

The Art of Caring

“Never believe that a few caring
people can’t change the world.
For indeed, that’s all who ever have”
– *Margaret Mead*

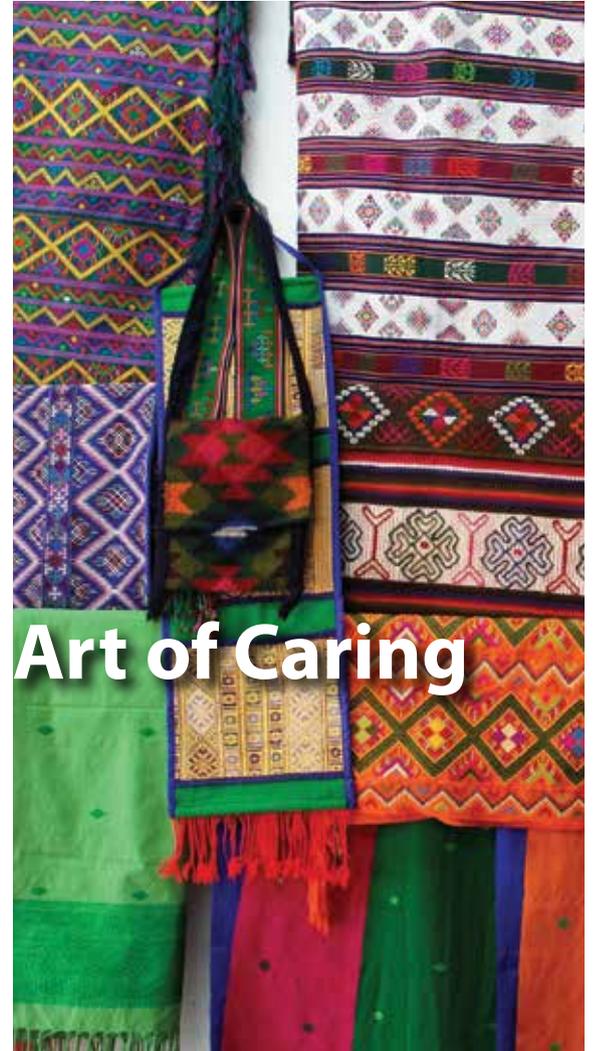


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In the enormity of the experience of medical training, first and second year students are immersed in knowledge that will guide their encounters with patients; learning biology that will reveal the workings of the body; chemistry that will serve as the foundation for medicines that they will one day prescribe. Later in their training they will spend concerted time watching attendings and nurses at the bedside of patients and through witnessing their manners and methods will learn how to navigate the transition from student of medicine to physician; caregiver. But where in their training are they allowed to fully explore the meaning of what it means to care for another person?

Caring has been described as displaying kindness and concern; the work and practice of looking after another.¹ Every day of their lives during medical training students are being cared for. There are individuals, often uncelebrated, who dedicate themselves to making sure that students have what they need to thrive: the custodians who tend the buildings in which they live and learn, the bus drivers who transport them and keep them safe, the cooks who prepare the meals that sustain them. What insights do they embody, what perspectives do these individuals offer as witnesses to the arc of medical training? What can students learn by listening to them and hearing about their lives?

They can learn volumes. During *The Art of Caring* workshop Yale medical students Matt Meizlish, Christine Sunu, and Lorenzo Sewanan conducted narrative interviews with Pearl Murphy, Chris Ferguson, and Lhamu Bhutia. The sacredness of those encounters are shared on the following pages.

We would like to thank Mr. Ferguson, Ms. Murphy, and Mrs. Bhutia for so graciously sharing their time, and stories from their lives for this project. Our heartfelt gratitude is also extended to Dean Nancy Angoff, Dean Forrester Lee, Dr. Thomas Duffy, and the Program for Humanities in Medicine who conceptualized this project and offered unwavering support throughout the process. It is the vision and generosity of each of these individuals that brought this idea to life.

1. Oxford Medical Dictionary

Ms. Pearl

By Matt Meizlish



I met Ms. Pearl at midnight. The library was closing its doors. My mind was half-occupied with immunology and halfway home. I stepped out of the library and began walking slowly through the silent atrium of Sterling Hall of Medicine. At this hour, the vacant building always made me feel out of place. I glanced over my left shoulder and saw a woman who filled the empty space. She looked down at me—she was six feet, two inches tall, with bright red lipstick offset against dark brown skin. She stood beside her custodial cart with deep calm and familiarity. She could have been an imposing figure. But she seemed to extend the comfort she felt in her surroundings. I stopped and turned toward her.

“Hi,” I said. “How’s your night going?”

“Oh it’s good. How are you doing?”

Her voice was deep and clear, rhythmically bouncing off the stone floored foyer.

“You a med student?” she asked.

“Yeah, actually. I’m a first year. I’m Matt.”

“Nice to meet you, Matt.”

“Nice to meet you, too,” I said. I looked down at her nametag. “Pearl.”

“Yep,” she said, “I’m Ms. Pearl.”

“Are you always here late at night, Ms. Pearl?”

“Ohh yeah, I always work the late shift. I like being here at night. I’ll always be out here when you come out.”

When I later went to interview Ms. Pearl, in the custodial headquarters in the basement of TAC, I met her supervisor, Anthony. "Oh, you picked the right person!" he said. "Do you want to use my office?"

The narrative that follows comes from the hour that we spent together. Absent from the text is Ms. Pearl's laugh—a delighted, alto chortle that erupts frequently from her smooth voice. Her stories—even the heavy ones—are infused with laughter. You can hear how that laugh has carried her through her hard times. You can hear how she lightens and lifts the burdens of others. You can hear that laugh coupled with firm conviction—first, in youthful disregard, and then, in a figure of strength and care.

I clean the library, outside the bathrooms, and I clean the Beaumont Room and all them upstairs. I clean the Dean's area on the second floor, SHM-B—Dean Smythe, Dr. James, all of them. Ya know I tease the security guards, and I definitely tease the physical plant guys all the time. All them get a kick out of me because I'm always making jokes with them.

I say, "What y'all gonna do tonight?"

They say, "Ohhh Pearl they called us, they got a clogged up toilet."

And I says "Yep. I can't get it unclogged! I can't take y'alls job today!"

They be just laughing.

All of us is like a little team. The night crew is real, real close. We stick up for one another, and if *Ms. Pearl* say something—well I stick up for all of them. So when something don't go right they come and ask me, "Ms. Pearl, you think that's right what they said?"

And I say, "No, no it ain't right, and we gon' see."

Everybody says I should be a union steward, but I don't have time for all that. I just help them out right here when they need something.

Take, for instance, the holiday: we automatically get the holiday off if it falls on a Monday. But sometimes some of them will come up with slick stuff, like saying we were going to take off a Friday and come in on Christmas, on a Monday. I told them that was wrong, and finally the supervisor said, "Ohh yeah you was right Ms. Pearl." I know I was right. Cause y'all trying to be slick.

You can't blame the supervisors, though, cause they get it from the high bosses, and if the supervisors are new here they don't know. But I've been here for 30 years. I've been here when Rufus, Dwayne, Joan, and Judy were here. They're retired now, and all the other supervisors are new—they've been here like 5 years. Anthony just started here, and he had a hard time with me. He couldn't understand the way I talk. I said, "Ohhh you the new supervisor. Don't come over here and start no trouble cause it ain't gonna be nothing." He starts laughing; he asked the other supervisor, "Who's that?" Jason said, "That's Ms. Pearl. She's a handful!"

I do my job. Every time they ask me to do something I do it and I do it well. But I just be messing with them all the time.

Me, I talk up. I'll listen to your opinion first, and then, if I don't like your opinion, then I'ma tell you just like it is. That's just the way I am. I always talk—I got that from my father.

• • •

My father was a strong person. He worked construction for R. A. Cimatelli. He helped build a lot of buildings, like the Astor Street Projects, which no longer is there on Dixwell Avenue. They used to be the real, real tall projects. They're all tore down now.

My father was strict, in a way. But I was a fast little girl. I always liked to hang out with the older people, go to parties with them. I learned a lot from them. I would put my age up. I had that little young face, but I always was tall. So if I was only 15, I'd convince everyone I was 18, because I was trying to get into the bars.

Around then, round this way in the Hills section there used to be a lot of bars, from Shelton Avenue on. They're gone now—Yale bought up everything. Used to be a bar called the Pink Pussycat, right over here. There used to be Slibies, over on Liberty Street. And I used to be mostly in all of them. When they found out my real age, they would kick me out. I always thought I was older. I used to take chat to all the older guys. I used to like them. Nathan was up there. He was like ten years older than me.

When I had my son, I was 17. My father wanted to beat the guy that got me pregnant, wanted to beat him up. I told my dad, "Well, it takes two."

My mother, she was a little quiet one, and she didn't really get mad until you really pushed her. But I gave her a hard time when I was a teenager. I was a bad little girl. I used to skip school sometimes, go hang out with my friends. My mother and father used to be looking for me, and when my mother find me she gave me a beating. And the school would call saying that I ain't been to school in a certain many days, and I get another beating. It took my mother a lot of time hanging around giving me a lot of beatings before I started listening.

Me and my mother was real, real close. We was so close that mostly when you see me, you see my mother. My mother died from lung cancer, like in '84. She worked for the VA hospital, in West Haven—she was a housekeeper there for years. But she started getting sick with the lung cancer, so she had to take chemo right over there, with radiation, and all that kind of stuff. So I used to make sure she'd get there, and one of my cousins or uncles or somebody would pick her up.

It was only a little before that, in my twenties, that I started really listening to her, and really doing what I was supposed to do. I had my son at 17, so I had no other choice but to listen. I kept on going to school, because they had this program called Paula McKay, to help the young girls that have babies. I graduated from Lee High School, the school with no windows! The windows were all on the outside of the hallways—we never had no windows inside the classroom, just brick and chairs. I liked it there at Lee High. Yale Hospital got it now. It's the dialysis building now.

Then I went to South Central Community College. That moved downtown and it's called Gateway now. I went there for like a year and a half and took an early childhood program. I had to raise my son and work, so I started learning to work in day care centers, started getting little part time jobs working with the kids. I worked so hard I ain't never go back to school. Sometimes, I wish I did. Cause I'd probably be helping my daughter out more. We'd probably be expanding, big, now. She owns her own day care center business, right in New Haven. She has her own little room at our house, right upstairs, that she made into a day care center, and she has like 4 kids. She just started another little organization called Kids Cook, teaching little kids to eat healthy. She even has some of the little kids on the weekend. That's how much she loves kids. They give me a run for my money now cause I'm up in age. I'm 60. I'm 60 years old! I say oh. You struggle with kids all day, and then she has some of 'em on the weekend!

But she got that from me. I worked in day care centers in the school system for a long time. Like the Head Start program. I loved working with the kids. I have 2 kids of my own, and I have like 3 step kids, you know. They became my kids because they grew up with my kids and what not. I used to always watch them, and my father and mother used to watch them, cause their mother used to work all the time. So there started being a bond. They always called me 'Mom,' so they're like my step kids.

One of them recently passed away about 3 years ago from cancer. She was only 30-something when she died. Her boys, one of them is only 5, and the other one is only 11, and the biggest one he's 19 now. The young ones are with their dads, those guys she had the babies by. So me and my daughter pick 'em up on weekends once a month and bring 'em over and keep 'em for the whole weekend. They're sweet kids.

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I wasn't never married. I almost *was* though. I should have married my kids' father, Nathan, but he wanted to play games in the street. Cause he was a nice looking guy. All the girls would talk to him, and he wanted to run with the girls, and this that. And so I said, "Ahh nah nah nah." So I be in there and beat him up. I was a fighter back then. I was. So when I start'd meeting guys and running with the guys he'd get mad. I said, "Oh, two can play this game." Me and him would start fighting. He would say, "You ain't going out." And I would say "You ain't going out either!" And so we'd start fighting and then we wind up making up. And that was it.

He was a good father though. Me and his mother, which is still living, she's 92, and his 2 sisters and 1 brother who are still living, we're all still close. Nathan he passed away from cancer about 8 years ago now, cause he used to smoke all the time. I'd tell him, "Stop smoking, stop smoking." Loved his Winston cigarettes. So it took him out, he had lung cancer. Plus he had asthma anyway—he was born with asthma but he still was smoking. Wasn't a good thing.

Oh, but there been quite a few important men in my life after him. One of them, my fiancé, he recently just passed away, in August of last year, 2011. He was only 52 years old when he died. He was a healthy guy, and then he went to dialysis. His mother used to have diabetes, so he inherited that part of it. But you wouldn't believe he was on dialysis 'cause he was still going to be Joe. He still was gonna drink his beer, smoke his cigarettes, and go to dialysis and have fun and crack jokes and everything.

Joe started on dialysis 7 years ago. He went through all the process, but he didn't abide by the rules that he supposed to get a kidney. He wasn't supposed to be drinking the beer. He'd say the doctor said it was alright with him to drink the beer. Then I'd say, "The doctor ain't tell you that because you're *lying*." I knew all the doctors at Yale. I'd go with him to the doctor and make sure he go. The doctor he'd fuss him out and cuss him out.

They'd say, "I'ma tell Pearl on you." They used to come and tell me, "You know that Joe's not doing this, Ms. Pearl!"

I'd say, "Yeah I know."

Then he'd see the doctor and say, "Don't be telling my wife what I ain't do. She can't do nothing."

And then I'd do something and they'd say, "Yep, see, that's the reason why we told Pearl on you. Cause we know she was gonna get it right."

I kept him living for as long as he had. I could get him to do what he was supposed to. I started telling him, you know what I'm gonna do? I'm gonna hide them cigarettes—I'm gonna take them cigarettes away from you, and any money that you get you ain't even

gonna be able to buy that. He used to have those other young guys that live on our street go and sneak and buy him cigarettes and beer. They'd come tell me, and I'd say, "Ok, keep it up." I'd come out in the summer and say, "Oh I caught you drinking some beer."

He'd try to hide the beer cans underneath his chair. He'd say, "What you doing out here? What you looking for?"

I'd say "I know you got something, I know you sneaking some beer or something."

"No I ain't."

And I'd look on the side he'd have his beer. "See!" I'd catch him and he'd start laughin'.

I'd say, "I done caught you with the beer can." He'd drink that Budweiser. And this is after he came off *dialysis* now! He's just funny. But he did that for a long time and he was still walking around here, and people wouldn't *believe* he was on dialysis. It started taking him down after a while. He was still big, and then he started losing weight, and he started changing color. But, he went out of here still a joyful man. Yeah dialysis took his body. He—he's resting in peace now.

It's still kinda hard because all during the holidays now, I miss him because he always was funny. He always kept stuff going. He loved fried chicken and pork chops and he could do all that. And he'd go buy us presents and go shopping and all the kids loved him. In his last days he spent a lot of time with one of his little nieces and his nephew. He loved them two. One was named Ruby, and the other was named Dwayne. They was the last two, really—and my granddaughter—to talk to him that night before he died. And he was fussing with them and stuff like that: "Now I told you you wasn't supposed to be doing that! I ain't coming back with no money for you cause you ain't listen to what I said." They said he was fussing with them like *crazy* that same night.

And I said Joe, "Why you fussing with them?"

"Cause they have to get fussed at. Cause I don't want them to grow up being a nothing and a nobody."

I said “okay.” He didn’t want them to be like he was growing up—only working penny-anty jobs and stuff like that. He wanted them to go to school and to go to college, be a computer programmer, be a social worker, be somebody. They’re good kids. The one that play basketball—Dwayne, he’ll go to the pros cause he’s a real good basketball player. When I was talking to Dwayne the other day I said Dwayne, “Remember when Uncle Joey used to tell you this?”

He said, “Yeah, my Uncle Joey used to fuss with me. I miss my Uncle Joey fussin’ with me.” Joe used to try to dress like a young thug. He had older clothes, and then he had his young thug clothes—his caps and his Timberlands. Ohh boy. So I gave Dwayne a lot of that stuff, and he appreciates it, cause his Uncle Joey used to wear it.

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When I had my first grandbaby, she got everything. She had all kinds of toys, clothes. My daughter and my son, they said “Don’t bring another thing in this house Ma.” That was Shareen, my son’s first child. She’s in college now—she go to Union University up in New York. Right now she’s doing science, and she wants to go to school and be a PA. And she’s real smart, she’s real good. She’s a good little girl. And the second one she goes right over here to Career High. She’ll be coming out next year.

My daughter has one daughter, Alisa. She’ll be 13 in April. She’s a smart little girl. She keeps up on her grandma, which is me. She tries to keep me in check; I try to keep her in check. Oh she trying to teach me how to text. I ain’t learning how to text. I’d rather talk on the phone.

“They don’t be doing that no more Grandma.” She says “They text people. You need texting.” She knows the computer like a whiz.

“Grandma, this is the way you do it. This is the way you go on the computer and you do this here.”

Then I’ve got my little 7-year-old, Isaac. He got a lot of mouth just like his grandma. Yeah, yeah, he talks a lot of junk to his daddy and he gets away with it too.

“Dad, I thought you was supposed to take me this place. Dad, you told a lie, cause you didn’t take me.”

I said, “Thomas you better take him, cause he ain’t gonna forget it. He gonna keep on asking.”

Isaac say, “Dad you know you supposed to bought me a new game.”

My son says “Nope, cause you didn’t do good in school.”

He says, “But I did good, I did good in school today. We should go to the store this weekend and get my game!”

I say, “They gon’ get that game.”

He thinks he’s supposed to get a new game every month. And he doesn’t like for you to kiss him on his cheek or nothing. When I pick him up from school and we get to the street and I hold his hand, he says, “Don’t hold my hand I’m a big boy now.”

I say “Oh yeah right.”

I want them to be just like my kids. Be smart, learn how to do something, go to school and college and all that kind of stuff. And I think they’re gonna do that, cause their mother and father they tough. My son he’s tough on them, and my daughter-in-law she’s tough. She works for the superior court. They’re gonna be something. Isaac, I can’t wait till he gets about 10 to 12. I’ll still be around hopefully to see how much trouble he’s gonna give his dad.

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Yale is a home for me. Some people ain’t as fortunate to be working at Yale. Some people don’t have jobs, and I’m fortunate to have one. I got here in 1983 and I’ve been here ever since. I’ll be here till I retire at 65. As long as I’m in good health and everything I’ll continue working. I like working, cause I like to have money. I like to spend money—at Ferraro’s meat store on Grand Avenue,

spend money at Shop Rite in West Haven. When they've got a sale, I just go. If they say the limit is 4 big old things of towel paper, I'll get 4. If it's on sale for like \$6.99 for 15 rolls, oh, I'll be there. And people be looking at me in the store like, "She got all that towel paper." I just have it all piled up just to have it. And then if people need it, my daughter and me, my sister and all of us, if they need it I already have it, so I can just give it to them. And if somebody else need it, I just give it to them, cause I already done got it. I just stock it all in my car.

There are some people here at Yale who I meet, and I start liking them and caring for them. Like I know Annie Le, that got killed. I knew her personally. Because up on the second floor where I worked at, she had a lab up there, and me, her, and Mary at custodials, we used to talk like every other day to her. Especially when Michael Jackson died. Cause she loved Michael Jackson. She'd 'Ahhh yeah,' and we stood there for hours—me, her, and Mary, talking about Michael Jackson.

She was like a little *tiny* something, and she was so pretty. She used to wear all these nice clothes, she'd make her own little outfits and dress so cute. That month before that, she was down the other end of the hallway, and she had this nice little white outfit. I said "Annie *what* do you have on today?" She had her little *shoes* on ya know, and the tights was long and they had lace on the bottom. I said "What kind of outfit is that?" Cause she had this real, real freaky like shirt on. I said, "*Look*, I can see you! You so little and you got on all these bright colors. I can see you a mile away, all the way down the hallway!" I was rolling down with the cart, and she was just cracking up. "What kind of outfit you got on? Who decided you'd wear that *outfit*?" I bust out laughing.

She said, "No, this is my outfit. I like this outfit!" and what not.

I said, "Ohh man, I wish I had my camera. I'd take a *picture* of you in that outfit."

She said, "You like? You like?"

I said, "Yeah I like."

I used to see her running down the hall with her little clicky shoes, and I'd say, "Annie Le, stop running down the hall!"

"I gotta get my bus, I gotta get my bus, Ms. Pearl, I gotta get my bus."

I said, "Didn't I tell you about staying here late at night working in the lab, trying to work work work work work, and here you go flying down the hall." I'd say, "Stop flying down the hall in them little shoes, cause you gon' trip one day!"

She'd "Nah nah nah nah I gotta go" and she'd be running down the hallway, going to get her bus.

When the detectives came up into the area up there, asking us, and they showed us pictures—"Do you know her?"—I said "Ohh yeah that's my homegirl!" I said, "What's wrong?"

They said "She missing."

I said "Oh my god. I hope nobody"—that's the first thing that came in my mind—"I hope nobody ain't do nothing to her." I went and ran down the other end of the hall and I said, "Mary, they say Annie Le is missing. They say Annie Le missing."

Mary said, "Whattt?" Like that.

I have to work up there in that unit where she was at, and I have to walk past that lab every day, all the time. Every time I think about her. Cause she used to be there—there was a table set out there in front of her lab, and the table's still sitting there, and she used to have her little coffee and her little muffins sitting there. I'd go knock on the door. I'd say, "Annie Le, what kind of muffins you got today?"

And she'd say "You know I like the chocolate ones."

I'd say "Can I get one?"

“Sure, sure Ms. Pearl get one get one.” So I’d go in there and get her little munchkins, and eat those munchkins.

I’d say “Annie Le I took 2!”

She’d say “Ookay!”

She was so *sweet*. She was just a *kind* person. And I still think about her all the time, when I walk past there.

And that’s about love. Love you think of a person, and care for a person. She cared about people, and she didn’t look down on nobody, no matter if you was custodial or whatever, what your color or whatever. Oh, god, when she passed, it was like, Oh man. I couldn’t believe it. I cried. I cried for like 2 *days*. I cried cause it really touched—it was hurt.

• • •

That night—I’m gonna tell you something—that *night*, the day they got the guy that really killed her, on that floor—I mean, people were thinking it was a ghost or something. The lights on the second floor just start flashin’, flashin’, ch ch ch. And me and Mary looked at one another and we said, “That gotta be Annie Le.” That’s what came in our hearts. It was like her spirit was there, and was saying, “Thank god, that you caught who did this to me.”

I’ve met so many med students... Some of them they graduated and they got jobs and they come back and say “Hey Ms. Pearl!” I meet a lot of people in the library and talk with them. People just love to ask me to do different things. Some of them will walk past you and don’t say nothing, some of them is afraid to ask you. And they be like, “Should I ask her? Should I ask him?” But you know that when they get to know you, they see you, they’ve gotta come ask you a question sooner or later.



One of the students the other night, she said, “Um, you know where certain certain room is?” And she said, “I think I’m lost around here.”

I said, “You sure you lost? Where you trying to go?”

She said, “I’m trying to get outside, down to the bottom.”

I said, “Let me tell you something. Go right here, right to these steps right here, and they gonna take you right to the security desk and right back out to Cedar Street.”

She said “Yeah yeah yeah yeah, that’s where I want to go, yeah yeah yeah yeah. Oh thank you thank you thank you.”

And now she sees me the other night and she said, “Hi! How you doing?”

I said, “Hey, how you doing?” I said, “You find your way out?”

Lhamu Bhutia

By Lorenzo Sewanan

“My English is not good.” Lhamu Bhutia utters words, letting them fall and rise. She does not pronounce different words phonetically; instead, she puts them to music, bringing delightful melody where monotony would bring clarity. Her words were destined at first to become story, to become prose, a narrative of life and mind. I listened and was wrapped up in their lyricism; when I tried to transcribe statements, the lines bent and oscillated back and forth. Whole thoughts fragmented into fixating phrases. What is not prose may be poetry. I try only to retell without distraction.

I am from Tibet and from India,

The place’s name was Kalimpong,

K-a-l-i-m-p-o-n-g,

In the West Bengal state,

And, yes, I am from India actually.

In my family, I have—

We were 3 brothers and 4 sisters.

Two brothers die in India,

One by lymphoma and one by sudden death.

Twins, born 15 minutes apart,
When the elder brother die,
You know, diagnosed with cancer
The other die, after 6 months.
I am the eldest daughter of the sisters,
My family is big; a good family.
But Chinese occupy our country,
Very young, we fled from there,
India gave asylum,
People follow our spiritual leader,
The Dalai Lama,
In 1959, he went to India.
We came to India,
Mom open a restaurant,

We sell dumplings, noodles, wine,

Wine from the rice, from the millet.

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Kalimpong is green hill dotted with dwellings of men, almost like a leaf mottled with white and brown. Indeed, few have ever lived amongst and seen its arboreal landscape or its misty crevasses, extending opaque corridors into the ancient forgings. For all its mystery, Kalimpong was a historical treaty ground for the Tibetan and the Chinese 68 years ago. The inevitable clash and failure of a Tibetan culture in which faith dictated everything, even politics, with a Chinese culture in which politics dictated everything, even faith, propelled many Tibetans again to Kalimpong, but now they had become seekers of political asylum where once they had come to deal as equals.

Other Tibet people were around,

I was little, I don't remember,

They welcome us.

Dad died, quickly,

Just two days in the hospital,

I don't remember him right now.



Mom wakes up at three-thirty,
Single mom alone,
To make food or wine,
I wake up early too.
Still dark at 6,
Study first,
Do chores,
Clean the house,
Other sisters make breakfast,
I have more to do than everyone else.
I am oldest.

By 9, the school bell rings,
We run across the road,

Near and cheap,
The school was Christian,
How do you call it? Protestant,
We Buddhist went there.

I found it strange,
We pray and sing to God,
Read the Bible, study it,
In the morning,
I offer 7 containers of water,
Light the butter lamp,
I practice both,
Buddhist and Christian,
I pray.

I get educated 1 to 12,
In India, at the girls' high school.
I studied arts,
There were streams,
Science and art and commerce,
I did humanities and arts and history.
I graduated from government college.
Maybe I was smart then.
I had house problems,
Too much sisters and brothers,
No focus, you know,
My mom couldn't give attention,
But I have always have positive thinking,
When I was little, I always think,
Some good thing happen to me.

My view? I don't trust

No Buddhism, no Christianity,

I am not atheist, I believe

When you do good,

You get good back,

In this life too.

• • •

Christianity and Buddhism feel inherently opposed. Christians seek salvation and heaven, that the death of a perfect being and subsequent devotion to his doctrines can redeem them from the miserable condition of sin. Buddhists seek morality and transcendence through karma, that personal responsibility for one's actions and inactions dictates the course of reward and misery in life. However, both venerate similar human qualities, humility, compassion, mercy, sincerity, peace, and honesty. Hope, that comes from faith and works.

My husband came first,

He was from Darjeeling,

But went to Nepal as a school teacher,

In Nepal, he opened a restaurant.

I did not know him before,

We have an arranged marriage.

I was at home in Kalimpong,

My husband didn't have any family,

Only 1 brother,

He doesn't know where he is even,

He had a friend, from childhood,

Who had a factory that makes carpets,

That friend's family came to Kalimpong,

To my house and they said if we want,

If I wanted to get married to Thinle.

I'm married more than 20 years.

I have 1 daughter,

She works in India, as a teacher.

Long time, 7 years, since I saw her.

I'm here, She's over there,

I applied papers for her,

But, not yet,

It takes a long time.

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Lhamu Bhutia is a cheerful woman. She is short and round with dark hair, no doubt dyed, but darker eyes that contrast creamy brown skin, reminding me of Asia from the Himalayan Mountains to the Isle of Java. As she speaks, she moves her head, tilting back and forth, oscillating as she considers, as if shifting the question from hemisphere to hemisphere. She has 30 minutes of break all day and gives it to me without qualms. As soon as our time is over, she goes back to work to feed the hungry masses of Harkness.

We went to Nepal.

We had a restaurant there,



Thinley restaurant,
Chinese food, Nepali food,
I speak Nepali,
So not difficult to exist,
People were different.
They don't like people from India,
Not as welcome.
We are refugees, Tibetans,
We don't belong anywhere.

Many years, in Nepal,
I don't see family a lot.
My husband got sent here,
With help of political asylum.

He came here first with friend,
Then I stayed in Kalimpong with family.
My husband sent money.

In India, you know
Neighbors, community, everything's open.
Four years, I felt very bad.
Society talks too much.
Married and back at home,
Husband in the US.
They say he didn't call me,
But I was positive,
One day I'll go.

One year,

Two years,

Three years,

People talk too much,

They said he left me,

That I lost his love,

That he had forgotten.

I stayed in Kalimpong,

Waiting, dreaming.

I don't know how even I would come to America.

I came from a little place,

Walk one side to another side,

Very small place,

The most powerful country,
It's not so easy to come here like that.
Family have problems in Kalimpong,
Money problems, no sources of income,
Every year, we have more,
Grandma dead, niece dead,
They closed the restaurant,
Now no one goes there.
Lots of brothers and sisters,
We are a big family,
Only I am here.

I listen to Dhalai Lama,
He says something about life,

I don't believe in god,
I listen to them all,
Christian, Hindu, Muslim...
I practice that.

The people worship Sai Baba like god in India,
No need to go to temple, he says,
Your heaven is your parents' feet.

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"I don't have anything interesting to tell you." Lhamu insists that there is nothing to learn from her, that her story is nothing more than a life that anyone can live, has lived. How many people have lived in 4 countries but never remember what it feels like to have a home? Maybe no one understands the forces that shape our lives, nor should we ever assume that we do or stop trying to unravel them.

I'm like this,
I'm not greedy,

If I have money,

I give it.

In India, a friend

Sold small baked goods,

He came from house to house,

Selling, trying to live.

He asked me for money, for business,

I did not have much to give.

But, I had one ring,

My only gold ring, from my husband,

I gave it.

My family said why,

He never gives you back,

I said, he needs money,



When I do good to people,
Good happens to me.

People thought my husband left me.

After 4 years, I came.

I was scared.

I was educated, went to college,

I know the English,

But didn't have practice.

First time, New Haven.

How hard is that?

The nephew of my husbands' friend took me,

To go to CNA—

I came here to make money.

I wanted to do CNA, to serve people.

I went to school,

First time with American people,

But I did the best.

I have a good memory,

I went to the big library,

Learned it all there, diseases,

Duties, I take notes.

I did good in the test.

But, I didn't get a job close enough.

They all want experience,

First chance, I had no car,

I had no reference,
It was all new to me,
I don't have that.
I didn't get the job.

If I didn't get a job,
I go back to India.
I had the state certificate for 2 years,
But I stayed at home.
My friend took me to Tyco-Surgical
Hired me to make sutures,
I wrap the thin threads,
Put clips in, for 2 months,
I worked hard there,

Then got fired.

They don't keep people,

After 3 months it's permanent,

Still they do that, hire people, start from new,

Fire people, I don't know why.

I didn't want to go back,

I did nothing wrong.

Then they wanted me back.

I did nothing wrong,

I stayed in the house with my husband,

Still looking for a job.

Here, totally different for me,

Before, in India, you know everything,

The community, neighbors.

Here, inside, That's it.

No outside.

Lonely?

Sometimes. I wanna work,

Because of that.

I went to be a casual for Yale,

And for me this was the best,

It's a restaurant,

I like that. I come from a restaurant environment,

But I never worked like that.

Big parties, so many people,

Banquet halls, even the President's banquet hall,

I was scared and happy too.

I walked among the big people,

Asked them what they want,

I always try to give a good service.

I always listen to them.

Some students are humble.

A tree with lots of fruit hangs

Down to the earth; those with nothing

Like bamboo always stand straight up.

I meet many people,

See this is true.

I came to the dining hall,
As a temporary too. The Indian
Manager was happy to see me,
Happy that I work for her.
I bid for the job, I told her,
I love to work here,
To serve people.
So I was hired for 10, then 20, then more.
It's been about 5 years.
Still, I have no complaint.
Pay, smooth and cool,
In life, laughing,
Reached up 200 hours sick time here,
Work is my god.

I miss my daughter,

I talk every time with her by phone.

I apply for her to come.

Maybe this year, she will come.

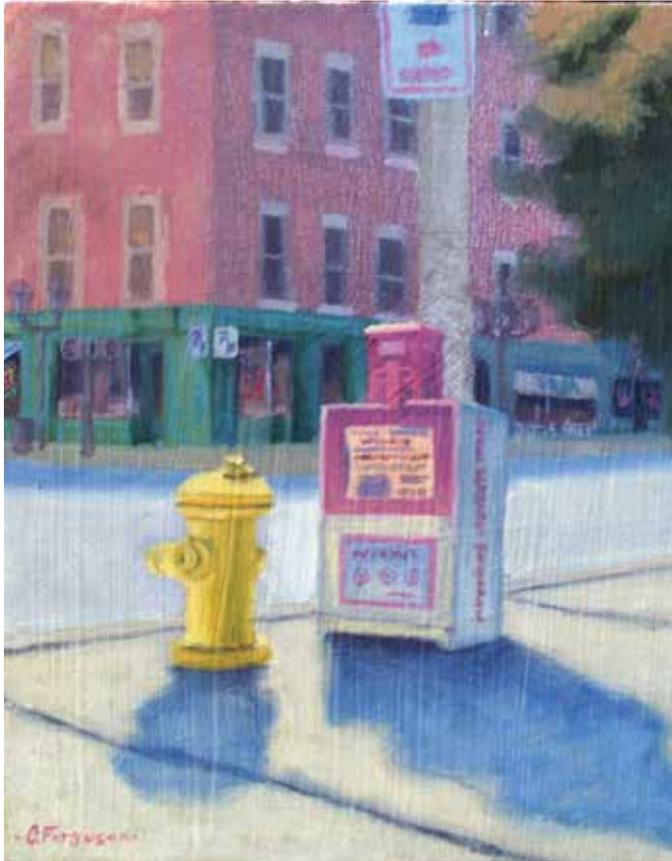
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"I am nobody, but when someone asks me about myself. I feel good." Lhamu Bhutia tells a story of a life woven with surprise, achievement; aspiration. Listening to her exemplifies that everyone has a different story to tell, a piece of history to reveal.

History is alive, not in the sense that the lived present becomes history. The present becomes the past easily but history rarely. Indeed, history is alive because individual people are intersections of threads of history; each person might be unique because straight lines only intersect once. Maybe, this is personhood.

Chris

By Christine Sunu



"EXTRA, EXTRA" by Chris Ferguson • Oil on Board

Chris was sitting in the lobby of First Transit when I walked in. He was wearing the bright orange vest associated with people who spent time on the road. "Are you Christine?" He asked.

We walked to a conference room, making light conversation. Only rarely does one meet someone like Chris. He was a large man, very at ease with strangers. Listening to him, I conquered my awkwardness.

There was something familiar about him. Sometimes we feel such a personal resonance with those who are like us. But I had a feeling that it was not Chris who was familiar, but rather the sense of peace he emitted — the calm understanding of life that we have all experienced once or twice, when the clouds parted.

I was driving a school bus. I did that for 4 years. Before I drove a school bus, I worked at a printing house. That was pretty much after I got out of college. My thought in doing that was, okay, well I can't make money as an artist right now, so I'll find something somewhat art-related. I was the bindery person. I didn't do the actual printing. I hated being indoors all day and at this job I was working on one machine then working on another and another... I decided after a few years I couldn't take it

anymore. I needed a job that would allow me to paint. So I decided to drive a bus, because the schedule had a split day. I did that for about four years, and I kept painting continuously and showing in galleries and things like that.

I usually get up at 4 in the morning. I'll pre-trip the bus, and I'll drive from here to the VA Hospital, that's where my route starts first.

I know most everyone, I can recognize everyone by sight. I can tell if somebody is getting on the wrong bus if I don't recognize them, or if a person is new I make sure they want to go to Yale or the VA.

On one hand you'll have professional types that are working at Yale, and then you have doctors and nurses. These people come from as far away as Madison, Middletown, Guilford... But then along with that, you have the veterans. Some of them are dealing with emotional issues, mental issues, and some are homeless. It makes for a very interesting mix on a small shuttle sometimes.

I think people don't realize how patient you need to be with others... My passengers have gotten road rage on my behalf sometimes, when something would happen on the road that I wouldn't get angry about, I would just let it go. But one of my passengers would get up and start cussing and screaming at the person in the other vehicle and I wouldn't say anything. Even in dealing with the passengers. Everybody has idiosyncrasies. Sometimes the VA people get impatient with the Yale people. Sometimes the Yale people get impatient with the VA people. And they kind of don't realize that you have to be patient with this job, otherwise you'll hate it.

My favorite part of what I do is seeing my regular passengers. I like saying hello to some people, being able to greet some people and having the opportunity just to do nice things for others. Sometimes I'll do nice things to help out a passenger. So that's what I enjoy.

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Dealing with certain passengers can be very difficult some days. Sometimes there will be fights on the bus with the veterans. Every once in a great while there will be a fight or an argument. Sometimes you'll have a passenger who is drunk, so I've dealt with that. Sometimes I've had to put passengers out because they were drunk or rowdy. And I think you're more likely to deal with that on the shuttle run that I do, because some of the patients are having difficulty at times.

The first thing I think about is the safety of my passengers, especially if there are women aboard the bus — I don't want them to get hurt. My first thing is to be very protective of my passengers, and I try to be calm, don't get angry, don't create any more friction than there needs to be. Just deal with things calmly, and either try to get them to calm down or just escort them off the bus.

Most people are really nice on the bus in my job, but sometimes... Usually I find this to be the tendency among student doctors or brand new people who are just coming in. A group of them will get on. I'll hear them talking excitedly about what they're learning, and I hear these really interesting conversations about medical things... I notice that doctors their sense of humor tends to be very different from other people, like their jokes will be based on medical things, and it'll be kind of funny hearing that. And they'll get on the bus and they'll get off the bus, and not say a word to the driver — not say a word, not say thank you, nothing. They are so engrossed in what they're talking about that they get off, and don't even acknowledge that the driver got you here in one piece. Sometimes one person, the last person out will realize this and say, "Oh! Thank you," and keep going... that doesn't happen a lot. But it's kind of weird — they'll just kind of get on and get off. That's with people who aren't regulars.

I like New Haven. I was born and raised here. I couldn't see living anywhere else, at least not far. Even if I moved out of New Haven, I'd want to be close enough to be able to get right back to it. It's like any other city: it's got its nice parts and its crazy parts, but overall though it's a nice diverse area, a nice mixed area.



"THE GRAND AVENUE BRIDGE" by Chris Ferguson • Oil on Board

Some of the landmarks in my memory are the bridges in New Haven: the Grand Avenue Bridge, the Chapel Street Bridge, the Ferry Street Bridge, and the Old Tomlinson Bridge.

I was born late in my parents' life... my brother and sister were seventeen, eighteen years my senior. It was just me, and so my dad would take me for walks. That was what we would do for fun. And we would walk all around Fair Haven, and I remember going up to the — I guess they're called the birdhouses — to visit with the workers that operated the bridges to open and close them. My dad and I visited every bridge, every bridge operator in the Fair Haven section. You're not allowed to do that anymore. People started getting robbed... no one is allowed to go up there anymore. But back then, we were allowed to go up. One time we were even up there when they had to open the bridge to let a boat through.

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I always drew. Ever since I was little, I drew all the time. I started off doing cartoons, and then my parents would send me to art classes at creative arts workshops. And then when I got into high school my parents signed me up for the educational center for the arts. It exposed me to different ways of creating art and also allowed me to tap into my creativity in a way that I never had before. So that was a really nice experience for me. From there, I decided to go to art school.

I started at Paier. It was just in the next town, which was Hamden, right down the street, and I could take the city bus if I had to. I learned a lot about using art mediums — oil painting, drawing, basic foundations of doing art and creating art... I discovered, though, that most of the things I learned about painting I developed years after I graduated. All the things that I know now about painting came from just doing.

I graduated in '98, and I was always painting. There were things that my teachers at Paier taught me, like they'd say "learn how to see," or another teacher said "you can paint anything and make it look realistic. You can paint a person blue and it would look realistic if you have your values right." "Focus on edges, edges, edges." All those things I heard about in school. And I think it wasn't until a couple of years ago did those things start to make sense.

One of my passengers encouraged me to show my work at the Yale School of Medicine in the hallway and I was able to do that twice. I've shown in really nice galleries, but the Yale School of Medicine — that hallway — I've actually sold more paintings off of those walls.

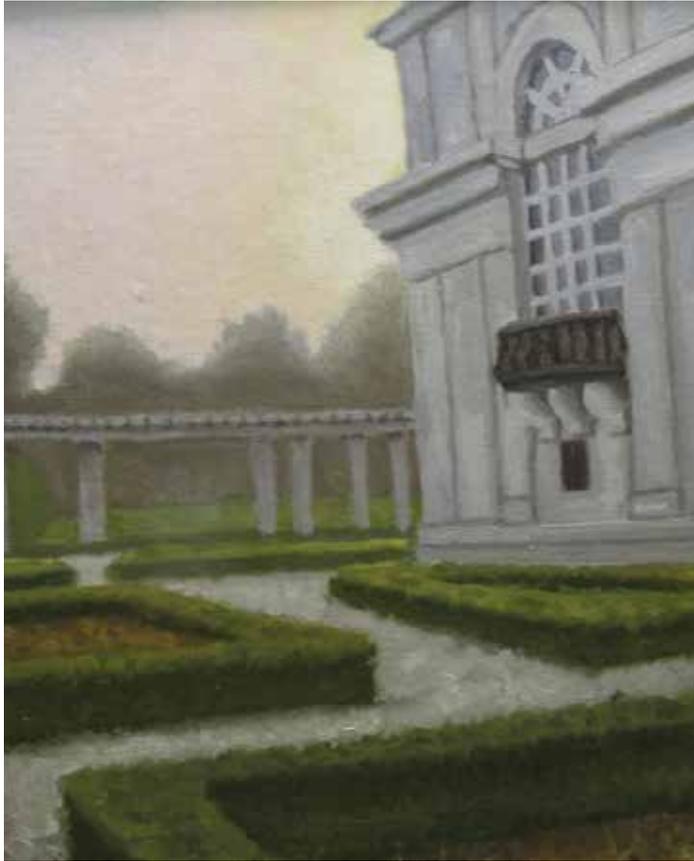
Nobody can show there anymore, it's unfortunate, but there were a lot of great things they had there, a lot of great works by local artists. The collection that they have there is really nice but it's unfortunate that it can't be shared by local artists.

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My dad's family is from St. Nevis from West Indies, so I think there's a strong culture in women being respected. He was born in Brooklyn, but he was raised by mostly his aunts and his mom... So my dad always treated my mom with respect, and he always treated her like a queen and spoiled her rotten. I think that is where I get it from. I treat my wife the same way.

At different times growing up, I've always felt cared for by women. I don't know if it's my nature maybe. I don't know, people seem to want to defend me for some reason, because I guess I seem helpless sometimes or vulnerable at times. So as a kid growing up, I think people were always looking out for me. It seemed like moms were always looking out for me.

I know one time one of my teachers in the fourth grade, she helped me out. I guess I was going through a rough time, because the previous teachers I had in elementary school were not good at all. They were really mean. So my fourth grade, the last year at elementary school, this one teacher she really took care of me. There were times when I was getting overwhelmed and stressed out, and I was crying because something wasn't going right. I couldn't get this math assignment right or something, and I started crying. So she took me out in the hallway. And I guess it's different now, teachers, some teachers, are afraid to touch children now. But at this time, this teacher sat me down she talked to me. She held me in her arms and allowed me to cry. She just cradled me there in the hallway for about ten minutes until I was all cried out.



“THE BREAKERS” by Chris Ferguson • Oil on Canvas

That was a breath of fresh air, because all the other teachers were crazy, but this teacher wasn't afraid to treat me like her own son. That was one instance. And throughout that entire year, it was really wonderful. She always treated me that way, like a son. She wasn't afraid to touch me, to hug me when I needed it. She wasn't afraid to do any of that.

I grew up as a Witness, and our work is primarily to teach people, to get people to look into their Bibles to see what it says for themselves. Witnesses are known for going from door to door, and some people have the impression that we are trying to change people's religions or change their views or their minds about things, but that's not the case. We are encouraging people to look into the Bible to see what it says for itself, and we use Bible-based publications to help people to see what the Bible actually teaches on a lot of doctrines that some people might have questions about or be confused about. So that's what we do... And my family and I we have a share in it and it's very rewarding work. Very rewarding.

Art gives me a measure of fulfillment, but being one of Jehovah's Witnesses satisfies my spiritual needs, and that's one of the most important needs to have satisfied, more than anything else. A lot of times people get into trouble

trying to fill a void. Sometimes people can get into self-destructive behaviors trying to fill a spiritual void. By being one of Jehovah's Witnesses, I am able to fulfill that spiritual need that I have, and that allows me to be content with everything. I'd like to be a full time artist right now, but I'm not yet. But I'm content with the process and working at it. There are other things that I'd like to have right now, but I don't have those things yet. So, I'm content with what I have, and I'll do what I can within reason to reach those goals. But as long as I put my spiritual activities first and make spiritual activities the center of my life, all other things fall into place.

Even though I grew up as a Witness, it didn't really click with me until I was in the summer between middle school and high school. I was listening to a public talk that was being given. It was a talk about the preaching work that we do, and the role that the angels have in the preaching work that we do, and how they play a much more significant role than we realize when it comes to our door-to-door ministry.

I can't remember exactly but I think it had to do with when we are going from door to door, we are actually God's coworkers, because the work that we are doing as Witnesses isn't our work, it's God's work, and he's assigned us to fulfill this preaching work. It was started by Jesus in the first century and it carries on to today... In order to accomplish this work, God assists us by means of invisible spirit creatures, which are the angels. According to what the Bible teaches, they play a role in helping us to find people who are looking for answers and who want to learn the truth about God. And we don't claim to hear voices or see visions of people appearing, nothing like the movies or anything like that. They're invisible to our eyes, but they're present, so they can maneuver things — circumstances — so we can get to a certain door.

For instance, we'll be in the ministry, going from door to door, and we'll be like, "Okay, let's finish for the morning we're all done, I'm kind of tired, let's go, we're done for the day, we have something else to do." But then someone — maybe one of the kids — will say, "No, I want to do just one more door, I want to do this door before we go."

So then we go to that door, and we mention our presentation about a subject perhaps that might be on the magazine cover, perhaps dealing with the death of a loved one. After we go through the presentation, the person at the door starts crying and that person says, I was just praying to God because I lost my husband or my son a couple weeks ago, and I was praying to God

asking for answers as to why this happened and could you please tell me more. That happens a lot. Nobody saw a vision, nobody appeared or anything like that, but just by circumstances things worked out where we got to the right person at the right time.

When I heard that [in the sermon], I kind of thought, “What am I doing?” Because my mind was always on “When is this over?” I was looking at the clock. When is this over? But when I heard that, I finally said, “What am I doing? I need to focus on this. I need to focus on spiritual things.” So from that point on, I always wanted to make sure that God was an important role in my life, and it has benefited me greatly, because some of my friends who I grew up with who were associated with the Witnesses, some of them made bad choices and ended up having a lot of difficulties... By sticking to Bible principles, I was able to steer clear of those problems and have a very fulfilling and satisfying life.

Many individuals who have become Witnesses in this area have studied with Witnesses who knocked at their door, and then they became Witnesses and they were able to make changes in their lives, and they were able to go out and do the same thing. And there were many people in the community who had very difficult lives, dealt with very difficult issues. Some people were involved with drugs, violence, and a lot of other things. And they studied with the Witnesses, and they made changes in their lives, and they were able to put away a lot of the negative things they were dealing with. And along with becoming a Witness, they were able to become productive citizens in the community as well. So it's kind of a two-fold thing. They develop a relationship with God, and again they become productive in the community, whereas before they might have been assisting or aiding in bringing the community down.

One friend of mine, he was heavily involved in drugs. He was married and had a son... and he ended up in jail when his son was born. And he was planning to murder somebody, the person who sent him to jail. But when the Witnesses actually came into the prison that he was at, and they spoke to him, he decided to study again and learn about what the Bible teaches, and he gradually made changes in his life. And now his family is back together again, and he's an active Witness in the community with a fine reputation. A productive citizen. He owns a home now and pays his taxes and things like that. So he made changes, and that's just one story. There are quite a few people who have made changes in their lives.

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I'm thankful that I had both my parents when I grew up, and they are still alive, so I was grateful for that, and they definitely set a good example for me. But I think one of the biggest influences in the way I treat people today has to do with me growing up as one of Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Bible-based values that I was taught from early on... in being considerate in treating others the way that I would want to be treated. And that's pretty rewarding, because a lot of my passengers really do appreciate me, and that makes me feel good because sometimes at certain times of the year, at the end of the year before the break that Yale goes on, some of my passengers will give me gifts, and it shows me how much I'm appreciated so it's really nice.

If I do something safely, or if I do something kind for somebody, or if I avoid a dangerous situation, or if I avoid an accident, I think that is when I get noticed more and people appreciate it. Sometimes passengers have applauded a maneuver I've done on the bus because of a safety issue that could have been dangerous.

One situation that really got noticed was not so much of a safety issue more of a disruption. This one passenger, she wasn't really authorized to ride the shuttle. One of the Yale employees was getting off while she was getting on. She was going up to see her boyfriend at the VA Hospital. She was not affiliated with Yale or the VA. And she was very street, and I didn't have a problem with her getting on. But when the real employee got off, she didn't see her coming on. She said, "Oh, I'm sorry about that" — the Yale employee said that to her. And then as this woman got on the bus she said, "Yeah, excuse you too B." She said that real loud. And I happen to know my passenger quite well. So before we went anywhere, I said, "Excuse me, are you entitled to ride this shuttle?" And she said, "No, no." And I said, "Are you a Yale employee or a VA Hospital employee?" "No, no." "So what are you on the shuttle for?" "Well I'm just going up to the VA Hospital to see my boyfriend." "Well, only Yale employees or VA employees are really supposed to ride the shuttle, that's what the shuttle is for. And another thing, I don't appreciate you disrespecting my passengers dot dot dot." And well you know, she just starts fussing back at me, so I basically kick her off the bus. So I think I overreacted, but I said something like "Yeah don't ever insult my passengers!" and I slammed the door and the passengers were like "Yeah!" and they cheered... I definitely overreacted in that situation I think I could have handled it better, but that was probably the biggest applause I got.

I do oil painting. I have a studio at my house. I create paintings and I try to sell them through galleries and exhibitions and things like that. It's weird how my work here and my art have come together, because a lot of my passengers are followers of my art blog that I write now... asking about when my next shows are coming up, so it's been a very nice combination. You'd think it wouldn't come together, but it came together very nicely.

Some of my passengers have been to my exhibits and a couple of my passengers bought things as well... People have been very nice, very supportive.

Right now I'm working on a series of beach scenes, and I'm looking into doing a series of paintings of people at art museums looking at other paintings. I've noticed that's been a trend lately so I'm working on that as well... I have an exhibit showing at a gallery in Westville right now.

I'm really starting to understand certain things about painting. Originally, I was actually going to be a children's book illustrator and I came very close to it. But then I decided I don't think I'd enjoy painting what other people were telling me to paint, so I think I'd just paint what I want to paint and submit it to galleries and things like that so that's why I'm driving a bus today, but I enjoy what I do. The schedule really allows me to paint, so that's a really good thing, and I've met a lot of nice people. So it's really coming together nicely.

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Oil is a very forgiving media, I find, because you can work on something and make a mistake and you can go back over it again as soon as it dries, and in fact you can keep painting something actually forever pretty much with oil paint.

So that's why I like it. I also really like the brilliance of the color as well and the smell, the smell of the linseed oil is something that I just enjoy working with. Watercolor isn't as forgiving and is more difficult — once it's down it's down. Acrylic is a little different for

me, too, because it dries very fast, and I don't think it's as brilliant, so that's why I enjoy oil paint a lot.

I don't do that edgy art — that harsh, violent, weird, dark, or erotic type stuff — I don't do any of that. I'll do landscape. People in my paintings they are usually women and children. That's my favorite subject to work on — women and children in settings in you know doing different everyday activities. I like that subject because I think that women are naturally more caregivers. And I think that children as well they have an innocence about them. They care about people.

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At the end of the interview, I said goodbye to Chris and headed back to the lobby. He went home to his wife and daughter and his painting studio. I greeted some of the people waiting for their routes, bright-jacketed like Chris. I felt strangely at ease. That inner peace that Chris felt — there was something contagious about that. I wanted to love my neighbor. I wanted to paint. I wanted to learn and understand the intricate life of more people around me.

The manager offered to drive me back to campus. I watched the bright-jacketed workers at the water cooler, taking care of each other, speaking happily, walking out towards buses parked in the adjacent lot. Taking care of us. The manager donned a bright jacket as well. As I exited the building, I realized that this color would now forever be associated for me with this feeling — the feeling of being cared for by someone who asks for nothing in return. The feeling that makes you grateful, happy; at peace.



"A WALK IN THE PARK" by Chris Ferguson • Oil on Canvas

Author Bios

Matt Meizlish

Matt was born in Fairfield, Connecticut, grew up in Weston, and was a History major at Yale (studying Nicaragua's Sandinista Revolution) before managing to briefly escape Connecticut to study the history of immunology and philosophy of biology at Cambridge University. He is happy to be back at Yale as a first-year MD/PhD student, and he is interested in doing research in cancer immunology. Matt is the son of two physicians with deep Yale roots, who are not at all happy about where he landed. He is very close with his two older brothers, who taught him to ski and most of the other things he knows.

Lorenzo Sewanan

Lorenzo R. Sewanan grew up in Paramaribo, Suriname, and moved to Queens, New York, when he was sixteen. After graduating from Trinity College in Physics and in Engineering, he enrolled in Yale School of Medicine as an MD/PhD student. As a child he used to invent worlds of imagination, and now, he wants to bring inner worlds, his and others, to papers and words.

Christine Sunu

Christine Sunu is a second year medical student at YSM. She graduated from Brown University in 2009 with a B.A. in Literary Arts. She is a large supporter of humanities in medicine and hopes to write continuously throughout medical school.

Alita Anderson

Alita Anderson is a writer and graduate of YSM who immensely enjoyed working with Matt, Christine, and Lorenzo as they created *The Art of Caring*.

