



Litquake Elder Project writings borne of experience, sharpened with wit and wisdom

Description

Published poet Lisa Galloway is the person who added the Elder to Litquake.

A spinoff of the popular, annual Bay Area Litquake Festival â?? Oct. 11-20 â?? the Litquake Elder Project is a writing program for seniors that offers instruction, community and the opportunity to share their voices. On Oct. 17, a Litquake Elder All-Star reading is free to the public, from 11 a.m. â?? noon at Bethany Lutheran Church, 2525 Alemany Blvd.

The Litquake Elder Project was birthed two years ago,, soon after Galloway moved to San Francisco from Portland, Ore. While interviewing for a job with Litquake, she learned that it offered writing programs for kids and teens but not seniors.



Litquake Elder Project Founder Lisa Galloway, left, with writer MG Thomas. (Photo by Judy Goddess)

She had worked with seniors, recording their stories as part of making end-of-life videos for Kaiser Permanente. She knew they had lots to say and were eager to share. Litquake took her suggestion and agreed to offer a program for seniors if she could find the funding to support it.

Galloway, fortunately also an experienced grant writer, accepted the challenge and secured funding from the California Arts Council for a demonstration project at the Oakland Senior Center. When logistics made it difficult to offer a second session there,, Galloway brought the project to San Francisco. It has since been offered four times at the San Francisco Campus for Jewish Living and is now completing its third series at the Cayuga Community Connectors, a program of the San Francisco Community Living Campaign.

Galloway expects to start a new series with the San Francisco Village community. Programs at Cayuga Connectors and the Campus for Jewish Living will continue, with matching funds from The California Arts Council. But additional programs will need additional funding, she said.

The Litquake Elder Project contracts professional, published writers as instructors. Classes meet for 90 minutes a week for eight weeks; a public performance of their work culminates each series. Many of the instructors are poets, others write fiction or prose. Instructors alternate â?? often teaching two consecutive classes â?? so that students are exposed to various writing styles. Galloway organizes the instructional teams.

â??For the Cayuga program, I deliberately chose teachers from diverse age groups: 40s, 50s, and 60s. I wanted everyone to have someone they could relate to,â?• she said. The classes have been popular, with many repeat students. â??Iâ??m so pleased with the program. Everything I wanted to happen is happening. Itâ??s exciting when you see students incorporate what you teach in their writing.â?•

Before the public reading on the last day of class, Galloway and the instructors compile an anthology of student writing.

Read more and learn about the authors in these PDFs of the some of the Litquake Elder Project anthologies.



[Litquake Elder Project Book ?? Cayuga Spring 2018](#)

[Litquake Elder Project Book ?? Cayuga Summer 2018](#)

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And here are some samples:

??The Crazy Quilt?•by MG Thomas

Waking up, the first thing I see is the quilt on my bed.

The squares tilted like baseball diamonds,
colors scattering madly, running into each other
like a kaleidoscope.

How I loved those as a child
watching myriad squares shifting and sliding
into the next impossible design.

The next impossible design being marriage.
How could two such crazy quilt squares as us
ever fall into a pattern that fit?

Those right-angled metamorphoses of life
kept tipping us off-center, bouncing off each other.

Bouncing until I bounce free

through a lattice-work gate and onto
St. Charles Avenue where I watch
a Mardi Gras jester dance along the parade route,
his jacket a civil disturbance of geometry and color.
Later, déjà vu, that design reappears at the race track
on my jockey's jersey, the diamond pattern
shimmering in the sunlight as
his horse meanders across the finish line.
My dream of retiring rich ruined,
my attention wanders across a diamond walkway,
back through my bedroom window and onto the bed
where the quilt has continued to sleep soundly,
completely unaware
of the journey
it just led me on.

St. Paul Streetcar by Grace Dana

St. Paul streetcar going downtown
going oing oing down the tracks
old white driver
bounce jiggles in his chair
going oing oing down the tracks.
I'm too little to go it solo
so mama holds my hand.
caned seats stiff in winter
through our heavy coats
sticky sweaty in vapid

zapid summer air.

Going oing oing

going downtown

through the revolving door.

Too hot inside

inside heavy coats

going to the notions floor.

St. Paul streetcar oing oings down

the tracks

past 7 Corners

humble, shabby, seedy then.

Chic with boutique antiques now

I hear.

Somewhere in a summer

they took the tracks, dug â??em up leaving mounds of yellow

brown dirt punctuated with rocks.

Old enough to solo now I

traipsed over the mounds

to the corner store, popsicle juice

tattoos my hand, tromping to my back door

chucking pokey rocks on the stair.

St. Paul streetcar gone

replaced by a noxious bus 22

still goes downtown

past 7 Corners, stops

at Wilder pool. Men who have no bathrooms

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shower there and
girls like me learn to swim.
Mean Betsy, my 4th grade fiend learned
float and crawl. Me, I floundered
while chirpy whistleblower teacher squished
my hand when I reached for the rail.
Mean Betsy didnâ??t have it all good.
Her mama died, her daddy married Peggy
nice enough, but Betsyâ??s rich grandma said
Peggy has piano legs.
On St. Paul noxious bus
Mean Betsy and me
hats, white gloves, quarters in hand
going to high stooled shiny beige Woolworthsâ??s counter
for hot dogs, chips and cokes
then to look at bras.
Solo on that bus
coming home with my first
Elvis 45, later
open close open
close stiff bags to peek
at fashions found on sale
through the revolving door in vapid
zapid summer air.
The tracks are gone, the corner storeâ??s
a pizza parlor now

and we still use that back door.

• by John Edmiston

I stepped into the dimly lit room

Essential oils barely wafting into my awareness

Ochre brick fireplace

Lovingly housing a serene seated Buddha

Gauzy tattered fabric softening the

image of the crowded world outside

I am here to be healed,

to soften the rigid muscles

in my neck and back

Cords of wood suddenly calcifying

Straining ridges knotted visibly under my skin

stealing my attention

The therapist reaches under my shoulder blades,

skillfully probes the attachment

radiating a bilious yellow throb,

pulls, stretches, coaxes

recalcitrant armored lumps out,

Softening the tightly held knots below my skin's surface

He works his way up to the cord of my neck

Where a rod of iron ends at the clavicle

Like a sprung bear trap clenched under my jaw

And I try to explain

with just words

how I came to be here

supine on his table
The radiation was not so bad for the first week
Caged from the top of my head to my pectorals
A web of plastic molded to my face neck chest
Snapped onto the table, trapped motionless
as the rays traveled through my soft vulnerable pink flesh
still healing from the surgeon's knife
The burns appear and grow and merge, 31
I wake each day on bloodied pillows,
Sheets crunch with dreams that fell away in the night.
Clots of skin and blood and crust slough off
catching in the drain
vermillion staining the water washing over me
I tried to tell him all this from a place of detachment
his fingertips already knowing so much.
I started to say
"It was really quite horrible!"
but then I could only cry.

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1. All Posts

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