



≡ Navigation



FEATURE LETTERS

# Just Showing Up

## Trump year 1

Dorothy Potter Snyder — November 30, 2017



☒ Coffee © tsaiproject | Flickr

*What have you done in the last year to respond to the upheavals in American politics? This is an installment in a series of short essays that reflect on the first year of Donald Trump's presidency.*

Watching Trump win the Presidency last November, I was afraid. I posted a note on our neighborhood website in Hillsborough, NC where my husband and I had been living for just six months: “Anyone want to have coffee and talk? It doesn’t matter what you look like, believe, or for whom you voted. I just want to be in community with my neighbors and start breathing again. Anyone?”

36 people responded, 24 commented. A handful committed. That Friday morning, eight women met at our local coffee shop: a Quaker retiree, a young physician, a former reporter for the Washington Post, a theology professor, a service dog trainer, an artist, a stay-at-home parent, and me, a writer and literary translator. We bonded immediately. The next Friday, we started analyzing our political situation. By the third Friday, we were coming up with strategies. We met every week for six months.

Out of new friendships came hope, and out of hope, action. The physician designed a local campaign to divest our town and its citizens from pipeline-associated banks and invest in local credit unions. The artist sunk deep into her work, the transmutation of

discarded materials into brightly-colored bowls, bags, and jewelry. The theologian organized events to educate citizen-activists about how we might win the state legislature for progressives through big data. I added my voice at fortnightly school board meetings as a member of the Hate-Free Schools Coalition, and we got the Confederate Flag banned on county public school grounds.

As for my writing, it became more urgent. I quit jobs I didn't like. I sublet a loft-space to use as a writing studio. The era of fake news gave me permission to speak my truth in the form of fiction. My new friends encouraged me to face my fears about racism, gender oppression, old age, death, and environmental degradation and my (dis)belief in myself as a writer. I worked to develop my narrative art to explore these ideas honestly on the page. I re-dedicated myself to translating contemporary women's fiction from Spanish and getting it published.

In community, activism, and writing I became less focused on outcomes, and more on just showing up. And it worked.

A year later, though our gatherings are less regular, the Friday group still gets together once a month at someone's house to share coffee, pie, laughter, ideas, encouragement and gratitude.

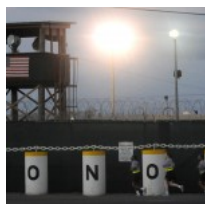
Equity and honesty continue as themes at our gatherings and in the projects each one of us pursues on her own. This morning, as I sit down as usual to write, the women of Fridays are here with me, encouraging me to tell the truth on the page and, in doing so, to dispel the specter of hopelessness.

*Dorothy Potter Snyder is a writer, literary translator, and Spanish professor who lives in Hillsborough, NC. She is currently writing a short story collection for her Master's thesis at The Sewanee School of Letters.*

## Also for you:



**Adding Injustice to Injury**  
Our colleague, Zeyno Ustun, is back in Istanbul this month. We corresponded about the situ...



**On Bitter Satisfaction**  
The verdict was more forceful than expected. On July 24, 2014 the European Court of Human ...



**Representative Thinking, Paternalism, and Invisi...**  
In a recent article published on Public Seminar, Rezvaneh Ganji criticized Republican Part...



**Finding Value in Schoolhouses as Public Things**  
In his recent piece, "Why Do Schoolhouses Matter?" Johann Neem makes a compelling case for...




Start the discussion...

Be the first to comment.


ALSO ON PUBLIC SEMINAR

- An Unreasonable Standard


1 comment • 21 days ago

 Louis Colombo — I don't disagree with what Professor Page has written here, even with her assertion that the article of mine to which she ...
- Subverting the Symbols of White Supremacy


1 comment • a month ago

 Chanzo Greenidge — We are not lambs. They are not wolves or foxes. (Lambs don't fight back, for starters).Our first challenge in combating ...
- Is it Time for the Kneeling Freedman Statue to Go?

1 comment • a month ago

 G. Derek Musgrove — An excellent meditation on our changing relationship to the Emancipation statue. I wonder, though, if a better alternative to ...
- Can Roy Moore's Candidacy Survive?

1 comment • 15 days ago

 urbanexile — I also find Ms. Nelson's account searing. The only thing that wonders me is how someone who experienced this could vote for a ...

PREVIOUS POST

< Being a Woman is Work


NEXT POST


This is the most recent story.

 Dorothy Potter Snyder

- Activism
- Democracy
- Politics
- Social Movements
- United States
- Donald Trump

## Discussion

-  Emmryss "Perhaps this framing, that standing out against tradition in a unique way, is an...

The Anxiety of Poetry • 18 hours ago
-  urbanexile Congratulations on the work, Val! Wonderful.

Translation Can Be a Peculiar Drug • 20 hours ago