loose, not thinking at all what we were doing. I remember how I just twisted it, humming away, laughing and playing, we merrily. It’s an ebb and flow of attention, like the opening and closing of bird wings.

Responsibility can only develop when a person reflects—not on himself but on what he’s doing.

Hannah Arendt

Is a Home Indeed

The Fools’ Court, our home and the center of our activities, required much tender loving care this last year. The rains came and the roof leaked, so we resealed it; our purple poncho to protect them. When is it best to be confrontational? When do we caress? When to be silent witnesses? When to be insistent? How to keep going despite despair? Our intentions are shaped by anger and frustration, also by good will and camaraderie. But the impact of our actions can not be understood only by the light of our intentions. Rather we must ask ourselves the harder questions about the impact of our actions. Did we achieve what we’d hoped for? Was there harm along the way? Has there been progress? Is our circle larger or smaller? What have we learned?

It’s reflection, be it with others or in a moment of solitude, that gives meaning to our actions. It’s not who we are that ultimately makes the child, but what we do. If our actions are to make a better world, we must reflect and act and reflect and act, in a constant ebb and flow of attention, like the opening and closing of bird wings.

Sam Dennison

A Home in Need

The Fools’ Court, our home and the center of our activities, required much tender loving care this last year. The rains came and the roof leaked, so we resealed it; our purple poncho to protect them. When is it best to be confrontational? When do we caress? When to be silent witnesses? When to be insistent? How to keep going despite despair? Our intentions are shaped by anger and frustration, also by good will and camaraderie. But the impact of our actions can not be understood only by the light of our intentions. Rather we must ask ourselves the harder questions about the impact of our actions. Did we achieve what we’d hoped for? Was there harm along the way? Has there been progress? Is our circle larger or smaller? What have we learned?

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Sam Dennison

Fools In Action:
We Seek to Meet People Where They Are Through Art & Advocacy

MANAGUA, NICARAGUA – “We as young people are committed to learning and grown so that we can be activists in our community,” says Arlen Casco. She lives, works, and learns in the barrio, Ciudadela Nicaraguan, where Bufones Fieles (Faithful Fools) and where Franciscan Associates of Managua have a home and a presence. Arlen tells us that she, Tyler Butterfield (a visiting volunteer), and Karina Duran have taken their talents to the children. There in the barrio, these three decided to connect directly with the children to learn about poetry, dance, and all manner of creative pursuit.

Arlen lives at the Casa Misionera Franciscana, which is a half block down the street from the La Corte (Fool’s Court) and St. Francis of Assisi School. The Casa was built by the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls when they lived there in the 1990s. Arlen and other Faithful Fools host activities and visitors in the Casa Misionera Franciscana, much like Carmen and Sam and other Faithful Fools do in San Francisco. Tyler came to the barrio via Carmen and the Healing Well, which now resides at the Fools in SF, and Karina spent a year as a Franciscan Volunteer with the Sisters of Little Falls, much as Bianca Huerta is spending a volunteer year with the Fools in SF as a Mercy Volunteer.

These creative ventures just go to show that we, Fools & Bufones alike, reach out to our neighbors and grow a community of citizens. Tyler and Arlen were determined to let them know their rights. To that end, activists like Kim Mosteiro, James Pounders, and Kat Callaway met, organized, and mobilized from the Fools Court. They walked the streets registering voters, they tabled at community events educating everyone possible, and they marched to City Hall together to show everyone how to get their voices heard loud and clear. By election day, more than 180 new voters were registered.

Of greater importance is the growing number of voter activists who are continuing to register their neighbors and grow a community of citizens. If any one knows Street Level organizing, it’s the Fools and Tenderloin Votes.

TENDERLOIN, SAN FRANCISCO - “We have to make a difference,” said Jesse James Johnson, poet and activist. That’s how it all began. Jesse Johnson looked Sam Dennison right in the eye and said, “We need a place to meet. Can we meet at the Fools? And Sam, supported by many others, said, “Yes.” So began a movement to bring more Tenderloin voters to the ballot box.

Tenderloin Votes is a small but growing group of residents, Fools, and volunteers who are determined to register voters on the streets, especially those who think they aren’t eligible. People without homes and people with criminal convictions often think they aren’t allowed to vote. But under California law they are, and Tenderloin Votes activists are determined to let them know their rights.

To that end, activists like Kim Mosteiro, James Pounders, and Kat Callaway met, organized, and mobilized from the Fools Court. They walked the streets registering voters, they tabled at community events educating everyone possible, and they marched to City Hall together to show everyone how to get their voices heard loud and clear. By election day, more than 180 new voters were registered.

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Krina and the children dance, dance, dance

Kat Callaway creates Get Out the Vote signs

Jesse and Tenderloin Votes

Tyler and Arlen

A Home in Need

Is a Home Indeed

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A Presence That Disturbs

My most recent street retreat included a magnificent conversation at St. Anthony’s. She was an elderly woman with thin, gray hair who smiled through broken teeth. She told me, with a shy pride, “I just made a You-Tube channel.” I almost danced at that remark, which was about the last thing I’d have expected to come out of her mouth.

And then, back on the street, some big guy in a suit was slamming a woman onto the back of his car, twisting her arm up behind her. It looked like a cop move, but then again, he was dressed in a business suit.

I stepped into the street and said, “Excuse me, sir, are you a police officer?” “Yes,” he said, and he ordered me, “Step back up onto the curb.”

“Could I see your identification please?” I asked. “You step back up on the curb or I’ll have two of you in handcuffs!” he roared. I considered; stepped back onto the curb. I pulled out my cellphone and began taking video of the encounter, which, amazingly, began to calm. He let the woman go with a reprimand; she apparently had slapped his car because he’d cut the corner too close to two little dogs she had on a leash in the crosswalk. They both went on their ways. And so did I, but it stayed with me. Should I have backed down when I did? Would standing my ground, perhaps drawing a cop move, but then again, he was dressed in a business suit.

Later that night I pulled out a poem I’d first read in high school English Lit class – an old chestnut by Wordsworth, “Tintern Abbey.” My eyes fastened on the words, “a presence that disturbs.” I began to think of how it is we Faithful Fools are in the streets; how the streets are in us.

And what about the larger problem? – that a white guy in a suit, showing no police identification whatsoever, can handle a woman on the street like that, and walk away with the woman apologizing to him?

Twenty years ago, Kay began walking the streets in a way that invited connection. When I walked with her as an intern at the Faithful Fools, I marveled at this way of walking, wondered if I could bring it into my ministry, wherever that would be. The Fools define “ministry” as a way of being in the world that mirrors the presence of God. People understand different things by that word “God.” So sometimes we say “mirror the presence of Love” or “reflect kindness to anyone we meet.”

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REFLECTION: Constant Conversion

Because of my long-term association with Faithful Fools and the readings co-founder Kay Jorgensen introduced to us, I learned to rely on the reflection process, “Act, Reflect, Learn (new paradigm) and Repeat.” So when I bumped into the Franciscan practice the Sisters call “constant conversion” my AHA was Oh Yeah! My old friend the born-again, and again, and again…Unitarian! There it is: Unitarian, Franciscan and Foolish. We humans reflect, we recognize ourselves, we acknowledge this new knowledge with others, and we are renewed.

Melissa Farfaman, Faithful Fool, Unitarian Universalist, Franciscan Associate

A Garden of Health

Wednesday class. They have learned to use plastic bottles to implement a drip irrigation system. Their mothers have also begun to collaborate with the children in the garden.
It’s Just Too Hard

In San Francisco, we exist in an urban culture full of technological miracles that often make a person feel as though he were inside of a science fiction novel; but inside this Metropolis the old wise sayings are still there to remind us that little has really changed. No one can survive on this planet alone. Going it alone all the time is too hard and that is just a fact. The ego probably doesn’t like that idea, but I think it’s true.

Carmen of the Faithful Fools recently accompanied me to the I.R.S at the Federal Building. This was a wonderful thing for her to do because I have a major phobia about dealing with bureaucratic institutions that want to ruin my life. I know that I should accept them and see the good in them, but I don’t; so when dealing with these creatures a wave of relief comes over me if just one other person can be on my side. All that person has to do, if they want, is watch me squirm. The grounding provided by someone who is on my side being there will do the rest. Just by being a witness to what another person is going through can add a validity to that experience that it wouldn’t have had before.

But most of all, accompaniment will help reduce the isolation most of us feel when dealing with human powers larger than ourselves and beyond our control.

So thank you, Carmen. Without you accompanying me, I probably would not have gone, and that would have been a mistake. Thank you! Even getting through the metal detector was easier with you there.

Ed Bowers

Monica Lee

I Came to Be a Witness, Instead I was Seen Quite Clearly

I choose my clothing carefully for the day: t-shirt, hoodie, and basketball shorts borrowed from my boyfriend. I wear glasses and no makeup. I’d volunteered to be one of the attending Fools for the Starr King School for the Ministry student visit. I know one of the day’s activities will be walking the streets of the Tenderloin. So I dress to deflect attention. I dress to deflect my own self-consciousness. A young woman walking alone on the street draws the eye as surely as gamblers watch the roulette ball cross its wheel. It doesn’t even matter whether that’s true; I believe it, and that belief makes me walk quickly and keep my guard up. But I don’t want that removal during this day. I’ve come to the streets to witness, and for me, that involves shedding the vulnerability of being witnessed myself.

We’re sent out on our walk saying: “What holds us separate? What keeps us separated? As we walk the streets, what still connects us?” We’re told to come back in an hour.

You can cover a lot of ground in that time, even on foot, but I only make it half a block. I stop at the corner of Hyde and Turk to watch a tiny terrier on the corner of Hyde and Turk to watch a tiny terrier dressed in a red princess outfit. He’s attracting a lot of laughter and attention.

I fall into conversation a woman there. Her name is J. She’s an Asian woman, maybe fifty, sitting on the cushioned seat of her unfolded walker. We’re at a busy corner, a bus stop, but she doesn’t seem to be in a hurry to get anywhere. Neither am I, for a change. We talk for nearly an hour. Mostly, she talks and I listen. She has a friend who travels a lot, who’d brought her back a souvenir from the Great Wall of China. She hopes to go some day herself. Also, she’s kind. She has a new pack of cigarettes for a friend who’s too broke to buy his own. Pragmatic too – it’s an off-brand, cheaper than her own beloved Camels.

It feels good to listen in this unrushed way. There’s a technique in therapy called “reflective listening.” It involves listening attentively, then offering your own thoughts back to check your understanding and to encourage the other person to open further. I try to channel this, to use my listening as a compassionately held mirror for J. Yet over the course of our conversation, there are things she says that poke holes in this idea of myself as benignly passive. She asks me what I’m doing on the street. It’s a sincere question and not unkind, but it shatters the notion that my dressing down makes me pass as anything besides who I am. And at the end of our conversation, she tells me she likes me. “People come in here with ideas on how to help push people around getting them to fit. You’re not like that.” I leave feeling humbled by J’s regard.

Here’s the thing: to witness means to submit yourself to being witnessed. I think some part of us understands this in a very deep and fundamental way. They call it Ubuntu in South Africa. Hindus call it Ahimsa. Newton called it the third law of physics: For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Every act of engagement is simultaneously an act of vulnerability. “All that you touch you change; all that you change, changes you.” It’s terrifying, and yet there’s an irrevocable integrity to it; anything less would be unjust. I’m grateful to J for the reminder.

Ed Bowers and Bernadette White talking with Micah Frazier about harm reduction and resilience, Nov. 2014

Kate Sulzer and Kay Jorgensen

Go It Alone?

Kay Jorgensen, co-founder of Faithful Fools, has taken her Fools Way across the bay. In March, she moved to Chaparral House, a non-profit, highly rated elder care home. Kay keeps a red nose handy and a ready smile available for the caregivers, residents, and administrators. It won’t surprise you to know that she frequently visits the Fools for programs, parties, and reflection.

Narcissus
Captivated by his face
on the water
Lost in his gaze upon himself
Remains until death
self-gazing.

Dorian Grey
while his image
in his painting aged
his projected popular face never faded.
Yes, when he gazed on
his aging image
He recognized his inner self (ie)?

Yes, when he gazed on
his projected popular face never faded.
In his painting aged
while his image
Dorian Grey
self-gazing.

Remains until death
Lost in his gaze upon himself
on the water
Selfies

It’s Just Too Hard

In San Francisco, we exist in an urban culture full of technological miracles that often make a person feel as though he were inside of a science fiction novel; but inside this Metropolis the old wise sayings are still there to remind us that little has really changed. No one can survive on this planet alone. Going it alone all the time is too hard and that is just a fact. The ego probably doesn’t like that idea, but I think it’s true.

Carmen of the Faithful Fools recently accompanied me to the I.R.S at the Federal Building. This was a wonderful thing for her to do because I have a major phobia about dealing with bureaucratic institutions that want to ruin my life. I know that I should accept them and see the good in them, but I don’t; so when dealing with these creatures a wave of relief comes over me if just one other person can be on my side. All that person has to do, if they want, is watch me squirm. The grounding provided by someone who is on my side being there will do the rest. Just by being a witness to what another person is going through can add a validity to that experience that it wouldn’t have had before.

But most of all, accompaniment will help reduce the isolation most of us feel when dealing with human powers larger than ourselves and beyond our control.

So thank you, Carmen. Without you accompanying me, I probably would not have gone, and that would have been a mistake. Thank you! Even getting through the metal detector was easier with you there.

Ed Bowers

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Monica Lee

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Monica Lee
Faithful Fools
Mission Statement

We are a ministry of presence
That acknowledges each human’s incredible worth.
Aware of our judgments, we seek to meet people
Where they are through
The arts, education, advocacy, and
Accompaniment.
We participate in shattering myths
About those living in poverty,
Seeing the light, courage, intelligence, strength,
And creativity of people we encounter.
We discover on the streets our common humanity
Through which celebration, community, and
healing occur.