



THE FROMM INSTITUTE  
FOR LIFELONG LEARNING  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

# FROMM FOCUS

*The Newsletter of the Fromm Institute*

Issue #1 • September 14, 2020

## FROMM FORGES FORWARD IN A NEW WORLD BECAUSE OF THE SUPPORT OF OUR COMMUNITY

First, I hope all of you are well and that your family, friends, and loved ones are too. At my house, I live with my husband, his cousin, and our nephew. Most of the time that makes me feel very fortunate, but there have been several times when it feels like I don't have enough space. It brings back memories of being five years old, stuck at home with my brother on a rainy day ("Mom, he's breathing on me!"). In spite of my many complaints, I am often reminded how fortunate I truly am. I have a job I love. I work with a fun, lighthearted and extremely hard-working team. We have a supportive Board of Directors, a wonderful faculty, and appreciative students who value us and the work we do. I have a loving family, a comfortable home, and my loved ones are all safe. As bad as things are, there is so much to appreciate.

I would like to say thank you to all of you for the community we have created together at the Fromm Institute – a community that forges ahead in spite of the many challenges facing us in these uncertain times. Thank you to all of you who have enrolled in our online Fall Session – more than 1,100 of you start classes this week. Thank you to our Fall faculty, led by our Academic Advisor Jonathan Bailey, who quickly learned new technology and who continue to innovate, creating the wonderment of learning that underlies the foundation of this community. Thank you to our Board of Directors and the Fromm Family for continuing to support our program both financially and personally through their involvement and participation in our classes.

Thank you to our diligent staff who this year were challenged to flip on a dime. They worked tirelessly to create an entirely new Fromm Institute program while making it look effortless, and they patiently teach our students this new technology, ensuring their comfort and bolstering their confidence to turn to us for support when they need it. Thank you to Fr. Paul Fitzgerald and the University of San Francisco for the technology and support that enable us to offer online classes. Thank you to our donors who have given additional contributions, scholarship support, estate gifts, or gifts in honor or in memory of friends and family. Finally, thank you to all of you for your patience as we all explore this new world of online learning.

In my mind, Hanna and Alfred Fromm are proudly looking down on all of us and at all of these things blooming from the community they envisioned and created back in 1976. To those of you who are joining the Fromm Institute for the very first time, my only regret is that you are not able to experience this community in person – it is the special sauce of the Fromm Institute, creating not just lifelong learners, but lifelong "Frommies," and we are all happy to welcome you to the fold. Our staff will be working to create a special new experience for all of you – small Zoom sessions where our new students can meet the staff and a few fellow students.

Throughout the session, at least two staff members will be in each of your online classes – one staff member will be visible, assisting the Professor with any Zoom tech needs they might have, and the other staff member will be available behind the scenes to help students with any Zoom tech needs you may have. If you have any questions or suggestions, please call us at **415-422-6805** or email us at **fromm@usfca.edu**. We may be busy, but we promise to get to you as soon as possible.

Welcome to our online Fall 2020 Session at the Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning. I'm proud we have been able to make it happen. Thank you for making it succeed!! – **Derek Leighnor, Executive Director**

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While he usually expresses himself in writing articles, novels and other musings, **Prof. Manfred Wolf** has submitted two pieces and a preface to this week's **Express Yourself**. Submissions to **Express Yourself** are accepted on a rolling basis and can be articles, opinion pieces or notes, written by you, the students or others in the Fromm Institute family, who want to share something with the larger community. Email your submissions to **Scott Moules** in the Fromm Institute office ([moules@usfca.edu](mailto:moules@usfca.edu) or [fromm@usfca.edu](mailto:fromm@usfca.edu)).

## PREFACE (I)

My publication a few months ago in Fromm Focus gave me such pleasure — many of you asked questions or commented on my pieces — that I asked Scott and Derek if we could do another set. To my delight, Scott proposed two installments of two columns each.

Many of my columns have appeared in the West Portal Monthly for several decades. During the pandemic, the paper seemed to teeter, but suddenly reappeared as a quarterly. Perhaps it was declared an “essential” service, which it certainly was for me. More important, a selection of my newer columns will, I hope, be available as a book sometime next year.

The two columns I submit here are on two very different subjects: (1) What really goes on between intimates when they quarrel? (2) What were the Nineteen Fifties like?

In another column on this latter subject, one that achieved a bit of fame, called “The Way We Weren’t,” I wrote that the Fifties had been thoroughly misunderstood. The one I reprint here is perhaps more conventional, but I showcase it to make up for some of the more unconventional views about the decade I’ve aired to students. Needless to say, I think both views are valid. Should you want to see that other column, please email me at [mwolf7@juno.com](mailto:mwolf7@juno.com), and I’ll send it to you. -Manfred Wolf

## THIS TIME, THIS PLACE, NOTES ON THE THE NINETEEN FIFTIES BY MANFRED WOLF

It’s not only those who want to Make America Great Again who yearn for a return to the simpler life of the Fifties. Many of my friends think of it as a kinder, better time, as I myself have on occasion thought (and said). But I’ve lately been writing about the Fifties, and deliberately recalling them, and seeing some films made in that decade — and on reflection, it was in many respects a difficult, unhappy time, far worse than the time we live in now.

Here are a few things I remember, and observed in people I knew, and now reinforced by such films and TV series as “Heaven Can Wait,” “Revolutionary Road,” “Mad Men,” and others.

— The great unhappiness of many women, their lack of fulfillment, their frustrated desire to have a meaningful life. They were supposed to find meaning in love and marriage but generally they didn’t.

I’m referring to middle-class women, of course, but working class women were no better off, probably worse, because they also struggled with poorly paid jobs as well as the stigma of being “working-girls.”

This desire for fulfillment spawned a yearning for a certain excitement, for the “glamor” of artistic life, for something that was thought to exist in Europe, for a more genuine, reckless, “bohemian” way of living. Some of course tried that, but most just longed for it and made themselves unhappy with not achieving it.



— The isolation of so many married couples. Yes, they had friends, but they were meant to be a world unto themselves, and usually their interests diverged. His was to be left in peace after a tiring day at the office, hers to have “excitement,” but mainly through her husband. Add to that the geographical isolation of suburbia, its lack of anything other than home, children, cleaning and shopping, and you get the full picture of misery.

— The search for some happiness in extra-marital affairs. The Fifties were probably more promiscuous than our time now, but these affairs brought little happiness and ended, most of them, in either painful domestic reshuffling, or sheerest misery. Sex, pills, and alcohol usually took the straying wife or husband into a direction neither wanted to go.

— The spoken and unspoken requirement to conform to others. This is something we often forget now, but the “rules” were brutal and the punishment was to be the brunt of vicious gossip or even total ostracism. Conformity was required, and non-conformity often ridiculed or savaged.

Perhaps one benefit of our own time with its endless talk about “diversity” is that some actual diversity in the way we live is tolerated, and even encouraged. And the airless, claustrophobic concept of suburbia is now mercifully gone, as is the ideal of ever-satisfying marriage.

All this makes our time and place a better one than the often yearned-for Nineteen Fifties.

## THE ARGUMENTS COUPLES HAVE

### BY MANFRED WOLF

The key to almost all couples’ arguments is that neither side can hear the charge against them. If they admit that there’s anything wrong with themselves, if they admit to a fault at all, then it’s one they have formulated for themselves: they perceive what’s wrong with themselves only as they conceive of it, not as their partner does. So if they’re of good will, i.e., eager “to work on the relationship,” they set about correcting not the fault as the other sees it but as they themselves diagnose it — which will do the relationship no good at all, since that wasn’t the other’s complaint to begin with.

Why it’s so hard for each partner to hear and see what is alleged against them has many causes, but one surely is that they have so identified it with “who they really are” that even if they recognize the trait (dubious) it still seems irremediable. But even that implies they grasp it. Often they’re so well defended that they may even see it as a virtue, a good trait, but more likely they don’t see it, or if they do, do so as a version of what their own self-diagnosis has told them.

Here’s an example (fictional, but entirely typical): I may dislike the way she responds to any observation of mine with a dismissive quip, or a lame joke or a would-be humorous comment. She doesn’t know she’s doing it and doesn’t see that she does it when it’s pointed out. Or more likely she thinks, “Manfred takes everything so seriously,” or “he has no sense of humor,” or “he’s so solemn about himself.” Or even “how can Manfred be annoyed by so small a thing, so minor a matter, so charming a peccadillo”?

And — to continue my hypothetical example — she may worry that I’m attacking her for not being smarter or more intellectual, which may have been a worry of hers for a while, so she’ll funnel my complaint into her worry, and she may try to correct that, or simply brood about it, though I don’t care about her not being intellectual, it’s not a problem for me; but I am perennially annoyed by her lame witticisms, her dismissiveness, her seeming not to grasp what I say because she’s so busy contriving her response.



Of course, this is a large problem between human beings even if they're not intimately bound. I don't know how often I've told certain friends, kindly but firmly, that they talk too much, that every conversation requires 50/50 or at least 60/40, but should never become 80/20 or 90/10; there must be some balance in quantity. This has never had the least effect. People have taken it to mean that I don't like their ideas, or can't handle the power of their thought, or find myself eager to talk more than they, or am being whimsical, or think their personalities overpowering, or that their talk is so brilliant it inevitably requires more words, or that the charge is false and they certainly don't talk more than I do, and so forth.

But when couples argue, it is all much more serious. The argument escalates by endless repetition of the same point. And the pain of not being heard continues. Not to mention that having failings pointed out hurts too, and resentment naturally builds up. Is it any wonder that couples-counseling doesn't ever seem to accomplish much?

Does it ever work? Yes, sometimes it provides a bit of relief; each side expresses itself, which clears the air and creates the illusion of having been heard, though in fact they have not been heard by those who need most to hear. They're lucky if the counselor hears them.

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Manfred Wolf is the recent author of [Survival in Paradise](#) and [Muslims in Europe](#).

## **FISA WEB RESOURCES**

We have added some resources to our [FISA web pages](#) which we hope will keep live our support for the Black Lives Matter movement and help to promote understanding of the issues. We have compiled both a [reading list](#) and [movie list](#). Regarding the movies, there are many more out there promoted by Netflix and other sites, but these are some of the stronger and are suggested in appreciation of Black filmmakers and their stories. All the works explore ‘the right to have rights’ to reference Hannah Arendt’s most quoted phrase.

These pages also offer resources that provide additional context for two of the classes being taught this session: Professor Alan Goldberg’s class, *Black (and Brown) Lit Matters: Voices in Contemporary African American and Hispanic (Latino) Literature* and Professor Rodger Birt’s class, *Cultural Capitol of Black America: Writers and Artists in Harlem, 1919-1939*, looking at literary and visual artists who led the Harlem renaissance during the two decades between the end of World War I and the Great Depression.

Please enjoy these resources.

FOR NEWS FROM YOUR STUDENT ASSOCIATION PLEASE VISIT <https://www.frommfisa.org/>

## ARE YOU FEELING FRUSTRATED AND SCARED? I KNOW I AM

*Fromm Institute member Frances Pinnock wanted to share this information with you concerning the upcoming election in November. If you have questions, feel free to contact Fran at [franpinnock@yahoo.com](mailto:franpinnock@yahoo.com)*

Nothing is more frustrating to me than the helpless feeling I have about the approaching election. I want to be out knocking on doors, handing out leaflets, driving people to polling stations as well as giving money. But at this most urgent time for our country Covid keeps me from doing any of those things. I have given money, of course, and that's important; but it leaves all my pent up and anxious energy with no outlet. Or it did until a couple of weeks ago when I discovered [Voteforward.org](http://Voteforward.org).

Tens of millions of Americans did not vote in 2016. It is critical that people come out and vote in 2020. [Voteforward.org](http://Voteforward.org) has devised a way to encourage them to vote.

Their basic idea is to create a template that volunteers like you and I can download and use to fill in a hand written message to swing state voters encouraging them to go to the polls. Evidence has shown that if a potential voter gets a hand written envelope with a real stamp and a partial handwritten letter they will, at least open it and often be moved to vote. Voteforward will select the date for mailing ( probably mid October) that will dependably get the letters to voters just before the election: the point of maximum impact. Apparently this was extremely effective in the 2018 election so I'm ready to trust that they have this one right.

I have already enlisted a group of friends to help me with this effort. If you want to join this team to get out the vote, just email me at [franpinnock@yahoo.com](mailto:franpinnock@yahoo.com). It would help if you let me know if you have a printer or not. Also if the cost of stamps is a problem for you, just let me know. We will cover that cost and absolute confidentiality will be maintained.

If, on the other hand, you would rather work independently, simply go on line to [Voteforward.org](http://Voteforward.org) and put your shoulder to the wheel.

I've only provided here a rough outline of the [Voteforward.org](http://Voteforward.org) project, if you want to learn more , just google the the organization and review their website.

Also do not think its too late to write letters. We have at least 4 weeks to write them.

Finally, just for clarity, this is not a Fromm or Fisa project. Nor am I, in any way, connected with Voteforward other than as a volunteer. I'm just, like you, a desperately concerned citizen.

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## INTRODUCING FISA'S DIVERSITY TASK FORCE

*By Irene Minabe, Hector Esparza and Linda Marks*

At the end of June, Fromm student Irene Minabe sent an email to Derek Leighnor, Fromm's Executive Director, expressing her concern about the lack of people of color at Fromm, which doesn't reflect the diversity of the San Francisco Bay Area. She suggested that "maybe there needs to be a committee to come up with ideas from the Fromm Community."

Up to this point Fromm had relied solely on word-of-mouth for recruitment because it had been at capacity for years and didn't want to expand in size. But now it was time for things to change and Derek asked FISA, your student association, to put together and work with a task force on diversity. We are now happy to introduce you to the Fromm Diversity Task Force and its work.

There are currently five people of color on the Task Force. Four of them are returning Fromm students: Virginia Johnson is a 61-year member of Alpha Kappa Alpha, one of the "Divine Nine" black sororities and fraternities, who texted excitedly when Kamala was named as Joe's running mate: "She's my sorority sister!" Laverne Simon is a veteran who earned her Associates Degree from the University of Maryland's European Division, did her teacher's education at San Francisco State and Dominican University, received Bachelors and Masters degrees at Golden Gate University and earned another Master's degree at Stanford University. Irene Minabe was the HR Director for T.Y. Lin International, a consulting engineering firm, and also served as the company's Equal Employment Opportunity Officer. Hector Esparza, born in Mexico, was a procurement professional at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. Irene and Hector met at SF State and have been married for over 30 years. The one new Fromm student on the Task Force is Roxie Mayfield, a psychologist who lives in Alameda and worked at Kaiser in Oakland for 35 years. Roxie also had a private practice and is on the board of Meals on Wheels.

Derek Leighnor and the four FISA officers, President Susan Kaplan, Vice-President Linda Marks, Secretary Maxine Einhorn and Treasurer Arlene Waksberg are also on the Task Force.

Increasing the diversity at Fromm of both faculty and students will provide new perspectives and opinions from a broader sector of the community that will enrich the Fromm experience. The value and importance of this has been highlighted by recent events.

The Diversity Task Force is currently meeting regularly by Zoom and is reaching out to minority organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area with senior participants. You can help us reach communities of color where

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there are people over 50 who might be interested in life-long education. We would love for you to get involved:

- If you have contacts in organizations that might have members in our target audience and want to reach out to them, we can provide you with sample talking points and sample language for an article in their newsletters. Or you can just share your experience at Fromm with them.
- If you know of organizations that we can contact (virtually for now, but with the potential of in-person visits after the pandemic), please let us know.
- If you have friends with diverse backgrounds, let them know about Fromm classes and the Frommcasts. And when classes are in-person again, bring them to Fromm.
- If you have suggestions for faculty of color who are 50 or over and can teach academic classes, please let Derek know directly at [leighnor@usfca.edu](mailto:leighnor@usfca.edu).

We're willing to talk to anyone who is interested in what we are doing. Please contact **Linda Marks** at [lindamarkssf2@gmail.com](mailto:lindamarkssf2@gmail.com) or **Irene Minabe** at [iminabe@hotmail.com](mailto:iminabe@hotmail.com).

Thank you!

## A NOTE FROM PROF. LYNNE KAUFMAN

Hi dear Frommies,

A short play I've written "A Broken String" will be performed on the SFPlayhouse website in their Zoomlet series on **Sept. 14 at 7pm**. It's directed by Louis Parnell, and he and I and the two actresses will be discussing the process of bringing it to life. The story is about two women, who have been long estranged, meeting for the last time. The event lasts an hour, and tickets are free and available by clicking on the site below. Hope to see you there. Best Lynne

P.S. should you miss it on 9/14, it will be archived on the SF Playhouse web-site.

<https://www.sfplayhouse.org/sfph/get-tickets/?page=event&eid=46207&edid=187761>

## POETRY FOR A LOCKDOWN

This week we feature two poems written by Fromm Institute members, **Mary Joy Quinn** and **Mary Melissa Grafflin**. If you would like to share your poetry which you've written during our current stay-at-home orders, please submit your work to **Scott Moules** either at [moules@usfca.edu](mailto:moules@usfca.edu) or [fromm@usfca.edu](mailto:fromm@usfca.edu).

### The Newest New Normal

And it continues  
This unimaginable plague  
This mystery fright.

Adjustments are made  
Some easy, some difficult  
Inconvenient.

Solitary time  
Slowing down the pace of life  
The newest normal.

Memories flood back  
Unresolved buttons get pushed  
Sweet revelations.

Deepened friendship ties  
Electronic means save us  
Loneliness, **Hello!**

Sweetness and concern  
Love spills from our very pores  
Bathing us and them.

**April 27, 2020**  
**MJQ • Mary Joy Quinn**

### WORDS

"Words build worlds."

So said the rabbis long ago

Incandescently, we find it's so.

"Safe" "re-open" "mask"

"Pandemic" "quarantine" "free"

Words: missiles of grammatical fury

Flying like flaming sidewinders;

Fixated on the opponent's heat signature

Of words

Adjective IED's, anti-socially distanced

Absence of words.

Signifying the absence of a presence.

Of all the building blocks of words, White noise  
over my head

Nouns dropping bombs from above

The only word that really counts is "love."

**-Mary Melissa Grafflin**



# THACHER GALLERY

## 2020 - 2021 SEASON



## A Matter of Liberation: Artwork From Prison Renaissance Now on display at the [Thacher Gallery's Website](#)

**A MATTER OF LIBERATION**  
**AUG. 17 - NOV. 6, 2020**

Curated by Antwan “Banks” Williams, [A Matter of Liberation](#) presents artists Emile DeWeaver, Eddie Herena, Sara J. Kruzan, Jason Perry, Orlando Smith, and Antwan “Banks” Williams answering the question, “What does liberation mean to you?” Through paintings, drawings, photography, collage, spoken word, and dance, these artists reveal the ways in which the pursuit for liberation unites us all.

A series of public programs (live via Zoom) will feature conversations with the artists, museum expert Sean Kelley from the Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site in Philadelphia, local social justice activists James King and Emile DeWeaver, and the co-founders of the podcast Ear Hustle. To register for any of these events please visit the [Thacher Gallery's Event page](#).

## GET TECH HELP FROM ANGELINA MIRAMONTES

My name is **Angelina Miramontes** and I am the Fall 2020 Fromm Gerontology Scholarship Recipient. I'm currently a Senior in Biology with a minor in Gerontology. I'm from San Diego, CA and it's also where I am currently for this semester. I love spending my free time painting and drawing (I recently got into digital artwork too). I would love to chat more with you all during my Tech Assist Hours beginning Sept. 15th! Tues: 12-2pm, Wed: 3-4, Thurs: 12-2 pm. Feel free to reach me by email for an appointment at: [admiramontes@dons.usfca.edu](mailto:admiramontes@dons.usfca.edu). I can help with practicing Zoom, Apps, Microsoft Word or if you just want to talk (about anything), I'll be here!

Angelina Miramontes  
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