

A Hand Up

An older man fell at the dog park today
I jumped my old ass over the fence
rushed to assist
took his hand in mine
pulled—but it wasn't enough
his weight, leaded
his legs limp

White man, 88, he said
Buzz cut, Army T-shirt, 82nd Airborne
tough old bastard
no doubt conservative
contrast against my bohemian blackness
my *I'm with Her* T-shirt
crossroad of our national paradox
our eyes locked

His wife, a southern rose
oxygen tubes in her nose
propped on her four wheeled walker
terrified
dismayed, eyes fear glazed
she managed a nervous smile
breathed a little when she trusted
I only came to help

I had to really invest
heave
put my back and spirit into it
pull him close, heart-to-heart
be in his space
touch him, breathe him
feel him
in order to lift him

Hand-in-hand, we strained
pulled together
strength overcoming weakness
need over coming fear
he struggled to his feet
I bared his weight
we stood
laughed together triumphant
shadows in the flicker of the dying day

men from different walks on the same path

An older man fell at the park today
I took a moment, took a chance
gave a lift to our humanity