



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

FROMM FOCUS

The Newsletter of the Fromm Institute

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WE NEED YOUR HELP

Since our lives were upended by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Fromm Institute has had to close its physical doors. Instead, we created a new, online presence so that our students can continue to learn through the Frommcast, and through live, online courses. We have done much better than we expected – with 1,241 of you enrolled in the Fall Session. This provides us with so much hope, and we know we will be okay for the near future.

We still face a deficit, and uncertainty in the upcoming Winter and Spring Sessions. As in years past, our annual budget relies on charitable contributions to meet our expenses. Last year we had 993 contributions that raised approximately \$700,000. This year, we will need to raise about \$1 million in contributions beyond the anticipated membership fees to meet our expenses. All Fromm Institute classes are subsidized by contributions – this year membership fees are expected to cover only 1/3 of all program costs.

This is a hard time for everyone, and I know how generous you all are – many of you have already contributed to the Fromm Institute and you are supporting more than your fair share of people whose lives and livelihoods have been affected. On top of that many other organizations are asking for your help. I write to you today to ask you to consider our worthy request for assistance. Please help us continue offering our programs – programs that may have an even greater significance to the population of lifelong learners staying at home, sheltering in place. Gifts of any size are always appreciated, but are especially needed this year.

To contribute, please visit us [here](#), and click on [DONATE NOW](#). If you prefer to wait for our annual fundraising appeal, you can expect that to arrive in your mailbox in December. Thank you so much from all of us at the Fromm Institute.

Derek S. Leighnor, Executive Director



In this week's **Express Yourself** Fromm Institute member, **Barbara Sapienza**, writes about a poignant moment in our chaotic times.

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 or fromm@usfca.edu).

A POSTCARD TO IOWA

By Barbara Sapienza

30 September 2020

September 15, in the Catholic panoply of saints' days, is the celebration of Mater Dolorosa, the weeping mother or the sorrowful virgin, the one the Mexicans carry through the streets on Holy Friday to remember a mother crying for her dead son. Her tears Lagrimas Dulce are celebrated in San Miguel de Allende with agua dulce, sweet water.

Today, the ashes from the fires have settled below the one hundred mark on PurpleAir alert, and just a week after the San Francisco Bay Area awoke to a pink midnight, when the morning sun was covered by a rose gray, by the ashes - the remains of trees, animals, houses — lasting pretty much all day long.

Now a week later the sky promises better, perhaps cleansed by the tears we shed. The heart of the mother softens and comes to me as I write one hundred fifty postcards to lowans to encourage them to vote in this 2020 election. I notice their beautiful names like Abilene, Marta, Crystal, Anthony, Alex, and Ted, men and women, who live on exquisitely named streets like Muscatine, Bittersweet, Spruce and Spring in cities like Cedar Rapids, Waterloo, Lamoni. The names grab my heart.

Each name, on each street, cul-de-sac, road, lane or maybe an alley calls to me as I write to ask her/him to vote in this very important election. Oh, I don't like how I followed a script for the first fifty cards that seems to shame her/him for not voting in 2018. Finally, I don't copy that sentence exactly and say instead, "*While you may not have been able to vote in 2018, your community hopes you will choose to vote this fall. Please vote.*"

My husband Peter asks, “Do you wish you could see someone pick up your postcard and read it?”

“No,” I say, “What I imagine is Abilene as a child, loved by her parents and their parents who gave her this beautiful name and a blessing to be all she can be, to make the world a better place. Or Ted, a boy, whose father placed his hand on his head and whispered or shouted to the infant baby, “Little man, my Ted, go for it.”

Then I hold each face in my hands and say, I’m sorry for the betrayal Abilene. I’m sorry for the division in our country, Ted. Forgive me Anthony for separating myself from you. Forgive me Crystal, Abilene, Ted, who live on Muscatine Street or Bittersweet Lane in Cedar Rapids or Iowa Falls or Waterloo or Des Moines, Iowa. Forgive us dear Siouan, the first peoples, who migrated from the great lakes to what is now called Iowa.

Under the same sky, breathing the oxygen from our trees, we are together as weeping mothers and fathers for the loss of our children, our earth whose tears bring COVID, Fires, Floods, Social Injustice, unrest and unprecedented presidential debates.

The tears we shed cleanse our feet so we can walk forward and do what we are called to do and drink Lagrimas Dulce together.

OSHER MINI MEDICAL SCHOOL FOR THE PUBLIC

A reminder that the *University of California, San Francisco* presents three new online medical classes for the public. Lectures begin the week of October 20th and will run for 6 to 8 weeks. For registration information please visit the Osher Mini Medical School site: <https://osherminimed.ucsf.edu>

The Health Emergency of Our Changing Climate Part 2: Public Health Strategies in the 21st Century

Tuesdays October 20 – Dec 8th from 7-830 pm

<https://osherminimed.ucsf.edu/climate-change-fall2020>

What’s Next: COVID-19, Science, and the Public Health

Wednesdays October 21 – Dec 9th from 7-830pm

<https://osherminimed.ucsf.edu/what%E2%80%99s-next-covid-19-science-public-health-fall2020>

Innovations In Cancer Treatment: Radiation Therapy in the Modern Era

Thursdays October 22 – Dec 10th from 7-830pm

<https://osherminimed.ucsf.edu/innovations-cancer-treatment-fall2020>

PANDEMIC STORIES

We all have pandemic stories. You have them. I have them. The rest of the staff has them. We thought you might like to share your story with other Fromm Institute students. Your story can be funny, sad, short, or even longish. We ask you to share your stories with us. Send them to me and I will publish the ones “fit to print,” as they say. Thank you, Scott Moules. (moules@usfca.edu or fromm@usfca.edu).

*This week we hear from **Frances Pinnock** whose story of her husband’s library behind their cabin appeared in last week’s Fromm Focus. This week she kicks off our new column, **Pandemic Stories** with her experience over that last few months in our pandemic lockdown.*

I have a cabin in the Butte County foothills of the Sierras. Before the North Complex Fire, our cabin was one of approximately 110 vacation cabins around a small lake. (Post fire ours still stands but 50 or so others burned.) The community itself was founded nearly a 100 years ago to give Valley ranchers and rice farmers a cool place to send their wives and children during the summer heat, a rice farmers Raj you might say.

Four generations later, entwined by marriages, by shared memories, by a pervasive Christianity and by an abiding love of the lake’s 1950s atmosphere and mores, the farmers’ descendants still own most of the cabins there. Business people, Salesmen, office managers, nurses, teachers and now, nearly 80% of the cabin owners embrace an inherited but fervent Republicanism.



I’ve owned the cabin for 23 years, so I am still a newcomer to the community and have always trod carefully. Paul and I have had some mildly hostile encounters at community meeting and social gatherings if politics came up. And, a time or two, we have heard loud voices proclaiming “there go those liberal lawyers” as we walked around the lake. But mostly we’ve got on without conflict by keeping our heads down.

In early March, Covid persuaded us to stay at the cabin. We had never spent more than 2 weeks at the cabin before; and as the fourth, fifth and sixth month passed, we looked at the calendar in disbelief.

Then George Floyd died and everything changed.

Reticence didn't work for us anymore. We sent off for a large BLM banner and hung it from our deck. Our neighbor warned that someone would burn our cabin down and he seemed half serious.



The response was more complicated than we expected. True, a couple of hard heads walked by calling “F-you;” but someone posted the banner on the lake’s Facebook page; and the post got multiple likes. Others approached us to say how appalled they were by Floyd’s death. One woman, an ardent Christian, who writes and sings religious songs accompanied by her banjo, told us she imagined Floyd’s death as a second agony of Christ.

In short, our banner opened up a space for conversation. We didn’t like everything we heard. Businessmen explained to us how they broke unions but what good care they take of their employees. People whom we had never spoken to before introduced themselves, with the preface, “I am a capitalist and a Republican” and then offered us a rum and coke. But ardent female Trumpers articulated to us intense anger at the handling of COVID-19 and we wondered if these women might desert Trump on November 3rd. It's probably wishful thinking to hope that hearts and minds were changed this summer, but something was changing around our lake, even before the fire, and maybe our banner helped.

Our Pandemic story is also our Black Lives Matter Banner story, but the COVID-19 virus made the story possible. And hopefully the whole experience will have left some lasting impact on the lives of a few of the people who spent time at our Lake during the multi catastrophe summer of 2020. It certainly left its impact on us.