



# COURAGEOUS CREATIVITY

NOVEMBER 2011



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## **EDITOR'S NOTE**    **SHAHANA DATTAGUPTA**

Shirin Subhani and Shahana Dattagupta were inspired to become "curators" of stories of courageous creativity after experiencing firsthand, the transformative power of creative thinking and expression that involve emotional risk and personal vulnerability. For more about Shirin and Shahana, please visit the "About Us" page on Flying Chickadee's Web site: [www.flyingchickadee.com/about.html](http://www.flyingchickadee.com/about.html)

As a little girl I was absolutely (and some would say naively) certain that the world is essentially a very good place. As I grew up, this translated into a more sophisticated understanding that every being has something of a higher good in them, albeit one that may not be in their access at all times. Today I know that this underlying reliance is what has ultimately made my journey through life, with all its unusual challenges, a courageous and creative one. And it is this underlying reliance – in goodness and love – that I call 'faith.' Even when 'faith' takes on religious connotations, it is ultimately a reliance on a higher goodness, a larger consciousness, sometimes understood as the divine.

So, why do an issue of Courageous Creativity on Faith? Because faith – that steadfast reliance on something fundamentally good and loving – is the foundation of all creative action. Without faith, imagination fails. Without faith, the courage to see a vision through falters. And without faith, love, the generative force of creative action, becomes obscured by fear and hopelessness.

Read on to discover how our contributors have variously used faith to bring courage, change and creative action into their lives and those of others. In our feature 'Faith in Action,' Andrea Maki describes how a chance encounter with twenty-one wild mares profoundly moved her spirit and led her to found the Wild Love Pre-serve. In 'A Polar Covalent Bond,' TC Tolbert describes a heart-rending effort to instill faith in grieving youth, as their wilderness instructor in a program called Heroic Journey with Outward Bound. Faith in God is what guides Karen Kaizuka through her eldest son's head injury and the unpaved road of autism with her middle son. In 'My Truth,' poet Prachi Vora finds faith in the power of Mother Nature, while artist Pragya Tiwari uncovers it through her homage to the Holy Ganges. As always, we gain much perspective from our youngest contributor Rishi Salem's thoughts on what faith means to him. In dialogue with Niusha Roshani, founder of Nukanti Foundation, we understand how her devotion to education, healing and hope for children, particularly in communities devastated by violence, poverty and armed conflict, is ultimately powered by faith.

We hope you too can keep the faith with us!

Shahana.

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**“FAITH IS NOT SOMETHING TO GRASP, IT IS A STATE TO GROW INTO.”**

- Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

**“AS YOUR FAITH IS STRENGTHENED YOU WILL FIND THAT THERE IS NO LONGER THE NEED TO HAVE A SENSE OF CONTROL, THAT THINGS WILL FLOW AS THEY WILL, AND THAT YOU WILL FLOW WITH THEM, TO YOUR GREAT DELIGHT AND BENEFIT.”**

- Emmanuel Teney

**“FAITH IS TO BELIEVE WHAT YOU DO NOT SEE; THE REWARD OF THIS FAITH IS TO SEE WHAT YOU BELIEVE.”**

- Saint Augustine

**“FAITH IS COURAGE; IT IS CREATIVE WHILE DESPAIR IS ALWAYS DESTRUCTIVE.”**

- David S. Muzey

**ON COURAGEOUS CREATIVITY...**

# I HAVE FAITH

## KAREN KAIZUKA

There are times in your life when you are forced to stop. And listen. One of these moments happened last November when my oldest son, Julian, incurred a traumatic brain injury. When the doctor told me, “Your son has a bleed in his brain,” the world stopped spinning. I fell to my knees. Oxygen stopped flowing through my body. No air in. No air out. The memories of what ensued after, with his loss of consciousness, the discovery of how fast the bleed was, the emergency surgery, the Pediatric ICU, the brain swelling, watching my extremely vibrant son fade in front of my very eyes... it's all a blur.

“I have faith.” These three words exhibit the human experience on such a fundamental level. Are you born with faith? What is it? Are you taught it? Is it something that happens to you at some point along the way? How do you know it has happened?

I've felt spirituality at various times in my life, in different ways. I vividly remember the intoxicating smell of incense at Catholic masses growing up. I have felt benevolence towards my ancestors when dancing in Bon Odori festivals. I have been moved to tears by many a Buddhist or Shinto ceremony in Japan. I have felt connected to God, listening to the prayers echoing throughout the streets in Cairo, on loudspeakers from mosques everywhere. I have felt reverence at a Native American pow-wow prayer. And, I have experienced beautiful moments of hope at the ceremony and celebration of a Jewish bris.

There is something spectacular about bearing witness to people when they are expressing their faith. In whatever culture they might belong to. There is a humbling beauty in the pride of individuals performing the same rituals as their ancestors.

I used to think that I had faith because I believed in God. I was baptized, completed most of the sacraments in the right manner. I have always loved church and have enjoyed the serenity it brings me. I bask in the intellectual aspect of the scripture and am thoroughly moved by the interpretations of others. It is fascinating. I like to

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# I HAVE FAITH KAREN KAIZUKA

ponder what it means and how someone else could have reached a different conclusion than me about a passage. I like to think about the path that God must have led that person on, to incur such different beliefs. I like to challenge ideas and be a little nonconformist, but I have still always believed.

In the hospital with Julian, when I could not breathe, it was as if God was standing in my very presence holding my hand, blowing air in and out of my body for me. I never questioned His presence. I had faith that He would bring us through this. And He did.

Two years ago, after walking arduously through a definitively unpaired path, my middle son, Oliver, was diagnosed with autism. In some respects, it was an incredible relief to have terminology attached to the behaviors that we continue to endure. However, it also took me through a combative cycle of grief, acceptance and love. Bearing the burden of raising a child with autism is often times more than a human can endure. Social isolation. Confusion. Regression. Yet, because of the lack of social barriers, the love that pours out of my son's heart is completely unfiltered. I soak it up and savor it with all of my heart.

Coming out of such experiences, one is left with a multitude of questions. Why? Why him? Why me? Why us? The answer is so simple: I don't know. What I do know is that the larger reason will be apparent at some unknown time in the future, when I will look back and think, "Oh...now I get it."

The one 'why' that I am now certain of is, 'Why me?' This one has become abruptly apparent in the past few years. He chose me beyond all other moms in this world to care for these children. It empowers me to know that God has faith in me to guide these three darling, yet very challenging boys. He has carefully navigated me through life, to learn the lessons, gain the strengths, and overcome my own insecurities, all for the very important purpose of being able to best support and provide for them.

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# I HAVE FAITH

## KAREN KAIZUKA

With all of the tragedies that I have encountered, it's becoming more and more apparent that faith is at the heart of it all. That voice is easier to hear, the more I listen.

Faith is about knowing that we are powerless. Knowing when to exert power and fight, and when not to. There is blind faith and there is conscious faith. There are times when both are necessary. Faith for me is also having the space and awareness to listen. Listen to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Divinity is always present. When you tap into it and can hear it clearly, it is beautiful, poetic and strong.

There are times in life though, when no matter how quiet it is in the room, your mind and your heart are so congested that they can't filter out the noise. Those are the times that blind faith predominantly guides me. Those moments are entirely driven by my confidence in my ability to step back and put everything in God's hands and be willing to accept and embrace whatever God gives me.

There are rough moments in life. We all have them. We all approach them differently at different times in our lives. Combating the many unknowns of what autism has in store for Oliver and for our family is a large pill to swallow at times. But, I am not scared. I know that He will guide us and that my faith in Him will prevail through autism, as it has through divorce, through a journey of ethnic identity, through a ravishing eating disorder, through a traumatic brain injury. Whatever it may be, I have faith.

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