



HEAL

Humanism Evolving through Arts and Literature

June 2012 Newsletter

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How to Bait a Hook Alexandra Mannix, Class of 2014

When I say that everything is more rewarding when done alone, people misunderstand. I am neither a loner, nor

do I believe I am better than anyone else. I love the company of others, and I enjoy working collaboratively; but I also believe anything worth having is worth working for. Seeing the results of your own merits is more rewarding when accomplished independently.

It was late 1992, I was five and out fishing for the first time. Grandpa and I pulled into the mangroves across the river in our tiny motorboat, just us two. Sharing our little boat was a lunchbox packed by my grandma and our fishing gear. Grandma filled the lunchbox; the gear consisted of three fishing rods, a tackle box full of hooks, line and buoys, and a large bucket like object hanging off the side of the boat (I later learned grandpa packed an extra rod in case I lost mine in the water). With his talk of the 1940s, the depression in New York City, and my great-grandfathers trucking company, my grandfather changed the way I viewed the world. In later years, I would learn how to drive the boat, change an extinguished light, and tie all the knots; yet, that day I learned only one thing—how to bait a hook.

Before we began fishing, I learned the mechanics of the reel and how to cast a line. Next, we moved on to the bucket hanging off the side of the boat. Grandpa reached into the bucket while it remained in the water and pulled out a small shrimp. As it squirmed in his hands, I learned the purpose of the bucket and its contents. With his bait in hand and my close attention, he baited his hook, cast his line, and began his day of fishing. After this demonstration, Grandpa handed me the other fishing rod, a single shrimp, and left me to my own devices. I was much shorter than the rod, and it was hard to manage with the shrimp in hand. At that moment, I threw a tantrum admirable for any five-year-old.

I was not interested in holding this shrimp (or killing it for that matter), but he would not help, and at the time I could not understand why. After being pestered by his five-year-old granddaughter, he probably began to wonder the same thing himself. I continued to refuse to put a hook through a shrimp. My behavior was greeted by my grandfather's continued refusal of assistance. He ignored my ranting and continued his fishing adventure. Surely it would have been easier for him to bait the hook himself, but he let me rant and helped me learn. After what felt like hours (as measured in kid time), I gave in. I put the hook through the shrimp (horizontally instead of vertically), threw my line out, and sat on the bench next to my grandpa—rod in hand.

I wonder if he was evoking the creed "give a man a fish, feed him for the day; teach a man to fish and he will eat forever," or if fishing happened to be the medium for an education in work ethics. Either way, that October afternoon I learned how to fish without his assistance, and more importantly, I learned the value of doing things for myself.

Since that day, I have baited every hook myself, because I could. Now, if I wanted to fish, I could achieve my goal without the help of another. Yet, after 20 years of holding this belief, I realize that few people hold independent work ethic so highly.

In all honesty, I will never know what Grandpa hoped to teach me that cold afternoon on our small boat. He could have been using fishing as a way to improve my independent work ethic, with the hope I would become a better support system for my mother. Or maybe he was not interested in baiting twice as many hooks.

Grandpa will never know how much that first shrimp on a hook affected me, but his actions are present in my belief system, work ethic, and lifetime of successful behaviors. Although he is no longer with me, his lesson persists in my daily life. Not only do I believe that anything worth having is worth much more if achieved independently, but I plan to impart this knowledge to future generations. In the meantime, I will prepare my tackle box, extra fishing rod, and my bucket of bait.



Reflections

Sara Mangan,

FSU Law School, Class of 2014

My time in Immokalee was eye-opening. I caught glimpses of both the way the law can be used to fight for justice for the most vulnerable members of our society and of its limitations in achieving that end in its present form. I met people of incredible character—migrant workers, lawyers, nurses, and others, and also witnessed racism and injustice on both individual and systemic levels.

The first day of the trip we set up a table, along with the medical students, at a Migrant Fair at the Immokalee Health Department. Lots of different organizations were there, from the Sheriff's Department to the Susan G. Komen Foundation. The medical students provided free screenings for blood pressure, diabetes, and BMI. The law students listened as Professor Adelson answered the legal questions of the migrant workers present. The first person to ask for help was a Haitian man who had "Temporary Protective Status" (TPS), meaning that he'd been in the US during the earthquake in Haiti, and therefore he was allowed to stay in the US until things in his home country became more stable. The man said that he had not seen his wife or child in seven years. Seven years. I can't imagine that. And there was nothing that we could do for him. There was no legal way for his wife or child to enter the country. Not even for a visit on a tourist visa. So he was stuck. I have no doubt that here, working and earning money to send home to them, he is their lifeline. But it's so awful that it means he cannot be with them.

Chloe's Rose

Joseph K. Torgesen, Ph.D.

on his abdomen. It turned out that his scar was from a stab wound. We initially thought he needed advice on disability, but what he really needed was an ambulance. He was in so much pain. The ambulance was called and when they got there I was relieved to see the paramedics, one of whom was a young blond woman who was all smiles and friendly to us. The two Spanish-speaking law students, Brandon and Yaima, went with the man to the ambulance to translate for him and the paramedics. Apparently the EMT's friendliness did not extend to the sick man. She made a snap judgment, based on his race, tattoos, or something equally ridiculous, saying, "If he's in so much pain, why is he at a carnival?" and walked back to the front of the ambulance without trying to engage him. Thankfully the other EMT seemed more compassionate. He spoke some Spanish, and climbed in the back with the sick man.

We discussed this afterwards and all hoped that the doctors and nurses did not take the same attitude towards this patient. These are the people who are supposed to help you when you're sick. It's terrible that they can be so dismissive and judgmental. It must have been frightening for this man to be alone and in pain in a place where he could not speak the language. The least the people charged with his care could do was be nice to him. We also worried that he would be not be able to get back to Immokalee. The nearest hospital is 45 minutes away in Fort Meyers. The man said that there was nobody to call to come get him. When we saw the man a few days later he looked a lot better. After being discharged from the hospital he had found a ride home. as well. Everyone was happy and relieved.

Throughout the week we had seen this mixture of sadness and strength, courage and injustice, innovation and bureaucracy. The government seemed to be divided against itself. The Sheriff's Department was there doing outreach at the Migrant Worker Fair, assuring people that they were not there to harm them, that their job was to catch criminals, not ordinary hardworking, undocumented farm workers. And I believe that they meant this, as much as they could. Yet they had an agreement with the federal government, essentially deputizing members of the police force to be unofficial ICE agents. And we were told that ICE itself sometimes set up road blocks, once even in front of the clinic that offers free or reduced rate care to members of the community who cannot afford medical care.

There were some wonderful women at the Health Department who went after landlords providing dangerous and sub-standard housing for migrant workers. Those women were committed to seeing that workers had housing options that were safe and dignified, and they struck me as a force to be reckoned with. Then there was the Farm Worker's Village, which had rows of nice affordable houses that were nearly all vacant because the government department that ran the Village was still using a model from the 60's and 70's that disqualified many of the people who most needed the housing from taking advantage of it. We

also saw a Habitat for Humanity neighborhood filled with families and thriving.

There were farm owners who were good to their employees and a packing plant owner who allowed the workers to take a paid break for health screenings. There was also a local company that cheated employees out of earned sick days.

I really enjoyed meeting with local attorneys who work to help the migrant workers, the undocumented, and the victims of human trafficking. They are some extraordinary people, and I'd love to join them in their work after I become a lawyer. I also learned about the limits of the law as it is. So often, there was nothing that could be done. Before this trip, advocacy had seemed less important to me than the "hands-on" work helping individuals. But seeing how directly policy affects these individuals has made me realize that systemic policy change is just as critical as work benefitting the individual. Things like the Dream Act and legislation that would create a pathway to citizenship for children brought here by their parents would make a world of difference. So would legislation making it easier for families to stay together.

Environmental concerns also seem to be a very important part of justice for farm workers. Along with poor housing conditions, farm workers are exposed to very dangerous pesticides. In a documentary we watched about migrant children, a 16-year-old boy matter-of-factly talked about a time when pesticides caused his skin to fall off while working in the fields. And in a local restaurant we saw a little boy who had no arms and no legs. His mother had been working in the fields when the farm owner had the crops dusted with pesticides. She had been pregnant with her son at the time and the poisons caused the birth defects.

I know that any changes to the way that we grow and harvest our crops—less dangerous pesticides, paying farm workers minimum wage instead of by the bucket—would cause food prices to go up. But it seems to me that even though food prices are relatively low, someone is still paying an awful lot for them, and it's not the consumer. Farm workers pay for our cheap food when their toddlers develop brain tumors from the pesticides their mothers were exposed to. They pay for our food with their health because they cannot afford to buy the vegetables their back breaking labor produces for us. They pay through increased vulnerability to those who would enslave and abuse them.

It is so unfair that this group of people is asked to pay so much so that we can have cheap food, and yet they are also reviled and looked down upon—on a local and national level—as criminals intent on entering the country illegally and living off the government.

There are lots of great organizations working for justice and dignity for farm workers, from the CIW to Florida Rural Legal Services to Amigo House and others.

The words of the Bible, especially the book of James, came alive to me as I saw and learned about the injustice this community faces. James warns rich oppressors, "The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty." Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "The arc of the universe is long, but it bends towards justice." I hope and believe this to be true. I believe that God is always on the side of the oppressed and that when people pray "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done," that it is not about some distant spiritual realm where people go when we die, but about making this place good and just.

Farm workers are so important to our society on such a basic level. For all our great inventions and innovations, civilization crumbles without food. And these workers, especially the undocumented, are so vulnerable to oppression. I think a life devoted to working for justice and dignity for migrant workers and other vulnerable people would be a life well spent. I want to live a life like that.

One last note to this rambling reflection: the day after watching the documentary about the lives of migrant children, we visited Immokalee High School. Some of the kids had experienced things I could not begin to understand. Many had to move frequently and some were held back because their transcripts failed to reach their new schools in time. Some probably helped their parents in the fields after school and during breaks. It was such a privilege meeting those kids. They had such great questions about college and were so bright. And they had dreams of doing big things—becoming doctors and lawyers and doing other great things. They inspired respect in my teammates, and I hope they all achieve those goals.



Characters

Marielys Figuero Sierra, Class of 2016



Still Life, Leaves

Jodi Chapman,
Medical Illustrator

How many times must we go
'round this tree
Kendall Campbell, M.D.

How many times must we go 'round this tree?
The lesson not learned, what could it be?

Here we go again and again you see
How many times must we go 'round this tree?

We just don't get it or at least it seems to be
So yet again we have to go 'round this tree

Through faith and patience we will see
God's plan for us as we go 'round this tree

With brand new mercies, yes that's the key
That keeps us strong and enduring as we go 'round this
tree

Understanding our purpose, the purpose that He
Put in us from the beginning, the beginning you see

So don't be discouraged as you go 'round this tree
There's purpose in it for you and for me

A plan that's wonderful, great and free
Full of abundance and love, just bow your knee

To the one who gives life more abundantly
Lesson learned, here we go, last time 'round this tree

The Art of the Right Turn (For Scott)

Carol Warren, Circulations

When Left is a peril,
Slowing and snarling,
Free flowing traffic
Turns Right!

When horns are honking
And drivers scream,
Take the course that is safest—
Turn Right!

When your troubles stack up
like a mountain
And your road has a hairpin turn,
Slow it down, take a breath,
and remember—
Turn Right!

When the traffic ahead is daunting
And your route has nowhere to go,
If on your left hand life is confusing,
Turn Right!



Photograph by Trung Tran, Class of 2014

Haven of Rest

Charles Howze

My name is Charles Monroe, Roe for short

I'm still doing drugs just waiting to get caught

Ducking and dodging my P.O.

While peeping out the window all down on the floor

Now you can find me in a park or in some motel

Still trying to get high or even making a sale

Or you can find me in Frenchtown just walking the streets

With the same clothes on, soles on my feet

I made a wrong turn, and when people ask me where I've been

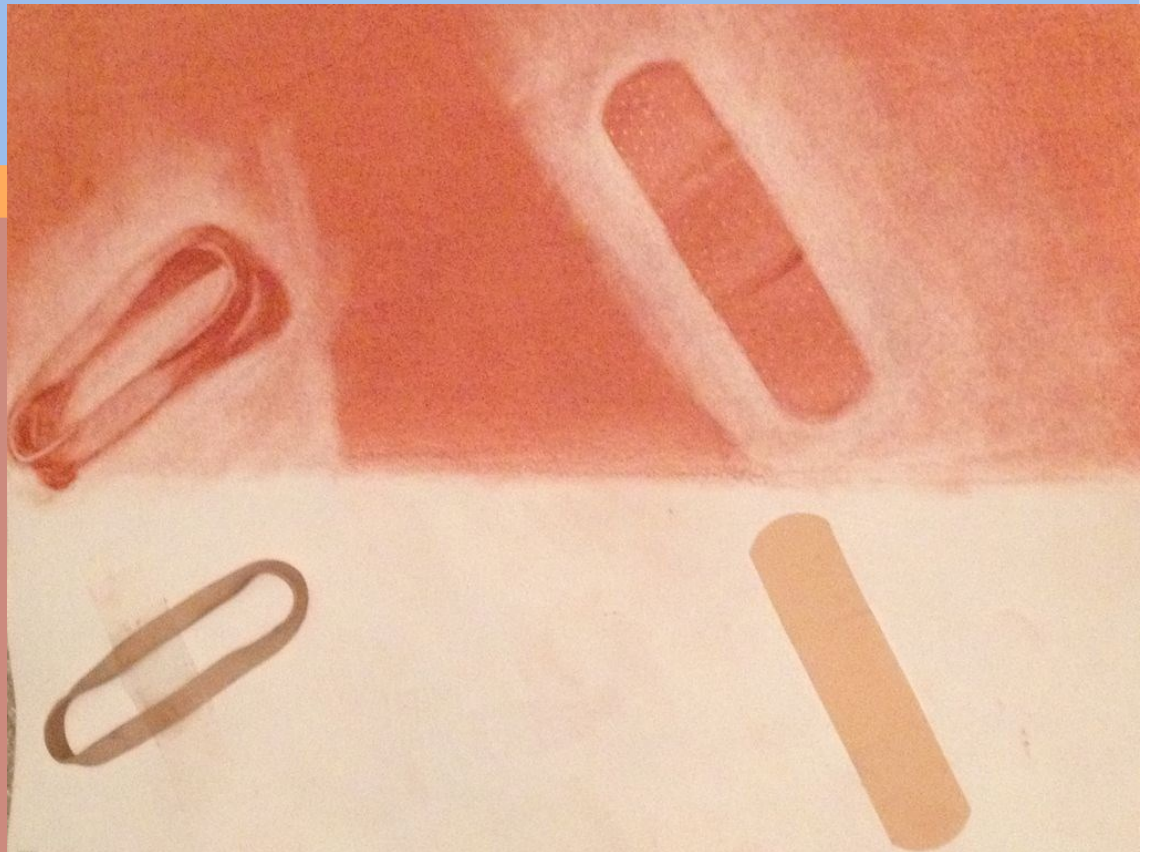
The only thing I could tell them is, "I've been down that road of sin."

But today, I'm trying to rededicate my life to God

Headed back towards Tennessee Street, I guess

Because like a bird, I'm tired of flying high

So I found shelter in God's Haven of Rest.



Submit to *HEAL* via email at:
heal@med.fsu.edu

Thank you and we look forward to your excellent submissions.

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Rubber Band and Bandage
Katie Love, Class of 2014

