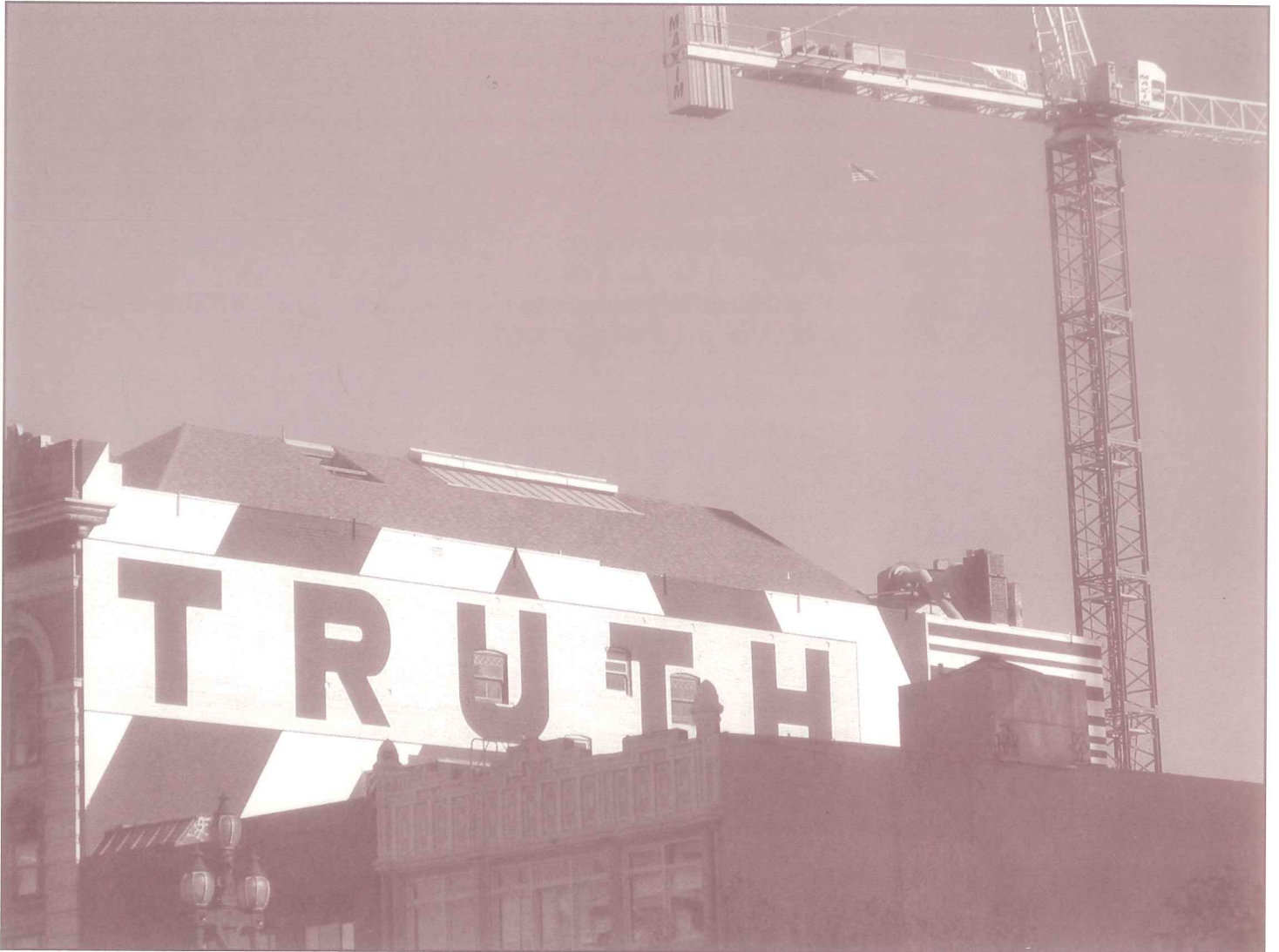


# Fools Fables

Volume VI, Winter 2003-2004



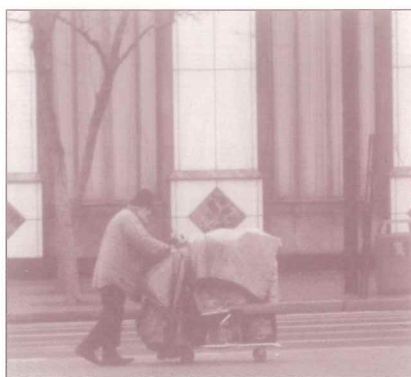
## What is Poor?

We were sitting around a table in the dining room of the Jaime Meyer House in Managua, Nicaragua when her words came to us loud and clear. Emerging from a thoughtful place, Ros looked at the seven of us with enlightened eyes and delivered the question "What is poor?". She birthed it into our collective universe breaking into our conversation and pushing it through the gates of our weakening assumptions about poverty and people living in it. We were Faithful Fools in search of the truth of our own relationship with poverty. As we do every day in the Tenderloin of San Francisco, we had come to witness and *live* in the midst of it.

(cont. page 2)



What is Poor? continued



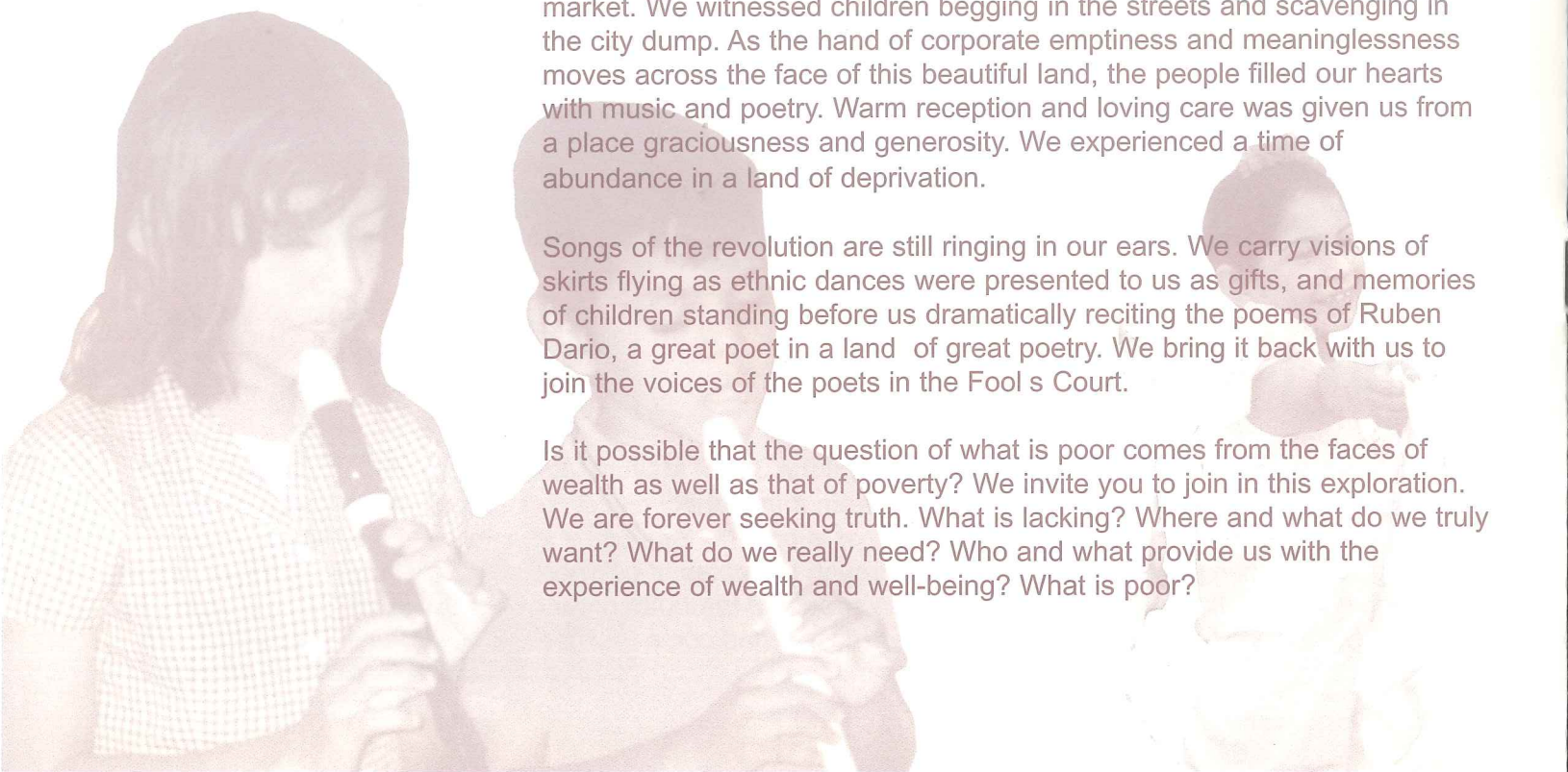
When Martha Lorena visited us from Managua, she saw the bodies of people sleeping on the streets as the dead: the living dead. In San Francisco, as we step over bodies of people lying in the streets or pass them huddled under freeways, we turn our heads and avert our eyes in a state of disgust, guilt and shame. Personal suffering has become public property to be scrutinized and manipulated; judged and moved about. As homelessness grows our personal relationships with suffering, (whether from deprivation, neglect, oppression or any number of sources) becomes minimal. In Managua we were experiencing some of the personal shift in our perceptions. We had been moving toward that consciousness through experiences given us from one-day Street Retreats to a four-day retreat in the United States, to Nicaragua, the second poorest country in the Northern Hemisphere.

The people who live on mud streets welcomed us with singing and dancing. For ten days we ate rice and beans and were welcomed guests in cement block houses with tin roofs. Ros lived with Heidi and Max in their home. Max is a professor and Heidi directs the elementary school down the street. Ros got into the life, picking up bits and pieces of the language while really enjoying the music, the dancing. You should see her dance, or go into a dramatic engagement with an elusive pinata while the children egg her on so the candy can rain on them...soon. Rich, we all felt rich.

But we also witnessed the sensual curve of a Coca Cola bottle emblazoned on red, decorating dishes, little and big stores, bus benches, billboards. "Enjoy" they call out. We witnessed the skeletons of buildings left standing after the 1972 earthquake, money for rebuilding lost to governmental greedy hands. We witnessed the fleet of city second-hand Laidlaw busses that once were shiny yellow, carrying US children safely to and from school. Now, they are beat-up, carrying folks hanging from the sides to work and market. We witnessed children begging in the streets and scavenging in the city dump. As the hand of corporate emptiness and meaninglessness moves across the face of this beautiful land, the people filled our hearts with music and poetry. Warm reception and loving care was given us from a place graciousness and generosity. We experienced a time of abundance in a land of deprivation.

Songs of the revolution are still ringing in our ears. We carry visions of skirts flying as ethnic dances were presented to us as gifts, and memories of children standing before us dramatically reciting the poems of Ruben Dario, a great poet in a land of great poetry. We bring it back with us to join the voices of the poets in the Fool's Court.

Is it possible that the question of what is poor comes from the faces of wealth as well as that of poverty? We invite you to join in this exploration. We are forever seeking truth. What is lacking? Where and what do we truly want? What do we really need? Who and what provide us with the experience of wealth and well-being? What is poor?



## Strong Medicine Show

*Conceived, produced and affirmed by Ramu Aki*  
Ramu invites performing artists of various genres and disciplines in whose work exists the dynamic energy which facilitates self-healing, expansion of consciousness and honest openness which is necessary for us to grow a world reality of justice & peace. In an intimate and sacred space, help create a communal collaboration and distill a medicine, strong. Help heal, become whole and re-member during these times we live in.

*Mission* and guiding *intent* of Strong Medicine Show is to

inspire

arouse

nurture

strengthen

heal

incite

encourage

GATHER AT THE  
FOOL'S COURT  
(234 Hyde Street, San Francisco)  
on the following Sundays  
4:00 pm 8:00 pm

December 14, 2003  
January 18, 2004  
February 15, 2004  
March 21, 2004  
April 18, 2004



**Fools publish their first  
poetry anthology!**



Excerpts from the introduction to the new poetry anthology

## **LIVING IN THE LAND OF THE DEAD**

*by Ed Bowers*

Nobody moves to the Tenderloin of San Francisco unless the power of their presence and the intelligence of their words is not appreciated anywhere else...

The endings here are real. In three years, I can't count the number of people who are now dead, or the amount of angels who have helped me survive...

The Land of the Tenderloin Dead is where visceral poetry, and love and hate, are honestly expressed.

You see, there is a Screaming Corner outside of where I live on 7th and Market. And by any other name it is called Pure Poetry.

The Screaming Corner is where those who love no one, and who no one loves, express themselves after 3:00 a.m...

Words here are live wires inserted into the brain in the middle of the night when you look out your window to see the waning Moon.

These words will make and keep you awake.

These words are mantras that you will never forget if you have the courage to take them seriously.

Welcome to the Living in the Land of the Dead and the Tenderloin Anthology of Poets and Writers.

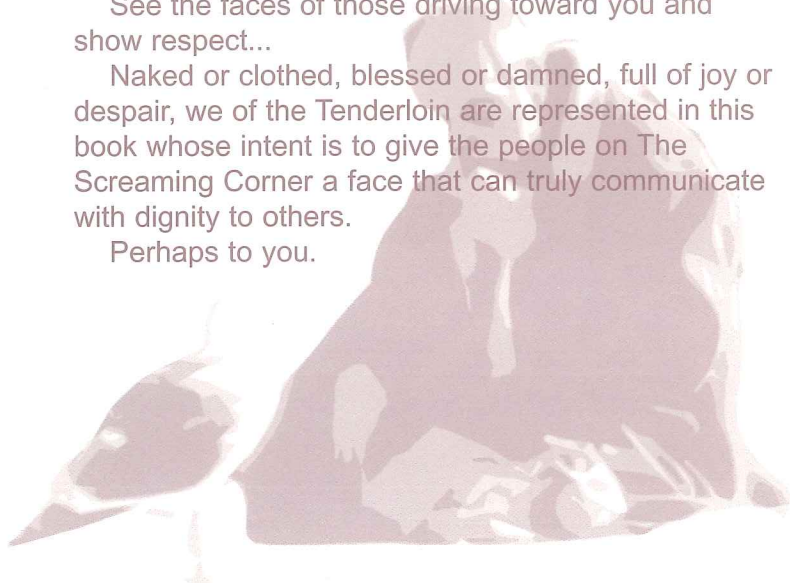
Let the Screaming Corner of this anthology enter your soul, and like me, you may be saved.

Read carefully and respect what is written here, and I humbly pray these stories and poems inspire you to survive under all circumstances so that you can go on to help someone else do the same...

See the faces of those driving toward you and show respect...

Naked or clothed, blessed or damned, full of joy or despair, we of the Tenderloin are represented in this book whose intent is to give the people on The Screaming Corner a face that can truly communicate with dignity to others.

Perhaps to you.







A return from the 4-day street retreat

Meet the poets through their words.  
**Be inspired and buy  
an anthology of poetry.**  
**Call 415.474.0508 to order one!**  
**[www.faithfulfools.org](http://www.faithfulfools.org)**

## **I REMEMBER HIRAM:** *An obituary by Ed Bowers*

Hiram,  
You're playing boogie woogie piano  
On another planet now  
And when you introduce yourself  
As a negro no one knows what  
You're talking about.  
So just ask them if they want to purchase  
one of your CDs for ten dollars  
And leave it at that.

You lived in my neighborhood,  
The Tenderloin of San Francisco,  
But now you're dead.

I saw you on Golden Gate ave.  
Two weeks ago  
As I was walking a manic-depressive friend  
To her psychiatric hotel  
At Jones and Leavenworth.

All the streets here  
Are spelled like names of prisons  
Or heavens or hells.

They sound like jazz.  
They sound like the blues  
piano  
You played at the Brainwash  
Less than a week ago.

The music in the smile  
In your face looked too alive  
To die.

It is Sept. 9, 2003 at 1:30 a.m.

I have just returned from a bar.

On my answering machine is a  
Message from Keith Savage  
Informing me that you have  
Died of a heart attack.

Now,  
When gazing carefully  
Into the eyes of those  
I pass on the street,

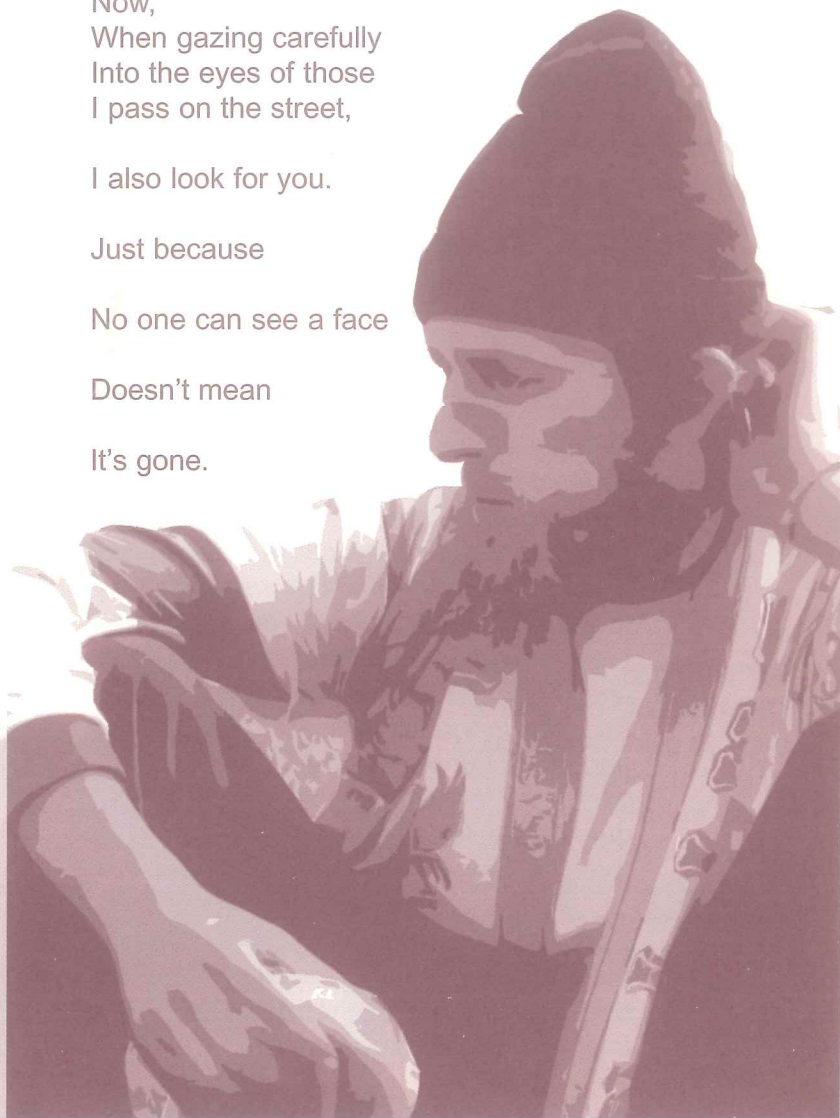
I also look for you.

Just because

No one can see a face

Doesn't mean

It's gone.





Parisa and Kian on 4-day street retreat

## Street Retreat Reflections

### YOUR PRESENCE MATTERS

In four days on the streets with my 10-week-old son, the first thing I learned was that I would have to hide. I hid from the pitiful glances and the offers of help that could threaten to take him away from me. It was a matter of survival. In my hiding, I was seen by those that others refuse to see. They offered the truest help: eyes that took in the fullness of my experience and didn't burden it with their own; kind words offered with no judgment or question; acknowledgment of the preciousness of Kian's life and mine.

Come with us and discover for yourself the surprises of the streets by making a one-day or a four-day retreat. The truth is this: your presence matters.

Near the HIV support place, a woman I wonder, How thin can you get and still keep walking?



Community in low-income areas isn't recognized because it doesn't fit into what we think community is, ie: neighborhood watch, soccer teams.

### STREET RETREATS

December 13, 2003

January 24, 2004

February 21, 2004

March 27, 2004

April 4-8, 2004

May 15, 2004

June 19, 2004

### COME MEDITATE WITH US:

#### Meditation hours:

M 8:15-8:45 am, 9:00-10:00 am  
T 9:00-10:00 am  
Th 9:00 -10:00 am  
F 8:15-8:45 am, 9:00-10:00 am



## Let Us Work Together

*If you have come to help me you are wasting your time.  
But if you have come because your liberation is bound up  
with mine, then let us work together.*

—An Aboriginal Woman

We are Faithful Fools in search of the truth of our own relationship with poverty caused by injustice. The Fools Court in the Tenderloin District is a place where circles and circles and more circles of people are gathering to sit, to speak, to write, to drum, to dance, to eat, to celebrate, to reflect, to act, to be encouraged. A neighbor tells us the space we provide is like an island in a sea of misery. The gas man walks up the stairs to repair our heater and proclaims, this place has a wonderful energy. Sr. Mary Swain of the Sisters of Loretto in Kentucky looked at us and said, this is a holy place.

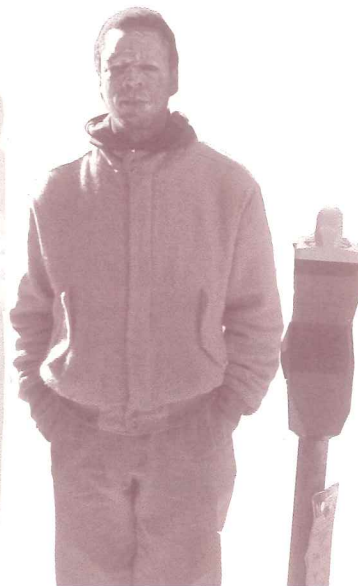
\$350 here and \$250 there and sometimes \$500 is needed at the end of a month to keep one more person from ending up in the streets. We need \$134,000 to pay off a loan on our building. Runs to the Food Bank are more frequent for families and individuals whose paychecks and social security checks aren't covering their rent and food. Daily we are receiving requests for a street retreat from high school and religious education teachers who want their students to awaken to their relationship with poverty and injustice. University Students call to come during their Spring breaks to serve and to search. Church groups and individuals call sometimes knowing nothing more than that they need to come.

The searching is sincere. The need for food and housing and compassion is real. We ask you to work together with us, for

*this is a holy place! The honesty spoken here makes it so.*

### THANK YOU TO...

We tip our hats to all of the individuals who offer pledges, material donations and their lives. We thank the patrons of the Faithful Fools Copy Shop. The Kalliopeia Foundation has provided significant support for our general operating expenses. Generous grants from the Unitarian Universalist Funding program support the Nicaraguan Street Retreat and the New Ministry Incubator Project. Our gratitude continues for past grants given by Greenville Foundation and Catholic Health Initiative.



### COME REFLECT WITH US...

In the midst of our daily routine, we stop to reflect. Join us Mondays at 1 pm and Thursdays at 12 pm. We have a **House Circle** meeting on Fridays at 10 am. Gather for our monthly **Round Table Celebration**. Call us. 415.474.0508.



## *Faithful Fools Street Ministry*

Rev. Kay Jorgensen  
Sr. Carmen Barsody, OSF  
230/234 Hyde Street  
San Francisco, CA 94102-3324  
e-mail: faithfulfools@value.net

### **FAITHFUL FOOLS** **» COPY SHOP «**

**YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD COPY SHOP**  
all proceeds return to the community  
through the Faithful Fools non-profit

**MONDAY TO FRIDAY 230 HYDE ST.**  
**9 AM – 5:30 PM THE PURPLE BUILDING**

**415.673.4567**  
**415.673.1027 (FAX)**

ASK ABOUT OUR NEW DIGITAL DIRECT NETWORK  
AND HIGH-END COLOR OUTPUT



## **WE BELIEVE THAT THE HUMAN AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES ARE ABUNDANT...**

You can contribute to our vision and work in an infinite number of ways; **financial support** by check, pay pal, credit cards or bequests. Become a **volunteer fool**; become a tutor at the Up On Top After-School Program; Companion people to appointments; **Join us for meditation** in the mornings; volunteer in the copy shop; serve and visit with people at the Welcome Center on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. **Buy a Living in the Land of the Dead**, poetry anthology of the Tenderloin. **Bring your business to the Faithful Fools Copy Shop**. Call Richard at 415-673-4567. **Join a street retreat**, see inside for listing of dates.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

**Faithful Fools**  
**234 Hyde Street**  
**San Francisco, CA 94102**  
**415-474-0508**  
**[www.faithfulfools.org](http://www.faithfulfools.org)**