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The Orange Chair

~ life from where i sit.



Gypsies Don't Need Chairs . . .

30 Monday MAR 2015

POSTED BY [KARAL](#) IN [LIFE](#)

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It's time to retire The Orange Chair.

Follow my new blog, [Gypsies Don't Need Sofas](#).

And remember ~ you can expand or contract . . . it's up to you!



WPC: Gone But Not Forgotten

05 Friday DEC 2014

POSTED BY [KARAL](#) IN [BEAGLES](#), [THE DAILY POST](#)

[≈ 11 COMMENTS](#)



How could I ever forget this face?

This is Lollipop ~ the dog who couldn't hold her licker.

And proof that one person's trash is another person's treasure.

In response to The Daily Post's weekly photo challenge, [Gone, But Not Forgotten](#).

Read Lollipop's story in [Rescue Me: Tales of Rescuing the Dogs Who Became Our Teachers, Healers, and Always Faithful Friends](#). A portion of proceeds is donated to selected rescue shelters and charities.

Fluid Dynamics

04 *Saturday* OCT 2014

POSTED BY [KARAL](#) IN [LIFE](#)

[≈ 4 COMMENTS](#)



El Matador State Beach, Malibu (2011)

Daisy and me are down by the sea
watching the waves roll in.
When somewhere between the curl and the crash
we feel the ending begin.
So we sit and we stare at what isn't yet there,
with the sun shining down on our faces.
Though she can't hear a word, I know I am heard.
We're awash in the love from heart places.



Daisy, August 4 (2012)

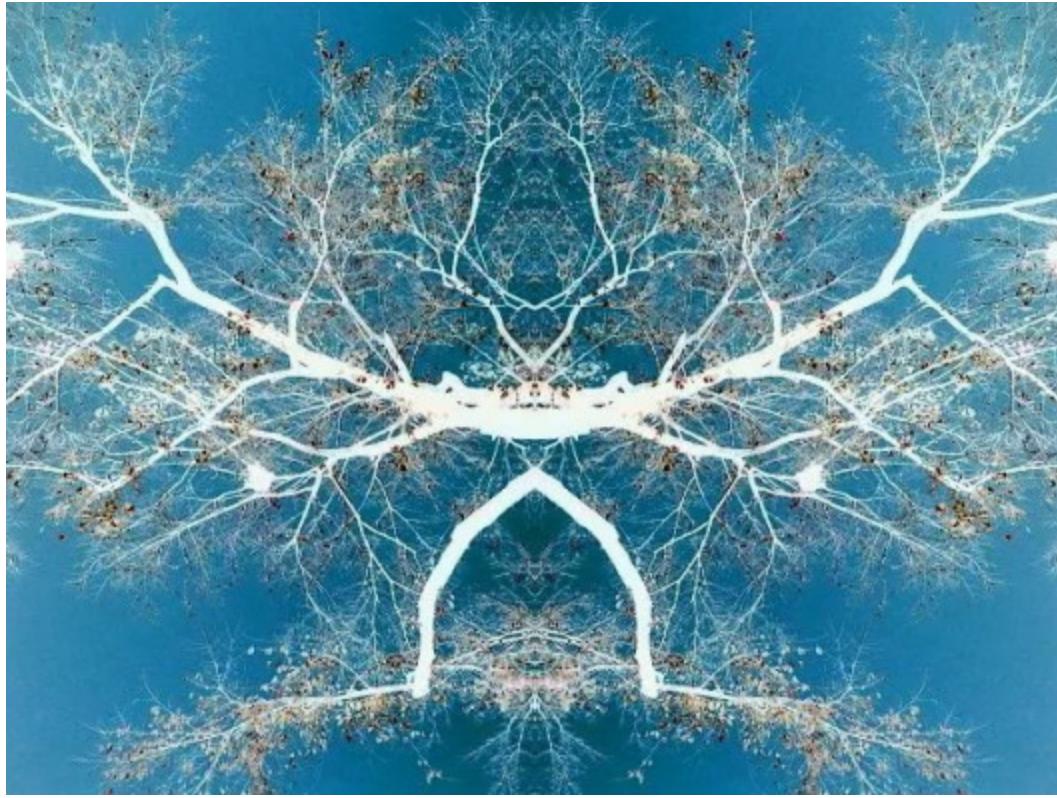
You Just Gotta Go With the Flow

30 Saturday AUG 2014

POSTED BY [KARAL](#) IN [HONORING YOURSELF](#), [POETRY](#)

≈ [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)
Tags

[alone](#), [chair](#), [healing](#), [ice](#), [life](#), [ocean](#), [peace](#), [shaman](#), [soul](#), [wave](#)



The Tree Shaman (2014)

There are times when I want to live out loud and share each moment, each thought, each victory or defeat, with the world.

And there are times when I want to be quiet, sit still, shut out the mind and all its illusions, and let my soul just *be*.

Last night I dreamt the world froze and everything was covered in ice.

Tall, narrow mountains of floe moved slowly on the crystalline landscape, closer and higher, their jagged peaks blocking out all but a glimpse of gray sky.

Giant ocean waves froze mid-curl, pushed steadily inland by the surge of the surf behind them, the edge of one deftly tapping my chair as it flowed with the current beneath.

Be Here Now

15 *Tuesday JUL 2014*

POSTED BY [KARAL](#) IN [CHOICES](#), [EXPANDING](#), [LIFE](#)

≈ [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

**The past is a great place to visit,
but so overrun with ghosts you can't live there.**

~ Me



Cafe. Route 66, Allenreed, Texas (2014)

I left Ojai a little over a month ago. Returning to Virginia has proven difficult, full of challenges, and not providing the fantasy comfort zone I had anticipated. Yet, everything in my intuition tells me this is where I should be.

Ojai . . . I could wax poetic all day about that place. I could tell about my lifelong connection to a town I'd never heard of until I stumbled in, at 45, via the crooked path known as eHarmony. I could describe the overwhelming beauty of the valley when viewed from the mountains above and marvel in awe at the friendships and relationships that blossomed and the sadness I felt at leaving those people behind. This woman who considers herself an entity of one found, for lack of a better word, her tribe.

When I moved to Ojai, I was exhausted, emotionally and physically overwhelmed by the past few years of deep and extended grief. My personal goal was to stay in California for one year, something I'd not accomplished in the two decades I'd traveled the East – West trail. My secret goal, though, was to let everything fall apart, to shatter into a tiny million pieces that I could then pick up and put back together in the form of my own choosing. I figured I'd live like a hippie, a bohemian free of society's rules and entrapments. I accomplished the year but never actually did fall apart, and in the end there was no need for such drastic measures. At the suggestion of a friend, I began to work with Kelly Schwegel of [the HEAL Center](#), and, through reiki and other healing methods, to clear away a lifetime or more of old patterns and beliefs. I learned our lives are like clay: we can reshape and rework and remold them into a form that reflects our true soul's essence. Though we are often unaware of it, we do this all the time, for good or bad, with our *intentions*. Intention and intuition have me here now, and I find myself facing the challenges I *thought* I would face when I moved to Ojai . . . no "real" job, falling behind on money, dogs who rely on me for their care. All those things I associated with breaking. And its *unnerving*. But behind the human tendency to panic and feel like a total failure there's a place of peace in my center that I haven't before known when things are messy that says everything is going to be ok. It's all part of the journey from, in my spirit guide's words, *wounded healer*, to healer. It's a journey that requires living in the present, not holding onto the pain and regret of the past, and not worrying myself sick about the future. I don't live a conventional lifestyle, and I don't know where the future will lead. I make no promises to myself or anyone else about whether I'll stay or whether I'll go or what I'll do down the road. Life is too unpredictable.

Shortly after I moved to Ojai, I found myself dissatisfied with my situation. Feeling rather low, I went to the local organic staple, Farmer and the Cook, for my favorite vegan molasses cookies. Parked outside the shop was an old refurbished bus. Inside, a band of Kundalini musicians moved gracefully to the door, their cool white turbans and robes contrasting with the electric energy of the brightly painted bus. Yet it was the hand-crafted message on the back window that caught my eye: *Be Here Now*.

I'm here now, where I want to be and choose to be, immersing myself in the experience and creating a new tribe. I am grateful for, and cherish, their love and support. I'm here now, and that's enough.

Be Here Now . . . it's all any of us have, anyway.

BE. HERE. NOW.

Aside

29 Tuesday APR 2014

POSTED BY [KARAL](#) IN [EXPANDING](#), [LIFE](#)

[≈ 2 COMMENTS](#)
[Tags](#)

black & white, body, dog, ojai, photography, physical, shadow, shelf road, soul, spirituality



If the body is the physical manifestation of the soul,
is the shadow its reflection?

Connected to Source

20 Sunday APR 2014

POSTED BY [KARAL](#) IN [LIFE](#)

≈ [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

Tags

[belief](#), [christianity](#), [easter](#), [resurrection](#), [spirituality](#), [transformation](#)



What makes you think you don't get to be Source?

I am not a Christian. I don't follow any one religion because the polarity between "us" and "them", "our way" and "their way" inherent in any organized belief system doesn't work for me. I was a minister's stepdaughter, and the hypocrisy I experienced within the church community wasn't any different than that found outside the sanctuary doors. It was at odds with what I was being taught, that church should provide a safe environment full of loving and accepting people. I finally quit attending in my early 30s when the minister verbalized his rejection of anyone whose sexual orientation apparently didn't match his own. When did Jesus get so damn prejudiced?

It's a basic part of my makeup to hate *hate*. I hate when others hate and condemn based on color, sex, species, and yes, religion. It's an ongoing practice for me not to hate the hater. I enjoyed my period of looking down upon the faith as strongly as that preacher looked down his nose at anyone who wasn't "straight" who may have been sitting in his congregation. It wasn't until several years later, when a friend and former minister pointed out my own holier than thou attitude, that I realized I had fallen victim to the same superior mindset I'd assigned to that minister and all of Christianity.

I took a good look at the people I love who love Jesus, and I took a good look at the man himself. Watching *Passion of the Christ* brought home the reality that Jesus was a real flesh and blood human subjected to the worst of humanity's flaws. Reading and study taught me that he never actually intended or desired to be worshipped, and in fact wished just the opposite. Meditation, intuition, and a strong connection to nature taught me that God is in all of us, that we ~ all of us ~ you, me, Jesus, the red and yellow, black and white, dogs and cats, and even mice, are indeed made of the same beautiful energy. Christians call that energy God. Many others, myself included, call it Source, or Spirit. Jesus knew this connection was true and real, and this is what he lived and taught and died believing. I grew up listening to the *Jesus Christ Superstar** soundtrack (thanks, mom!) and I cannot get through this emotional, passionate music without being moved to tears at the sheer, well, humanity of it all. That is what Jesus has given to me.

I look at my stepdad, a Christian and an active churchgoer, and I see an example of the kind of person Jesus knew we could be. I look at many of my friends who call themselves "pagan", "witch", "atheist" or simply, "spiritual" and I see those same qualities. I have long not been a fan of Easter. Yet, that we are connected to Source, that we *are* Source, is worth celebrating. We are part of something so much larger than ourselves, something beautiful. We are manifestations of a vastly creative energy, and, as Jesus and others have taught us, we will live on for eternity after our physical bodies die. *All* of us. You're a superstar!

*The original 1970 rock opera soundtrack of *Jesus Christ Superstar* is available on [youtube](#). You can also hear the full 1996 London Studio Cast [soundtrack](#) (which features Alice Cooper singing *King Herod's Song*). The 1973 movie is available to rent on [Amazon](#). The italicized quote at the beginning of the post is from my amazing and insightful life coach and energy healer in response to my desire to take the easy path instead of following intuition and creating the life I envision.

Standing on Solid Ground

04 *Friday APR 2014*

POSTED BY [KARAL](#) IN [LIFE](#)

≈ [5 COMMENTS](#)



karalgregory
photography

The foot feels the foot when it feels the ground, or so Buddha has said.

I know what he means, at least for me.

It is when I am most connected with the natural world that I am most connected to and in sync with my true self.

It is when I am most in sync with my true self that I am most able to interact with the world.

If I could but spend my days running barefoot through the grass with hounds.

Having felt what I am not, I feel what I am.

Uttanasana

18 *Tuesday*_{FEB 2014}

POSTED BY [KARAL](#) IN [EXPANDING](#)

≈ [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)



KaralGregory Photography©

(OOT-tan-AHS-ahna)

ut = intense

tan = to stretch or extend

I've been slacking on the yoga (and just about everything else) thanks to some pretty extreme exhaustion.

The commonly used word to discuss this phenomenon is *fatigue*; from where I sit, a rather poetic, but pathetic and weak word that, when used to describe the mind-numbing body-aching brain-fogging monster that sends me face-planted into my pillow more days than not, is akin to calling a full facial transplant a *beauty makeover*. A word that, when used out loud, conjours images of fragile, ghostly, sepia-like Victorian women on the verge of a delicate faint.

Victorian I am not. For the past couple of years I've managed to balance the reality that something is wrong in one hand with the magical thinking born of denial in the other. With barely enough energy to get through the workday and walk my dogs, much less have a social life or maintain friendships, I research the symptoms, causes and cures. I rationalize that my bloodwork is fine and a little rest will fix it. And I, like the fragile Victorian flower,

sink slowly, gracefully, almost imperceptibly, delicately to the ground. Except that if both hands are occupied, there will be nothing to catch you when you fall.

Blessed am I to be working with an amazing energy healer who has rejuvenated and reopened my connection to my own innate wisdom, healing ability and spirit guides. Together we've been working through old wounds and imbalances, restoring the health and vitality of an overworked and depleted adrenal system, bringing clarity to the lessons to be learned. I finally realize how hard I will push myself and how quickly I will dismiss my own feminine wisdom and strengths and beauty, how easily I will contract into basic survival mode. How brutally I will beat myself to just keep moving.

So when I start to cry in the midst of doing yoga, it surprises me, as I'm posed in a simple forward bend. What begins as a gentle and relaxing posture quickly pulls on tight hips and back, calls for even breaths and a slight bow into the depth of the move. This act of submission is also an act of admission, and it opens a place inside where lost emotions are stored. They begin pouring out, first in waves and then in angry, crashing rolls. My yoga teacher friend tells me this asana stimulates the kidneys, the organ that, in Chinese medicine, holds fear. She explains that, "like house renovation, it's going to get ugly before it gets pretty. In yoga the buried negative emotions need to be released in order for the bliss that is inherently there, thank goodness, to be experienced."

In other words, we contract so that we can expand. Thank goodness indeed.

Tyler, Rescued

04 *Tuesday*FEB 2014

POSTED BY KARAL IN ANIMAL ADVOCATE, BEAGLES

≈ 1 COMMENT



Tyler was rescued twice. First from the streets of San Bernardino and then from the city kill shelter. After a very thorough 1am bath to wash off godknowshowmany weeks of street-stink, she climbed into my bed and under the covers, putting her nightmares behind her. It took a lot of dedicated people to save one little pitiful dog. But that's what love does, right?

I Can See Clearly Now

04 Thursday APR 2013

POSTED BY [KARAL](#) IN [HONORING YOURSELF](#), [LIFE](#), [TRUTH](#)

≈ [5 COMMENTS](#)

Tags

bright sunshiny day, easter, grief, happiness, jesus, joy, ojai, soul mate, suicide, virginia



Sunflowers, by Me.

It is the 4th of April. The sun has not yet risen and I am sitting in my backyard in a darkness lit only by the few stars in the sky and the tiny flame from the oil lamp stationed beside me. My mind wanders through the still, black air, back to Easter morning in the spring of 1974. I am 10 years old and sitting on the porch talking with my mother. "Is there really an Easter Bunny?" I ask, fidgeting with the shiny new toy he supposedly brought the

night before. "What do you think?" she replies. I stop to consider my options and question further. "Does that also mean there's no Santa?" "What do you think?" she says again.

Keen problem solving skills and an intuitive ability to read between the lines lead me to decide both the bunny and the fat guy are likely made up lies. To the daughter of a man who died 5 years earlier, this is just further proof that nothing is as it seems, that nobody sticks around, that nothing good lasts forever. To the stepdaughter of a man who preaches God's word each Sunday, Jesus is just a reason for the local hypocrites to gather together and make me uncomfortable in His presence. And now, all of them — Jesus, Santa, and the damn Bunny — are just 3 more men removed from reality and relegated to the realms of myth. Faded pastel mints, brightly colored eggs, and juicy jelly beans can't fool me into believing there is cause for celebration. That rabbit can hop around with his basket of fake grass and cheap candy all day long, but like Charlie Brown and his paper sack of rocks, I'm luggering around a big ol' bag of resentment and disillusion that just grows heavier over time. From where I sit, Easter simply sucks.

In the flicker of the lamp, the silver screen of memories fast-forwards another 34 years. It is Easter Sunday, April 4, 2010. I wake early and take my dogs for their routine morning walk. In the quiet darkness we wander through my neighbor's elaborate rock garden and are graced by the scent of roses, poppies, peppers, and oranges. The mists of the night still swirl thick and heavy in the Ojai air and the sun is just beginning to peak slightly over the majestic Topa Topa mountains in the distance. I am standing in front of a row of sunflowers perched high upon a hill when I hear a voice whisper softly through the wind: *Expand or contract. It's up to you. You can expand or contract.* With no one else around to deny or confirm what I think I hear, I react to what I am told. I open my arms wide, stand straight and tall, and raise my face toward the heavens. Then I wrap my arms tightly around my body and curl my torso and head down into my knees and toward the ground. Three times I complete this strange ritual. It has been an odd weekend, full of ominous feelings and somber symbolism. I sense something bad is coming and it is as though the Universe wants me to know and is trying to prepare me for the fall. I stretch my arms out once more, vowing to be strong and unbreakable and clear-eyed, to walk through the fire of what is to come, though honestly, the message seems more than slightly surreal.

Later that day I am yet again walking my dogs through the beauty of the garden. It is dusk. The sun sets over the ocean and the reflection of its descent casts a luminous pink glow on the darkening Topas. I stop to watch, letting the image soak into my soul as the sun sinks below the horizon. Back home in Virginia, it is three hours later and the sunlight has long

faded. There in the darkness sits a man, my high school sweetheart, a soul mate and still dear friend. He sits alone in his car behind an old and rustic country church. In the stillness of the night, he holds a small gun in the palm of his hand, its cold metal grip melding with the warmth of his skin. He brings it up to his beautiful head and pulls the trigger. His body is found 6 days later, a Bible on the seat beside him.

A light breeze blows gently through the trees and the sweet tinkling of wind chimes brings me back to now. I am standing toward the west, facing the waning moon, and the light of the sun is coming up behind me. My arms are outstretched, and large, silent tears stream from my eyes and down my cheeks, moistening hardened lips. I have carried the burden of resentment and fear and loss and anger for most of my 48 years, and my body aches with the added weight of the guilt and blame and responsibility for this thing that brought me to my knees. For three years I kept my promise and journeyed through the flames of anguish, and though joy and grief are intermingled, one contributing to the ecstasy of the other, I am exhausted and no longer able to endure the sway of emotion or the heaviness of the smoldering ash. Lifting my face towards the sky, I am once again overwhelmed with the passion of compassion, and I do what I have never done before. I surrender. I surrender to the light, and I feel peace. I surrender to the truth, and I accept. I surrender to the joy, and I embrace what is, today, this moment, in the here and now.

The doors of perception

21 *Thursday*FEB 2013

POSTED BY [KARAL](#) IN [CHOICES](#), [HONORING YOURSELF](#), [LIFE](#), [WRITING](#)

≈ [2 COMMENTS](#)

Tags

[living out loud](#), [los angeles](#), [runyon canyon](#), [writing](#)



Hollywood Hills Door ~ by Me

i've found that writing opens the door to both the soul and the world.

when i don't write, i know i'm allowing myself to stay on the wrong side of that door. i'm choosing it. sometimes i don't write simply because there's just too much in there trying to get out, and the act itself seems simultaneously overwhelming and pointless. but still, i'm choosing it.

there i sit, staring at that closed door, when all i need to do is get up and turn the damn knob.

*Title trivia. I borrowed the title of this post, *The Doors of Perception*, from the Aldous Huxley book of the same name. Aldous borrowed it from William Blake's poem, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and Jim Morrison borrowed it from Aldous when he named his band, The Doors:

"If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things through narrow chinks of his cavern."

Hiking through the hard stuff

13 Wednesday
FEB 2013

POSTED BY [KARAL](#) IN [HONORING YOURSELF](#), [LIFE](#), [WRITING](#)

≈ [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)
Tags

[california](#), [expanding](#), [journaling](#), [los angeles](#), [runyon canyon](#), [writing](#)



California Dreamin' ~ by Me

I've gotten back into journaling and am rediscovering the transformative power of pouring the soul onto paper (that, presumably, no one else will see).

I took this photo while hiking Runyon Canyon in 2008 and often go back to it when I'm feeling scattered. While everyone else was busy scaling mountains, the woman on the bench was content to sit and write.

Sometimes our highest elevations can be reached by reflecting on just how far we've climbed.

Confessions of a former purgeaholic

06 *Wednesday*FEB 2013

POSTED BY [KARAL](#) IN [LIFE](#)

[≈ 7 COMMENTS](#)

Everyone thinking
so strong and independ-
ent, and confident, and
I am confident, and
and though I think I am
and I know that I am,
but I know that I am,
yet who the real me
not come to be to
alone, but who the real me
stay away, the real me
stay holding the real me
there will my life be

Happy Anniversary to me ~ 9 years bulimia free!

*i want to eat the whole world
consume it, devour it, hold it
so it will hold me
and show me i am loved.
hugs, kisses, attention
who needs it?
when there are reeses and hersheys and butterfingers?
those i need, they give me love
and all the things i missed.
but i don't need them, either
and i don't want them.
they are too close to me,
and i will retch them away.
i am in control here
i like it better alone.
everyone thinks
i am so strong
and confident, and independent
and tough.
or maybe i think so.
but i know that i am not
yet also that i am.
do not come near me
i don't like to be touched
stay away.
please hold me, and love me
and tell me you will stay.*

4/13/92

I wrote those words over 20 years ago, during my senior year in college. While I don't remember writing it, I do recall the events surrounding this particular binge and purge. It was the last exam of the spring semester and someone brought candy bars to school. We sat in the hall and chowed down waiting for class to start and I continued to eat my way

through an all-essay English lit exam. When my test was through, I walked to the professor's desk, plopped down both my exam and a handful of candy wrappers, and walked out the door, disgusted with both my gluttony and my literary performance. I went straight home where, I have no doubt, I regurgitated chocolate better than I regurgitated Chaucer. It would be another 12 years before the eating disorder finally stopped.

I waived the white flag on the dark night of February 6, 2004, at the end of a particularly hard week of purging and several hours into a virus that put the Civil War to shame. To state it delicately, the North and the South fought it out in my bathroom and my body was both soldier and battlefield. Never before (and never since) have I been so completely *ill*, my body wracked and dehydrated from vomiting, all night long, every eight minutes, with equally spaced bouts of diarrhea tossed in for fun. Wrapped in a soiled blanket, lying alone in a pool of sweat on a cold bathroom floor, I begged the Universe to just let me die. I think it enjoyed the irony, because out of the darkness, I clearly heard someone ask, in a very sarcastic tone, "Do you like throwing up? Because if you do, I can give you some more. And some more. And some more." I hate being nauseous more than just about anything, so again, I begged to just let it end right there. And then, knowing it probably wouldn't, I bargained.

Please God just let me live through this and I will never throw up again.

And I know it sounds crazy, but just like that, the compulsion to vomit vanished. Even through an IBS-type illness that hit almost 3 years later to the day and still continues, I've not had the undeniable urge to eat myself silly and hang over the toilet in regret. Oh, I've had my moments, but the moments don't win. Still, as a monologue on overcoming self-abuse, this post fails miserably. I have no secrets to success, no words of wisdom, and no advice to advance because there's no logical reason for why things changed.

Unless you take into consideration the reason for the purging. Like all addictions, bulimia is our attempt to control our seemingly out of control environment. But I think that's just the illusion we tell ourselves, the candy-coated outer layer of this particular piece of chocolate.

What it really is ~ what in my opinion, every addiction really is ~ is a way to create chaos and frenzy so we don't have to stop and listen to the silence. In the silence we can hear the voice of our own spirit. In the silence we can hear the voice of our higher self, our higher power, nature, the Universe. In the silence we can hear ourselves, and we can hear the truth.

We aren't normally taught how to hear or embrace that truth because we live in a society that teaches us to look on the outside for our answers and that truth is what everyone else says it should be. Most likely, your voice is going to say otherwise, and that's a whole lotta scary. Better to flail around in the frenzy than to float in our own pool of peace.

Be warned, though ~ the spirit world is patient but unrelenting. It wants you to know you are fabulous, and it will continue to speak to you and show you just how wonderful and unique you are, even when you don't want to listen. In the people you meet, the songs you hear, the movies you watch. In the clouds and numbers and symbols and all those odd little events you chalk up to chance and synchronicity, it will speak to you. You can move from one addiction to another, and it will follow you, waiting to be heard.

And that is where the answer lies. That night, while the Universe was showing me just how horrible my life had become, I let it speak. I listened, and I answered back: *no more self-hate*. From that point forward, we began the journey of working together.



love. hate. social drugs. (oil on canvas, found in an LA thrift store)

AstraZeneca! Pleez! Free the Beags!

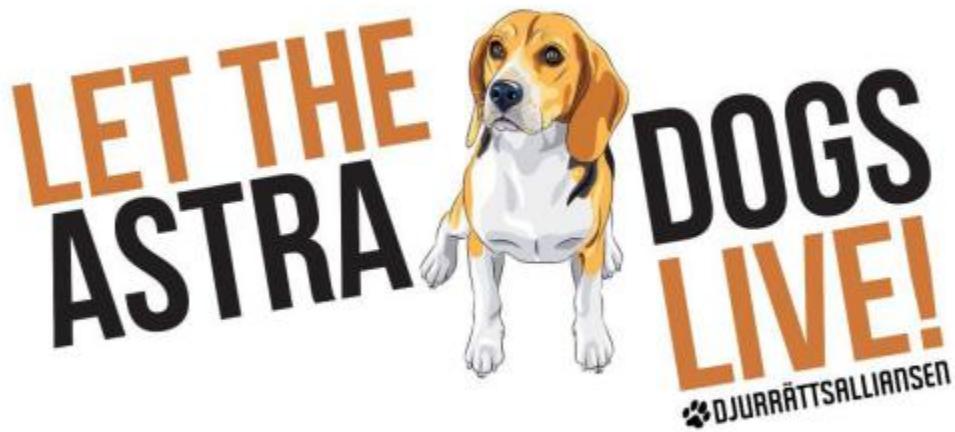
16 *Wednesday* JAN 2013

POSTED BY [KARAL](#) IN [ANIMAL ADVOCATE](#), [BEAGLE FREEDOM PROJECT](#), [TRUTH](#)

≈ [15 COMMENTS](#)

Tags

[AstraZeneca](#), [beagles](#), [BFP](#), [laboratory research](#)



This post is part of an ongoing effort to convince drug giant AstraZeneca to reconsider their decision to relocate 400 beagles from their breeding facility in Sweden to laboratories in the UK and elsewhere, where they will continue to suffer as research experiments. [Beagle Freedom Project](#) of Los Angeles, along with other rescue organizations, has asked AstraZeneca to consider freeing the dogs for rehab and rehoming. The offer has been denied. AstraZeneca attempted to lighten the news by stating that only 2% of the animals they use for testing are Beagles. Not good enough.

From where I sit, using animals in laboratory research is wrong. Morally, ethically, scientifically wrong.

I am appalled animals are abused to test the safety of cosmetics. Sick that they are sacrificed to study the side-effects of household cleaners. Disgusted that they are drugged, diseased, and dissected to ensure the effectiveness of antibiotics (or antacids). Especially when it is widely known, though not widely accepted, that testing an animal to study the effects of a cosmetic, cleaner or drug on humans does not provide accurate or reliable results.

As I sit and write, my big lump of rescue love, Daisy, grows restless and moves from the couch to the floor, rolling her big belly up in the air for some rub time. She's persistent, wiggling over the carpet with a big grin on her face until I give in and smother her with the affection she so deserves. LolliPop, her tongue hanging loosely from her mouth as the result of abuse, lies facing me, flattened to the floor with her head between her front paws, back legs splayed to either side, her swishing tail the only hint she's watching my every move.

If they were laboratory Beagles, they would never know such things as belly rubs, naps in the sun, trips to the beach, or stealing my side of the bed. I would never know such things as how they greet me each day with loud barks, the Beagle dance, dashing to grab stuffed "babies". Only they know the tears their soft heads have dried, the comfort their warm little bodies hold in the middle of the night. The joy they bring me and teach me every single day. They say it with their very souls: *appreciate life*.

If they were laboratory Beagles, they would endure life in a cage with no room to stretch and roll. They would be restrained, forced to give their blood, or their body parts, as deemed necessary for our selfish research. They would be poked with needles, filled with drugs, blinded, maimed, mutilated. And most likely, when their service was done, if they have survived, they would be euthanized, thrown away, and forgotten.

That is the fate for countless Beagles used in research, unless someone speaks up for their freedom.

Fortunately, there is [Beagle Freedom Project](#). BFP uses its voice to work with research laboratories around the world, negotiating for the release of Beagles used for testing all the wonderful products many of us use everyday*. In just two years, starting with the rescue of 40 Beagles from a research laboratory in Spain, BFP has successfully coordinated 10 rescues worldwide, saving, rehabbing and rehoming over 100 former research pups.

Unfortunately, their latest rescue effort, to save all, or at least some, of the 400 beagles at a Swedish breeding facility owed by biopharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca, has been denied. The reason? According to an email from AstraZeneca to BFP:

*"Because these dogs have been purpose-bred for research, and **they are needed to support our global research efforts**, the best solution is to continue to utilise them for research at AstraZeneca facilities and by third parties acting on our behalf." – Head of Corporate Affairs for AstraZeneca in Sweden, in a letter to the BFP.*

AstraZeneca, the maker of such prescription drugs as Crestor, Nexium, Seroquel and Symbicort, doesn't seem to get it. Over and over again, BFP has shown that former lab dogs can ~ and do ~ become happy, healthy, loving, family members to those of us who love dogs. They don't need to spend their lives caged, isolated and alone, condemned to further torturous and horrid research. And they don't deserve it. That sort of existence can hardly be for the benefit of the dog.

Whether or not you agree with using dogs for research, it's hard to deny that they should at least be given a good home when their service is done.

In an effort to convince AstraZeneca to rethink their decision, BFP is asking their adopters, fosters, and supporters to speak up for the release of the dogs. So I am asking you for help:

1. Send an email to **kontakt@astrazeneca.com** and let them know you want the dogs freed. If you're inclined, download the poster at the top of this page and take a photo of your dogs (or cats, or cows, or pigs!) with the poster, showing their support. Attach it to your email. Post your emails in the Comments section of this post, or email them to me at lollipopdaisy@gmail.com for future posting on this blog.
2. Sign the [petition to free the dogs at Change.org](#). We still need over 5000 signatures!
3. Follow Beagle Freedom Project on [Facebook](#) or visit their [website](#) and see what else you can do to help with their ongoing efforts.

Below is the email I sent along with a photo of my rescue girls, LolliPop and Daisy.

Because from where I sit, not freeing 400 Beagles from sad lives of slavery and service in a research facility is wrong. On so many levels.

Dear AstraZeneca,

Lollipop and Daisy join together with thousands of dogs around the world to implore you to reconsider your decision to confine the 400 research Beagles in your lab to life of hell.

You say that dogs bred for research should remain research, as though they could never adapt to a life of love, happiness, contentment, and peace. So they should remain confined, unloved, tortured, test tubes without a name? Your logic, your reasoning, is faulty at best, and self-serving at its core. Public awareness surrounding animals as research subjects is growing, and you are now at the forefront of that awareness, ... all eyes are on you.

We have shown you with our stories and our pictures just how loving and happy and well-adjusted and joyful rescue beagles can be, given the chance. Don't you think that they deserve it?

While my two dogs were never laboratory research dogs, they were abused and mistreated. Lollipop lost her lower jawbone due to abuse and then infection (note the sign is sticking to her tongue). Daisy was fed to be grossly overweight and suffers health problems as a result. But they are by far the most loving, sweet, fun, happy, grateful, and loyal little dogs I have ever known. Do the right thing, AstraZeneca. Set those babies free.



**unless you are like me and use only cruelty-free products.*

24 JANUARY 2013 UPDATE

The following letter was submitted to AstraZeneca by Brandy Montagnari and her adorable Beagle, Shelby. (And yes! Named after the Julia Roberts character in "Steel Magnolias"!) Comments of this post include more messages for AZ, so I will be resubmitting this post to them as part of the ongoing campaign to convince them to free their beagles.

To: kontakt@astrazeneca.com

Subject: Please free the Beagles

Dear kind person or persons filtering these messages.

I'm writing to beg you to reconsider the fates of your precious lab beagles.

I don't know what it takes to run a huge corporation, but I do know what it takes to be humane; it isn't difficult.

These beagles have already worked hard for you, and have probably helped in the production of some human life saving medications. Wouldn't you say it's time to let us humans return the favor? They are beautiful loving dogs who still have potential happy lives ahead of them.

As an owner of a rescued beagle, I can attest to the fact that they make wonderful, caring, and fun pets. My rescue was an adult when we adopted her and we had to train her how to live life as a pet. Fortunately, beagles are smart animals, and they can adapt quickly. As I'm sure you know, they love pleasing their humans.

I'm sure you're getting many of these emails, but it should go as proof that there are many of us who are willing to take these precious creatures into our homes and hearts.

Kindest Regards,

Brandy (and Shelby)



Shelby wants to see her beagle brothers and sisters free!

Be Red

21 *Wednesday*^{NOV 2012}

POSTED BY KARAL IN LIFE

≈ 4 COMMENTS



On the Rocks ~ by Me

If you think you are different, you probably are.

So *be* different.

Separate yourself from the group. Stand in your own corner.

Create your own space.

Color yourself red. Bathe in your passion, courage, power, will, and desire.

Be red.

Be spontaneous, determined, assertive, daring, and full of pride.

Be *audacious*.

Feel the heat of the fire. Let your blood bask in its warmth.

Radiate with the sheer ecstasy of being you.

Feel the love that radiates when you are fully alive, grounded and centered in your own heart.

Trust yourself. Be secure.

Because if you think you are different . . .

You probably are.

Getting Floored

12 Monday NOV 2012

POSTED BY [KARAL](#) IN [LIFE](#)

≈ [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)



A few months back, in the midst of our family reunion, my niece lost the diamond from her wedding band. Good faith searches of the massive yard and the house proved futile, a real-life hunt for a needle in a haystack. Weeks later, my dad cracked his kneecap on the corner of the kitchen door and ended up face first on the linoleum. Through the blinding pain, this bug's eye view afforded him a glimpse at a glimmer under the threshold of the offending door. You guessed it ~ her diamond.

The universe must be using knee injuries as the latest attention-getting device. Big Daisy's recent patella strain has forced us to forgo all the tall furniture and hang out closer to the floor. Mattresses and pillows and cushions have replaced anything over 8 inches tall that can be leapt on or crawled upon. But honestly, between being literally grounded and not having a tv, (because it died over the weekend) I've noticed I am feeling much more connected to myself. It's a forced downsizing, but one I have so seemed to need lately. Yes, I know, just because the dogs have to stay on the floor doesn't mean I have to . . . but in my house, that's just the way we roll.

This new perspective reminds me of the first two weeks of "LA 2010" when there was no bed, no sofa, no chair, only blankets on the floor. We were cushioned by the kindness of new friends in our building, soothed by the cool California night air, and lulled to sleep by the smooth sounds of the sax being played in the apartment below. I never slept so peacefully; I haven't since.

This change in latitude has also caused a change in attitude, somehow opening the door a crack to release, ever so slightly, the steady stream of events and emotions and insights that, over the past couple of years, molded this person I have become. Until now, they've sat stuck in that place between my heart and my tongue, threatening to choke the life from my throat each time I dared release them into the open, for fear I would cause discomfort in someone else's space. But my space matters too.

Yep, down here on the floor, I think I have found my voice. That's a diamond of a different sort.

This Little Light

17 *Wednesday* OCT 2012

POSTED BY [KARAL](#) IN [HONORING YOURSELF](#), [LIFE](#)

≈ [4 COMMENTS](#)



This Little Light. (by Me)

So far I've really sucked at round two of this blog thing.

Realizing that I've not posted anything new since September 19 set me to wondering why, exactly, I'm not writing. It's definitely not a lack of material, because I have a list a mile long of things I want to talk about. And it's definitely not a case of writer's block, because there is rarely a time, when I have something to say, that I won't find a way to say it.

What is it, then?

The answer dawned on me in the middle of my morning yoga workout, where, aside from the shower, all good thoughts seem to come to fruition.

I hesitate to write because I hesitate to put myself out there.

Out *there*. For everyone to see.

The whole point of this blog, with its tagline, "life from where i sit", was to create a little window into the human that is me. Perhaps in the process I'll get a little bit better insight into the spirit behind the woman in the mirror and at the same time, connect with the human and the spirit that is you. (Wow. That was a mouthful.) But the point is, I read and I

write because I believe there is a lot to learn from shared experience and because I believe that every person's life is, essentially, a story.

My [earlier posts](#) tended to ride a huge wave of optimism. Overcoming Fear prevails as the underlying theme, and always, always, the sun shines bright and comes out tomorrow. Except one day it didn't, and the blog eventually died.

It died because I found myself unable and unwilling to write openly about the things that were happening around me. *To me*. But ultimately, not being able to write made me feel a whole lot less like myself.

Writing is healing, sharing is healing, and strength comes from having the courage to either step out of your comfort zone or allow someone else to step out of theirs and, in the process, make yours a whole lot less comfortable. I am a writer, and the pen, or the computer, keeps crawling back on my lap and begging for some love, so here I am.

For awhile, I considered starting a whole new blog under a pseudonym so I could write what I wanted without the repercussions that come with baring your soul to 800, or 8, other people. (Insert flashback of splitting my pants in 11th grade English class here.) Then my friend Jeff Weber, life coach and co-owner of [Heads Up CTE](#) and [Cardio Coach](#), said something in conversation that stuck:

It is time to stop hiding ourselves behind names and time to simply allow ourselves to shine.

Well, the only way I can truly shine is to be authentic. The only way I can be authentic is to write. To write from the heart about the journey of who I am, where I've been, where I'm going, what's happened along the way. The only way for me to do that is to drop the middle child mentality that only wants to keep the peace and the status quo, that only wants people to just get along, that never creates ripples in the pond, at least not on purpose, that worries that you won't like me (heaven forbid!). The only way I can do that is to be who I am, all of the time, not just when I'm in my own little safe and protected space.

(Just for the record, since this is the beginning of the new authenticity, I don't believe in living life safe and protected. You can do that all you want, but I guarantee that something is going to come along and rock your little safe and protected world, so you may as well get out there and enjoy it).

What this means is that while the underlying theme of Overcoming Fear and going for your dreams will undoubtedly remain, mixed in with whatever else grabs my attention, my

approach won't be disguised, vague, or middle-of-the-road, and I won't gloss over the edges.

So it's likely I'll talk about things like why I traded Christianity for spirituality, how I endured and ended 17 years of bulimia and 35 years of "depression", why I put quotes around "depression", how much I dislike prejudice and hate and abuse, (especially when it hides behind dogma), why I don't eat animals, the one thing I have feared the most, how it has chased me from coast to coast, what happened when it finally caught up to me, and why I seriously considered stamping the words *Suicide Girl* on my forehead. And how ultimately, that one thing has been the guiding light on a journey of self discovery in a very magical sort of way.

I don't believe we do ourselves or the people around us any favors by not living out loud and keeping our stories to ourselves. So *The Orange Chair* is back, and this time, it's a little more real, a little more authentic, and a little more me. Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

This post is dedicated to my friend Joyce McCartney. Her ability to write her way through recent tragedy embodies what I refer to as "walking through the fire" and I am grateful for, and inspired by, her friendship, her courage, and her strength.

Joyce writes at [The Imperfect Nutritarian](#) and [Look Twice, Save a Life](#) and is one of my awesome [Cardio Coach](#) sisters.

Beagle Freedom Project Needs *Your* Help

19 Wednesday SEP 2012

POSTED BY [KARAL](#) IN [ANIMAL ADVOCATE](#), [LIFE](#)

≈ [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

*Forget all the reasons why it won't work,
and believe the one reason why it will.*

This blog was originally written to encourage readers to vote for [Beagle Freedom Project](#) in a recent fundraising campaign. Though that campaign is over, BFP

can always benefit from donations to help with the feeding, vetting, and care of the hounds they rescue from testing labs. You can [donate here](#).

As you all probably know, Beagles have a very special place in my heart.

All 3 of my girls have been rescues, and all 3 have had special needs of some kind ranging from overcoming neglect and learning to be loved, losing a jawbone from abuse, or being fed up to 85-freaking-pounds and then handed over to animal control to be killed.

Over the years I've learned that Beagles are sweet, loving, smart, funny and extremely loyal.

They are also the laboratory research animal of choice.

Yes, that's right. Beagles are routinely bred to be sold to laboratories across the country and the world as test subjects for cosmetics, household cleaners, foods and medications, in part *because of* their innocent, trusting natures.

Many of these babies spend their entire lives in a crate, in a test lab. Never feeling the love of a friend or the sun on their faces or the grass under their feet. *Ever.*

And often, when these labs are finished with these "test animals" ~ they are killed.

That's why the [Beagle Freedom Project](#) has a very special place in my heart, and why it's the organization I've chosen to sponsor, through my [photo website](#), to help bring change to the lives of some deserving little dogs.

The Beagle Freedom Project, based in Los Angeles, CA, rescues, rehabilitates and finds homes for former laboratory beagles from all over the world.

But that's not all.

According to founder Shannon Keith, Beagle Freedom Project is a service of [Animal Rescue, Media & Education \(ARME\)](#). Founded in 2004, ARME is a nonprofit advocacy group created to eliminate the suffering of animals through rescue, public education and outreach. ARME is dedicated to saving animals globally and ending animal exploitation.

All this from one small organization with some extremely dedicated and hard-working volunteers. It ain't cheap, it ain't easy. But nothing good ever IS.

And that's why I'm asking for your help.

ARME has been nominated for a Chase Giving Grant.

There is the potential to win thousands of dollars.

But . . . the voting ends TODAY.

I'm asking, urging, begging, you to spend 2 minutes of your time (easily part of your FaceBook time!) to go to the [Chase Community Giving](#) site and vote for ARME.

It's easy, it doesn't require you to register for anything and you can potentially get extra votes if someone on FaceBook "likes" your vote.

[The simple steps are here on the Beagle Freedom site.](#)

I thank you, I thank you, I thank you! And those Beagles? They thank you too!

In case you did not see the video released when Beagle Freedom Project rescued 40 Beagles from a research laboratory in Spain, here you go. Watch these guys touch grass for the first time in their LIVES! And, because I love you, you can see [more videos here](#).

Pure Imagination

06 *Thursday* SEP 2012

POSTED BY [KARAL](#) IN [BE CREATIVE](#)

≈ [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one.

This is reality:



This is imagination:



Use your imagination to create your reality.

How Spa Girl Lost Her Grip

29 *Wednesday* AUG 2012

POSTED BY [KARAL](#) IN [CHOICES](#), [HONORING YOURSELF](#), [LIFE](#)

≈ [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)



Spa Girl, by Karal.

Spa Girl is one of my favorite mugs. I inherited her from a dear friend in Hollywood and spent many chilly mornings before dawn curled up with her under blankets on the cozy patio of our Southern Cali cottage. Me holding Spa Girl, her holding hot, freshly brewed coffee, listening to the soothing sounds of the hills around us as the city slowly came to life below.

I dig the self-pampered chick on the mug because she seems to be digging herself. She seems to honor herself. Know. Respect. Honor. *Herself*. She lounges in her plush white bathrobe with her newly painted nails, unwittingly epitomizing that oft repeated but not oft followed Shakespearean phrase, *To thine own self be true*. I dig her even if she is a little imperfect.

Poor Spa Girl wasn't always handleless. She lost her grip the morning I exchanged our sun-warmed brick patio for a bare, cold, concrete slab of a porch. Like breaking a promise made silently to the self, there was very little tangible warning of her impending collapse. A barely audible *crack*, a slight shift in balance, a feeling that something once whole was now incomplete.

Spa Girl slipped from my grasp and tumbled to the ground, hot coffee cascading from her open mouth in slow motion as she fell, spewing an arrow-straight line of dark brown liquid across the porch, up the window, splattering her staining spray on the surrounding walls.

When it was over, Spa Girl lay broken and motionless, drowning in the pool of lukewarm coffee spreading at my feet, the handle of the mug still clenched within my fingers. Relinquishing my hold, remnants of the severed ceramic form crumbled into chalk-like dust.

Katya Lidsky Friedman is One Sorry Chick

14 *Tuesday* AUG 2012

POSTED BY [KARAL](#) IN [BE CREATIVE](#)

≈ [1 COMMENT](#)
[Tags](#)

[activism](#), [advocate](#), [apology](#), [dog](#), [FringeNYC](#), [I'm sorry](#), [katya lidsky friedman](#), [new york city](#), [theater](#)

I'd think twice if I were you, Karal. You gotta think about the type of people you're gonna attract when you're out walking those funny-looking dogs.

Advice from a well-meaning if slightly misguided friend when I adopted Lollipop, a Beagle/Basset mix with no bottom jawbone and a tongue that hangs down to *thar*. Advice I obviously chose to ignore when I found Daisy, my purebred Beagle bundle of love who came into animal control weighing a massive 85 pounds.

Advice I never gave much thought to at all until I took my little misfit girls to the Silverlake Reservoir in Los Angeles. I'm strolling down the street, two Beagles bouncing beside me. One constantly getting slapped in the face with her own tongue, the other sporting breasts the size of a Butterball turkey. And ~ honest.to.god ~ my baby's got back. Real butt cheeks that wiggle when she walks.

I hear her voice before I see her. "BEEEEEEEEEeeeeeeeGLES!"

Now, just the day before I was chased down the streets of Los Feliz by a guy who thought I was some chick named Kunte conspiring against him with the FBI. I finally lost him when I ran into the local bookstore. Today, I'm not in the mood for loonies.

Daring to look up, I see this diminutive but determined woman sprinting across the grass at full speed, straight towards me and the hounds. Arms outstretched. Big smile on her face. Behind her is a confused personal trainer, shaking his head; beside him, another guy, looking totally unfazed. Gotta be her husband. Good, cuz this time, I've got nowhere to run and big Daisy can't move that fast. We stand glued to the spot and the next thing you know, crazy dog woman is down on the ground with the hounds, planting kisses and rubbing bellies.



Katya Lidsky Friedman

Meet [Katya Lidsky Friedman](#). Animal advocate and activist, actress and apologist extraordinaire. Say "Katya" in the world of L.A. dog rescue, and people will finish your sentence with "Oh, I know Katya!" She's the kind of woman who IS what she does, and what she does is love dogs.

She loves dogs enough that she works with dogs, volunteers with dogs, lives with dogs and fosters dogs. Enough that her own *Orphelia* was the Canine of Honor in her wedding.

Enough that she'd run up to a total stranger because she's "got Beagle." Enough that she overcame her crippling people-pleasing, apologizing, do.you.like.me insecurities (you know

those!) because with animals, and animal activism, she found something she could believe in.



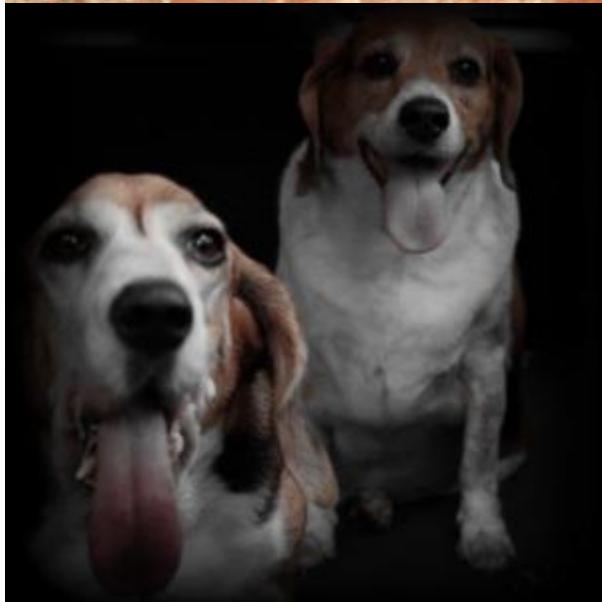
Katya and Orphelia, her Canine of Honor

Katya, also a writer and comedienne, tells about her journey "from apologist to activist" in her one-woman play, *[I'm Sorry](#)*. Making its New York City debut at [FringeNYC](#), *I'm Sorry*, delivers a poignant message about recognizing and stepping into your own voice. Katya, by way of 16 characters ~ some human, some not ~ uses her's here as a vehicle to highlight the contemporary animal welfare issues so close to her heart. And she does this all in her quirky, funny, heartfelt, authentic and beautiful way.

Because once you find your voice, you gotta use it, right?

Katya, I'm so not sorry you used it on me.

Tickets for [I'm Sorry](#) are available for the August 24 and 25 performances. If you live in New York City or you are going to the Big Apple, check it out. [View the promo for I'm sorry here.](#)



Lollipop and Daisy, the misfit hounds

Crazy

15 *Tuesday*^{MAY 2012}

≈ [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

Tags

[choices](#), [courage](#), [evolving](#), [expanding](#), [los angeles](#), [runyon canyon](#)

I'd rather be crazy and think I can than be sane and know I can't.



Runyon Canyon Stairs (3). Los Angeles, CA

The Chair Is Back . . .

08 *Tuesday*^{MAY 2012}

POSTED BY [KARAL](#) IN [NEWS](#)

≈ [1 COMMENT](#)

Tags

[beach](#), [evolving](#), [expanding](#), [orange chair](#)

. . . and I am sitting in it.



The Orange Chair (Possibility). Virginia Beach, VA