



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

FROMM FOCUS

The Newsletter of the Fromm Institute

Issue #2 • May 10, 2021

LIVING AND LEARNING - VIRTUALLY

Can you believe how far we have come in less than a year? We first started Fromm Institute Zoom classes in June 2020. Before that, I had only been on Zoom a handful of times. Now, I am much better – by no means an expert though – my coworkers will tell you all about my calls to them for help. My work is primarily on Zoom and I “see” more of my family than ever before because we regularly meet on Zoom now too. You all have similar experiences with Fromm classes, and your friends and family. Sometimes it’s nice to look back and see how far we have come while at the same time looking forward to what is yet to unfold.

In the last two weeks, our enrollment climbed by almost 200 more students to just over 1,000 students enrolled this session. We will be starting some social meetings this week before morning classes and after afternoon classes so everyone can “see” one another and simply spend some social time together. Watch your email for invitations with links to the virtual social meetings.

In this new world of virtual classroom learning, many of our students attend classes not just from the Bay Area, but from all across the world. We have students from a variety of time zones, students enrolled in two different classes that meet at the same time, and students who are not able to make our live online classes for a variety of reasons. Zoom allows us to record each lecture. We can share the class recordings so you can watch or re-watch a class at a time that is convenient for you. You’ve probably seen some emails with links to the recordings already.

If you are enrolled in a particular course, you will be emailed within 24 hours of that class. The email will come from a member of the staff (see all our email addresses below) and will contain a private link associated with the recording for that particular class. The recording will remain available to you for 30 days. Click on the link in the email – which will open up a website with the recording – you can click on play and watch the recording. If you have any trouble, please give us a call at 415-422-6805 or send us an email. The general email box is fromm@usfca.edu.

Living and learning virtually – who would have thought we would have come so far?

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ZOOM TIP – the link for each class is the same every week. Reminder emails with class links are sent 24 hours before each class session and again one hour before each class session. If for any reason you do not receive a reminder link, you can search your email with the faculty member’s name for an email from the past. You can use that link to get in to each of the eight classes taught by that faculty member. Alternatively, you can copy and save the link on your computer in an easy to access document with the links for all your classes. You’ll be able to click on the link in your saved document without having to look through your emails when class starts.

EXPRESS YOURSELF



Barry Seidler shares a story that is as local (and universal) to all of us who live in San Francisco. 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).

THE HOMELESS LADY

By Barry Seidler

Over the years I have befriended a homeless lady who was a human fixture in her wheelchair in front of the iconic Russian church which is located next to my apartment building. I would never pass her by without acknowledging her. I would drop a quarter into her small paper coffee cup. Sometimes even a dollar. It was a good spot that she had chosen as some church goers were generously inclined toward her. When the virus hit in March many homeless were removed from the street. The church was closed and our lady was no longer there. I often wondered what had happened to her.

I believe it was in August when walking past the church I saw a woman questioning people on the street. She approached me and asked if I knew of a homeless woman in a wheelchair. She was desperately trying to find her sister who she had not seen for twenty years. “Yes, I know exactly who you mean,” I responded. Her enthusiasm of finding someone who knew her sister was extreme. I was quite affected myself.

Barbara gave me a brief sketch of her sister’s life – they were both raised in the Sunset District in San Francisco. Eowyn (the name she now went by) the older sister, was the prettiest most intelligent girl in school. She could speak Russian and was well educated. Her own daughters hated her, but Barbara knew her before she became a paranoid schizophrenic and still loved her.

I dearly wished I could do more but I had not seen Eowyn for many months. Barbara found a scrap of paper on the ground and wrote down her phone number. I took that scrap of paper and placed it in a tiny coaster box. So at least if the day ever arrives when Eowyn returns I would be able to fulfill my promise and contact Barbara and reunite her with her long lost sister.



On one of our Indian summer days in late November our Lady reappeared. The Russian church was now open. As I approached, both of us masks on, I could tell that she recognized me. “I could tell it was you by the twinkle in your eye when you smile.” We both laughed and then chatted a bit. Her sister had warned me not to divulge what I was going to do. Barbara was afraid of her sister’s reaction due to her paranoia.

I hurriedly grabbed the coaster box as I entered my studio apartment. I called! Though there was no answer, her machine had both her voice and her number. I left my message, fulfilling my promise to call, not knowing if I would ever know if the connection was made.

One day some two weeks later I observe a woman speaking to our Lady. A little unusual as most people do not stop and chat. As I approach, our Lady says to me, “I would like you to meet my friend Terry.” I am a bit mystified; then the woman approaches, and asks me “if I am the man who lives in that building?” Suddenly we both realize who we each are. She can’t stop saying “you did a wonderful thing” over and over again. All I could reply was “I am so happy,” “I am so happy.”

**Let's be
Alone Together
SF**

Calling Creatives for a Pandemic Zine!

We at Alone Together are a group of students at the University of San Francisco working on a project to build community between USF students and SF senior citizens. After researching how college students and the elderly have been uniquely impacted by isolation during the pandemic, we are creating a zine of art and writing by elders and USF students centered around experiences with loneliness, the challenges of COVID, and hope for the future.

If you are interested, please go to our Instagram @AloneTogetherUSFCA and then to the link in our bio! submissions are due by May 14th, send them all to our email: connectusfca@gmail.com

USF STUDENTS WANT YOUR CREATIVE WORK FOR A PANDEMIC ZINE

A reminder: *Alone Together*, a group of students at USF, is currently producing a pandemic-themed zine jointly created by USF students and SF’s career-free population. They are particularly interested in having Fromm Institute members sharing their creative work completed during the pandemic. If you are interested in contributing your work, check out their Instagram page @AloneTogetherUSFCA. You can also reach them at connectusfca@gmail.com.

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

FROM THE FROMM INSTITUTE STUDENT ASSOCIATION DIVERSITY TASK FORCE

Who Was Alvin Ailey?

by Laverne Simon

Alvin Ailey started his American Dance Company in order to honor Black culture through dance. I do not think many Fromm students have heard of him and his work, so I thought this article might be interesting in educating other about an African American dance idol who was known world-wide.

Alvin Ailey wanted to celebrate Black Culture through dance. He wanted to depict Black Culture with all of its sufferings in history.

In 1958 Alvin Ailey founded Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater to present his vision of honoring Black culture through dance. The company had its debut at the 92nd Street Y in New York. Two years later he premiered his most famous work, Revelations, at the 92nd Street Y. This work drew upon his growing up in Texas surrounded by Black people, the church, spirituals, and the blues.

The company struggled financially, but got bookings through the US State Department for an international tour in 1962, which went to Asia and Africa. The State Department wanted to book the company as ethnic, instead of a Dance Company, and was closely watched by the FBI, referring to his homosexuality as “lewd” and that he had criminal tendencies. The FBI threatened his company with bankruptcy if he showed any signs of effeminate homosexual behavior while on tour. He threatened to close the company, but the State Department sponsored more cultural exchange tours as an apology.

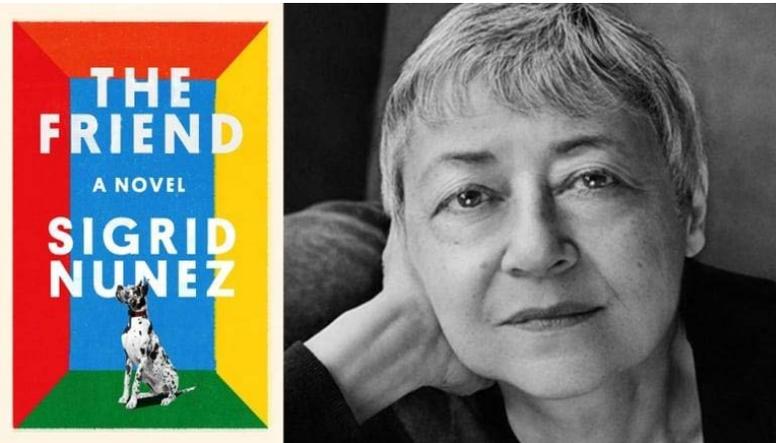
Alvin Ailey is an American Modern Dance Company and Alvin Ailey was a visionary, representing past, present, and future. He created a work about the Holocaust and concentration camps, South Africa’s apartheid, and the Chicago riots in 1969, which can be viewed on Youtube.

He saw art as personal and powerful. There are numerous documentaries and important past performances of the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater available on YouTube. It is a great resource to learn more about the man and the artist. Alvin Ailey died of AIDS in 1989 in New York.

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**The Drop-In Book Club announces their Spring 2021 selection:
The Friend by Sigrid Nunez**

**[Please click here to register for the book club discussion on
Friday, May 28th at 2 p.m.](#)**



ANOTHER BEAUTIFUL BOOK

***The Friend* by Sigrid Nunez**

Friendship, Creativity, Loss, Ambivalence, and a guest appearance
by a Great Dane

“AS FUNNY AS IT IS THOUGHTFUL” - BUZZFEED

WINNER, 2018 National Book Award

(ONLY 212 PAGES; No Monsters, Pixies or Knights and not too much about
the Dog)

**JOIN US FOR ANOTHER FROMM DROP-IN BOOK CLUB
FRIDAY MAY 28TH 2PM**

AND A FAREWELL



The May 28th Book Club meeting is dedicated to Our Friend, Sondra. Sondra loved books, loved Fromm and was brilliantly creative. She is an immense loss and we will miss her so very much. Frances Pinnock, Maxine Einhorn and Maryanne Wolcott

**Sondra Alexander
9/18/1937 - 4/5/2021**

CONVERSATORY ON RACISM WITH PROF. MARA KOLESAS

Friday, May 14, 2021 at 1:30pm

African American Women, Achievement and Citizenship

Koritha Mitchell in Conversation with Mara Kolesas



[Koritha Mitchell](#) is an award-winning author, [cultural critic](#), and professional development expert. Her first book, [Living with Lynching](#), won awards from the American Theatre and Drama Society and from the Society for the Study of American Women Writers. Her second monograph, [From Slave Cabins to the White House: Homemade Citizenship in African American Culture](#), appeared in August 2020 and was named a Best Book of 2020 by Ms. Magazine. She is also editor of the Broadview Edition of Frances E.W. Harper's 1892 novel [Iola Leroy](#), and her scholarly articles include "James Baldwin, Performance Theorist, Sings the Blues for Mister Charlie," published by American Quarterly, and "Love in Action," which appeared in Callaloo and draws parallels between lynching and violence against LGBTQ communities. Mitchell has been invited to offer guidance to scholars at every stage of their careers by various types of institutions, including the Ford Foundation, the American Society for Theatre Research (ASTR), the New Jersey Department of Education, Vanderbilt University, Michigan State University, the College of Wooster, and Princeton University. In addition to serving as external reviewer for tenure dossiers, she has chaired committees to select the winners of fellowships, essay awards, and book awards. In 2014, Mitchell [lectured at the Library of Congress](#), and in 2018, she was named Undergraduate Professor of the Year by Ohio State University's English Undergraduate Organization. On Twitter, she's [@ProfKori](#).

[REGISTER HERE](#) (Free and Open to the Public)

[REGISTER HERE](#) for the Discussion Group at 3:30 pm

Friday, May 21, 2021 at 2pm

Perpetual Foreigner - Anti-Asian Hate and What We Can Do About It

Karen Umemoto in Conversation with Mara Kolesas



Karen Umemoto is the Helen and Morgan Chu Endowed Director's Chair of the UCLA Asian American Studies Center. She received her Master's degree in Asian American Studies from UCLA and her Ph.D. in Urban Studies from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She worked as a professor at the University of Hawaii for 22 years before returning to her alma mater with a joint position in Asian American Studies and Urban Planning. Her research centers on issues of democracy and social justice in multicultural societies with a focus on US cities. She also examines and pursues planning processes that include a diverse array of voices, acknowledges different ways of knowing, and allows for meaningful deliberations. She is equally concerned about the structural, procedural and relational obstacles to attaining a just and democratic society. Her research and practice thus takes a broad view of planning in the context of social inclusion, participatory democracy and political transformation.

[REGISTER HERE](#) (Free and Open to the Public)

[REGISTER HERE](#) for the Discussion Group at 3:45 pm

POETRY FOR A PANDEMIC

This week we feature a poem written by Fromm Institute member **Jeanne Powell**. The poem is from a new collection of poetry, *Deeply Notched Leaves*. Jeanne will be reading from her collection on **August 15th at the SF Public Library, main branch**. She is also the facilitator for *Write If You Dare!* group at the Mechanics' Institute Library.

If you would like to share your poetry which you've written during this COVID pandemic please submit your work to **Scott Moules** either at moules@usfca.edu or fromm@usfca.edu.

WEARING A POEM

© *Jeanne Powell*

She woke up somewhere in
her fifth decade and decided
to start treating herself right

A hard struggle it was
yanking permission from
the many judges holding forth

Evicting them took effort
but she did it, heaving to
with pitchfork and fire

Now she could eat chocolate
as a rite and buy a latte every
day, damn the expense

Wrap mother of pearl around
her wrist and dangle seductive
earrings from her lobes

order custom arch supports
and drape long silk scarves
around her golden brown neck

Wear a lipstick carnelian
in color sporting the name
"Toast of New York"

Easy to understand this
alluring defiance. She wore
a poem in her eyes