



talking sidewalks

voices. faces. stories. souls.



Lost and Found

R. Michaels

I grew up in Chapel Hill when it was called a village. As a teenager, trips to downtown Franklin St. were always a source of excitement and wonder. Along the walk, doors were always opened, at night they were never locked. I wouldn't have noticed a homeless person if they were staring me in the face. Many things come rushing back to me as I recall my growing years, but first I must take notice of what I have lost. The regimen in the shelter is quite strict, up at 5:30 regardless, out of your room no later than 7:00—if you don't want breakfast, you're out on the sidewalks by 6:00—I don't choose breakfast but a green ice tea and a newspaper at a local coffee shop. I usually proceed from there to where the real lost and found is, the rocks in front of the church. That time of the morning gives me much time to reflect on my life, my town, and my memories. I was away in the 70s and 80s due to education and service in the U.S. Navy. It's true you can never go home again; we all find this out in different ways.



Thomas B.

A Word from the Writers

Dear Reader:

Here we are again—hopefully you enjoyed our first edition, this one is also for you.

The margin of society is a society in and of itself. It exists in parts of the world where many people fear to tread. This society, made up of other tiny societies, contains a variety of different people, all of whom come from different circumstances, values, and ideals. They fall into cliques that resemble that of a high school—small groups comprised of friends and acquaintances that make up the citizens of these margins.

As members of the proletariat we remain an important part of society because we still have a voice, albeit a quiet one. This magazine is only a small representation for that voice. For poverty abounds throughout the world.

So here we are, have a good read.

J & R

*For questions, comments, or to get involved, email talkingsidewalks@gmail.com
Read it online at www.talkingsidewalks.com*

Cover photo by Joseph Sinkiewicz

What I have lost is a respect for the village I grew up in. Gone are the days of people simply acknowledging each other. If one doesn't dress right, or not shaved that day, they are brushed aside without a simple hello. Lost is the feeling of community, the golden rule, and human decency. I don't agree with panhandlers in front of businesses, there are Interstates for that, but sometimes it's the only way. It's ironic that at least they try and are honest as opposed to various CEO's around the world.

But sometimes, sometimes, I can sit on the wall and regain memories of a better time. When Mr. Russell would set fire to the tires up and down our favorite sledding hill so the kids could sled at night. Little league baseball games where the fans were always there even when some players seemed like they weren't. Or the time when a small child dried tears from his eyes because the manager of Roses let him in after closing to get his coveted Lone Ranger coloring book.

As Dorothy Gale from the Wizard of Oz said, "If I ever go looking for my heart's desire, I won't look any further than my own backyard, because if it isn't there, I never really lost it to begin with."

Well, Dorothy (and Toto too), my backyard is the sidewalks of Franklin, and as you remarked about Kansas when you landed in Oz, I don't think I'm in Chapel Hill anymore.



Jason O.

Where I'm From

Arnold

From greatness to
Slightness
from doctor's Hand
from my father's stand
from my mother's eyes
the beauty of all
from dark and black
a crown of Kings
from dreams to tears
from slavery to smears
of two-hundred years
from broken chains
to no more pain
from rain that often
falls and now from
Jesus who is us all
from never having to
fall. So from where I am
are you still there.

Almost Famous

The Retro Player

I was almost famous,
 I almost made it.
 But when my dreams failed,
 I became frustrated.
 I grew up in The Hood
 And I always
 Felt misunderstood.
 Truth is I wasn't working
 As hard as I should.

So lost my roof
 And with no one else to talk to,
 All I had left was
 Talking sidewalks,
 Who became my new bed,
 A very hard place to lay my head.
 The blood in my veins ran cold
 As if something else controlled my very soul.
 I lied to myself again and again
 Then I felt the presence of my inner-man.
 And I knew that with Unity Strength & Ambition
 I could make it,
 But my self-esteem was so low
 So I faked it!

It took my daughter "Karma"
 and my son "Fresh" to get me to reconnect,
 So I went from a dead-beat dad
 To learning how to be a father again.
 That's when God released the inner-man
 And the Master Plan.



TRP

My Life From the Mind of a Child

Amanda

Since I was a little girl I have never felt like I was in the right place. I have always felt as if the life that I was living was some kind of dream. How could so much bad be attracted to such a small child? Since I could remember, there have been bad things happening in my life. They say that all things happen for a reason and that you should ask God to see the better in your situation, but I never could. Don't get me wrong, I was born into a religious family. This is why the thought of asking God for help was such a joke to me.

If there was a god then why would he allow so many bad things to happen to such a young girl? I mean, I didn't know who my real father was until I was eight years old. I lived with my stepmother and her husband. I had two stepsisters. One younger and one older. They got away with everything; I got punished for everything they did. I remember when I was five years old the beatings started. Every night at two in the morning, when my stepfather got off work, I was made to hold onto the bedpost and they would beat me with anything that came in handy—belts, hangers, wires, etc. The horrors didn't end just with the beatings. I was a small girl doing what a teenager should have been doing: laundry, dishes, taking care of my younger stepsister, cooking simple meals like mac-and-cheese. The whole seven years I was with my first stepparents I don't remember playing or even laughing. I don't remember getting a birthday or even a Christmas. I don't think I ever met a kid that didn't get anything for their birthday. I didn't get a card, anything. Then one day when I was seven I received a call from my father telling me he had just gotten remarried and that she would be picking me up. My father was still in prison and had met his third wife through a pen pal program they have in the Michigan prison. I was born in Florida, by the way. My mother who I met when I was ten moved to Texas while my father remarried and moved to Michigan, taking me with him, only to get arrested.

July Fourth another woman entered my life. The moment I saw her I felt as if I was saved. She took me into her arms and held me tight. I met my new family that day. I had two stepbrothers, grandmothers, and pets. They brought me to North Carolina, where I had my own

room. The first year with this family was rocky because I didn't know how to be a kid. All my new mother wanted was for me to have fun and be carefree. To everyone's dismay I was damaged goods. No matter how much I tried to be a kid and behave, I kept getting into trouble. I was like a dog you adopt from the shelter and you know that it's been abused, so you give it all the love and affection you can, but in the end the dog is too far gone. I was that adopted dog. I was too far gone. My thrill for adventure was no longer there, my curiosity was no longer there. I had seen some of the world and it scared the shit out of me. My father came back into the picture when I was eight. Not that he had really been in the picture to begin with. My new mother, who in the end I consider my real mother, went to pick him up. He got me my own puppy, a Great Dane that he named. From the moment I saw my father I could not stand him. I was eight years old and I felt a hate I thought could never exist. He moved in and tried to be the caring father, but I saw him for what he was truly, a bully and a con artist.

My father always had big plans on how to get his life in order. He had big dreams and he was determined to make them happen, as long as he didn't have to work for it. Whenever I did something wrong he would yell and belittle me. My stepbrother, Brian, would do things and everyone would blame me. He would eat something that wasn't supposed to be eaten, he would mess up the living room, things like that. No matter how much I denied that it was me, they wouldn't listen. So, to save my breath, I would tell them I committed the crimes. I was an outcast in this new family. I ran away from home, they put me in homes, and after a while I stopped feeling. I didn't get mad, I didn't feel sadness, I was never happy, I just didn't feel anything. I was numb. The world had taken its toll on me at an early age and I had had enough. Things just didn't matter anymore. By the age of nine I had altogether stopped crying. I just couldn't summon up the energy to show any kind of emotion. I felt that if I was unreadable and unshakable I wouldn't be hurt anymore.

My new stepmother tried to understand me; she said I was a free spirit and I had to fly sometimes. She said that she never worried about me because she knew I was tough and that I would find my way home. My stepmother was a good woman and she tried to reach me, but I was lost. And I always felt lost, still do. I felt like I was in the center of

a tornado and everything around me was spinning. All I wanted to do was grab something and hold it still. But I could never find anything or anyone to hold still. It was as if life was pushing me forward and no one noticed that I hadn't caught up with the times. The choice was made that maybe what I needed was to meet my real mother. They packed me up and moved me to Florida to live with my real grandmother until my mother could come from Texas and get me.

My grandmother was a selfish woman. She didn't like you to touch anything or mess up her schedule. I remember I cracked my head open and she got mad because she missed Matlock taking me to the hospital. There isn't too much to say about my grandmother though. I'll move on.

My real mother came and got me. I met my brothers and sisters for the first time. I had an identical twin sister, along with two other sisters and two brothers. I also had another stepfather. My first night at my new home was the worst experience.

The trailer they lived in had no heat or air conditioning and there were huge holes in the floor. Then my oldest sister told me that the stepfather was raping her. Later I found out that he had been raping everyone but me. Not that he didn't try. He was later arrested and was given five years. How's that fair? That never made any sense to me. I had learned that my mother had known that all this stuff was going on and was allowing it. She sold her kids to this man so she never had to work. How could a woman that gave birth let someone commit these acts toward her children? Soon after the arrest my mother moved us. My older brother started beating us and my mother finally sent him away. The family was like a mafia. Only the strongest survived. I became tough. I became the head leader of the children. They did what I said all the time. I only became the leader to survive. I began to hate my mother and didn't care about anything she stood for. She was the enemy. Everyone had become the enemy. Why? I don't know. She, like my father, never deserved my respect. I hated life with her. I hate her. I hated my siblings because they were weak. They always played the victim. I didn't understand it. I refused to be the victim. Even when I had a boyfriend that beat me in the head with a two-by-four and made me go blind and deaf in the left side of my face. I couldn't take charge of my life, but I wouldn't be a victim. I ran away numerous times and finally was sent back to North Carolina.

Soon after I got back to North Carolina my brother died of leukemia. Brian was the only one that with a look could say so much. When he died the rest of my being died. I didn't care anymore about anything. Life just didn't matter anymore. I ran away from home and ended up in Burlington. I hooked up with a boy who beat me for five months. He brought me to Chapel Hill. He finally got arrested and I hooked up with another guy. He beat me and made me feel so low.

So, here I am today. Am I still in the tornado? Yes. Life hasn't slowed down and I don't know what to do. Sometimes I just want to stop the whole process, but then again, I'm curious about what happens next. The only thing I am sure of is that my dog will always need me. If nothing else in this life comes and if I could be remembered for something, it would be that I never played the victim.



Watermelon

Isaiah O'Briant

My food family
will be watermelons.
Watermelons, because
they're fruit.
When it's large,
it's ripe and ready to eat.
Won't bounce because
you will think it's asleep.



Easy to carry,
because of its size.
When it's broken open,
it will revive its meat.
Plucked from the vines
with many mouths to be filled.
The juices
go straight to the head.



*Drawings by Isaiah O'Briant
Photo by Thomas B.*

Memories

DJ

One day I awaken and
my childhood is gone,
like the dream I had
during my sleep.

The thought of something new on
the horizons thrilled the hell out of me,
also it scared the hell out of me too.
Wondering what happened to those
daydreaming days and popcorn
movie nights and cartoon mornings
over breakfast.

One thing that is amazing to me,
life is like that blooming flower
that shows its true being, you know,
between spring and summertime.

I guess what I'm trying to
say is, I'm maturing and becoming
a man.



The Gorilla

Michael Jenkins

The Gorilla is always there, you know. He never leave you. Just like the devil, he try to get you at your weakest moment, at your weakest point. When he nag you, he wait till you mad at someone, or you fussing at your mate, or something like that there. That's when he pops up. He be there like a little voice in the back of your head saying, "Ok, since you want to act like that, come on, you don't need but one, one ain't going to hurt you." You try to fight it as much as you can, but when you angry and mad at someone that is when it really sticks its claws in you and he be messing with the back of your mind saying, "You can do this one. It ain't bad." It's looking in the door like a thief. He waiting for you just to make that mistake. He waiting at this point, but he always peeking in. It's a struggle like if the preacher were preaching saying about the flesh and the spirit fighting against each other, that's the way that Gorilla is. Really, the Gorilla is more of a fight against you and the world out there and the consequences of the drug game out there. It runs you out there, but once you get out there, he leaves you, know what I'm saying. He leaves you hanging.

Then, you're on your own. And then you got no way to turn back. The voice is gone now. But he's still living cause he still got you out there chasing. You sleeping in abandoned houses and stuff like that when that Gorilla like, "Ok, look at you now. See, this is where it's at. You know you like this. This is part of life here." There ain't nothing good about the Gorilla. The Gorilla is ugly; he's mean. The Gorilla, he'll steal and destroy. He'll rip out your heart. The Gorilla is hateful. He'll come in and destroy your home and your family and tear it apart. It don't have no conscience or no meaning. He come to destroy you. He come to take you out.

When you don't have nothing and nowhere to go, that's when you know he got you where he want you, in his claws. When you got nothing to look back on, you can't go back home or nothing like that there, he got you then. That's when bad things happen to you. You go out here and he'll make you steal. He make you rob. He make you steal from your own mama. It's bad when you can't go home to your mom.

And when you can't go home to your mom because of all the wrong things that Gorilla made you do. You steal from your own people. They don't want you around. They hate to even see you coming. That's sickening.

But it's always there. It never leaves you. You can be clean for like 20, 30 years and know what you done been through. But like I say, it sneaks in at your weakest moments. It don't hit you when you're doing good and you got real strong people. It comes at your weakest time. Or your time of trouble, like say you lose your job. That's when it sneaks in on you. "Oh, I can get him now." Most folks, 9 out of 10, if you ain't strong, it will get you. And it will put you right back out there in that cycle where you ain't got nothing. It takes and rips everything apart, your loved ones, the people you care about. It make you hurt other people that you don't be meaning to, but . . . it's just insanity.

The Gorilla got to get some people down near death before they realize what's really going on. Like me, I done been shot up. I done been run over. But I still went back out there at that point in time, as soon as I got out of the hospital. It's like I didn't learn nothing. But the last time I got shot, I learned something and I told my people, I'm outta here. This is it for me. It took me getting run over and shot to let that Gorilla know I mean business. Before I realized I'm tired, because I know what's coming next. Next one's taking me out.

The moment I decided that was when I got shot in my arm. The bullet kept going through and I felt my fingers drawing up. But I didn't want to go to the hospital, now that's sickening. So I don't know who called my people. But they came and picked me up and snatched me in the car, bandaged me up, then dropped me off at the hospital. I realized then, that day in the hospital, they were trying to do something to my arm, the bullet went straight through and took out a chunk of my nerve. The doctor operated on me and tried to put it back together and it still ain't doing no good. When I woke up after the operation, I knew then that I wasn't going back. I realized I used to have a good life. I said, I know I'm going back to the good life, if I have to fight the rest of my life to get it right. The Gorilla do try to sneak in sometime now, but I tell him, I can't let you bring me back down. I come too far.

A Little Story About My Family

Charles Gear

My name is Charles Gear. I'm fixing to tell you a little story about my family. When I was coming up, I was a little bitty boy, my mama was a great mother. She lived her life a Christian life. My daddy was a great, great lovely man. He loved fishing. He loved softball. He hit the ball really good. My dad was an alcoholic. But he take care of his five kids. I loved my daddy. We went fishing. We played basketball and we played cards together. Spades and Bid Whiz and Tunk. My daddy was good at that.

My daddy, he was a chef at sorority houses. He loved to cook at sorority houses and fraternity houses. He loved to cook for students. My daddy was a breakfast man. He fry up white potato, onion, and sausage or ham and eggs with some cheese in it, pancakes, and grits plain with butter and salt and pepper. And he make homemade biscuits every morning. He never had to measure. He rolled them out with a pin. He got a glass and cut them out and put it in the oven at 350. He was never rushed about his biscuits. He would always say, "At 400 they're going to burn at the bottom." So, he always cooked them at 350.

I remember when my daddy and my mama separated and got divorced, that really hurt us. I'll never forget that first Christmas that my mama and my grandma bought us. My daddy went into the house and stole it for some liquor. But we still had a good Christmas. My mama paid for somebody to come dressed up like Santa Claus in a van. He came in a blue-and-white van and he had on a Santa Claus suit with a white beard and white hair and black boots and a big stomach. Santa Claus sat down and ate dinner with us. He brought all four of us a bicycle. He brought clothes. Back then, it wasn't like now with kids being greedy. It was a good Christmas with our mama and our daddy.

So that went on. Then they got a divorce and that was it. My daddy moved back home with his mama. My mama and daddy was still seeing each other. My mama was staying on Sykes Street and my daddy was staying on Gomain Street with his mama so they could still go out the back door and the front door and see each other.

For a while, my mama was on welfare but I told her when I got my first check from UNC hospital that she had to get off welfare. So I brought

my first paycheck home to my mother. It was like \$900. I said, Mom come get off welfare or they are going to take us from you and we're going to have to split up and we don't want that. And my mom said, "Ok." I told her I make enough money to help her and the kids pay the bills and the household expenses. And I bought my kids Christmas. I was 16 at the time. I was doing patient transportation and housekeeping.

My mama used to work at the university and she never did much cooking except on Sundays. I used to cook for my mama five days a week. I'd do whatever my mama asked for. Monday through Friday I'd do fried chicken or something or pork chops or spaghetti or a tossed salad or lasagna. But every Thursday, she wanted fish. She got off at 4 p.m. At 4:15 p.m. when she walk in that door I drop the fish in a hot grease pan and I know it be good and hot when she walk in the door. So I cook fish, coleslaw, hush puppies—that's on Thursday. Friday and Saturday, we pick up sandwiches. Then Sunday my mama go in the kitchen and cook up a big Sunday dinner like she got 50 kids out there. Mama had fried meats. Long time ago before she got sick, she fed a whole neighborhood. She had everything—chicken, potato salad, macaroni and cheese, ribs, barbecue chicken, chicken and dumplings, pound cake, collard greens. She made the best pineapple cake. Her coconut pies and her potato pies—oh, you ought to taste them. It was great. She made all her stuff from scratch.

My mama got sick and then I had to take care of my mama. I was in the hospital day in and day out. She worked at the University for 39 years. When she came home retired, everything was wrong with her. She had a stroke. She had a heart attack. She had two blood clots. She had a tumor inside her brain. And she had asthma. Then she just went away peacefully. God called her home. He said, come home with me. Time to get some rest. And she went away from here with a smile on her face.

She passed away when she was 58 years old and I had to take care of the three kids at home. I can't ever forget, it was January 12, 1999, that she went away from here. It was a hard time for us cause we didn't have no Christmas, no Thanksgiving or New Year's without my mama. It was rough on us.

My dad just passed away January 6, this year. So this year my daddy went to the rest home. And then at the rest home, my daddy had a stroke and a heart attack. He fell out of his wheel chair at the time and no

nurse and no doctor were around at the rest home. So they sent my daddy to UNC hospital. He was 69 when he died. He had a stroke and a heart attack and he fell out of his wheelchair at the nursing home.

I got on drugs really bad. I went to rehab. I came out of rehab and I fell again. After my mama's death, I went back out there. But after my daddy's death, I didn't go back out there. I been clean now almost six months after my daddy's death. Not drinking. No drugs at all. I tell you it's a nightmare when you're out there chasing for that ghost. You spend your last on drugs, trying to get high. When you got no money. It's late but you don't know where you're going to get your next meal from. You don't know what you're going to do. But after I came in, Michael is the one who took me and said, "You know Charles, you ain't got to do that no more." Since then I've been hanging around him. He don't do drugs. He been clean for almost a year now. I look at that and say, *you know Charles, he can do it, you can do it, too.* It was hard out there. I had to make up my mind, it was death or prison. I was going to get killed.

Right now, I'm a nurse. I take care of old people at nighttime. From 11:30p.m. until 8 o'clock in the morning. I been doing it almost 15 years now. I take care of them in their homes. I love old people. One day, we're going to get old. We're going to need some help, somebody got to help us when we get old. You can't treat old people any kind of way you want to treat them. Let them be loved just like you want to be loved. My mama and my grandma told me as a child, "You got a heart for old people. Why don't you just take care of old people?"

Right now I'm staying with my nieces and nephew. I want to see them grow up, go through college. It has to be greater than high school; it has to be college. I'd be happy if I see all that and God can take me home then.

That's the end of my story.



TRP

Lost and Found

A Community Ensemble



DJ

I lost my heart, but I found hope.

—Thomas B.

I lost everything and found God.

—Mufasa

I lost my way—lost how to live, and found my way back—a way to survive.

—Jimmy Jones

It seems once I've lost all of my fears, then I will find the confidence come back at once.

—Jianling Zhou



Thomas Gray Owens, Jr.

I found that I have power inside, the power to do what I want.

—TRP

I lost my guilt and found forgiveness.

—R. Michaels



Thomas B.

I lost my home.

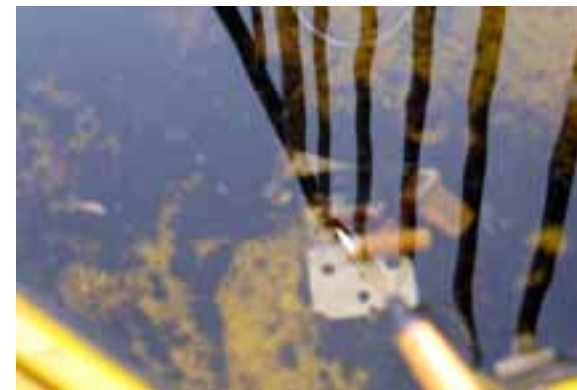
—Jimmy Jones

I lost my keys and found my car.

—R. Michaels



Thomas B.



Jason Owens

I lost my home and just can't seem to find my way back to it.

—Steve

I lost my mind, and I still ain't found it.

—Mufasa

I lost some of that good feeling spirit, but I found some bright points of light that still shine in the dark of night.

—Arnold R. Moore, Jr.

I lost one line to be the prime mover in the wrangle, then suddenly I find that as matter of fact my space of sky is limitless, endless and so.

—Jianling Zhou



Jason Owens

A Dream*Anonymous*

I dreamed in black and white
 Saw you staring through the night
 Without color the vista is clear
 You holding me holding you near.
 I asked, you acquiesced
 That night we stood face to face
 Had a kiss
 A moment to embrace
 Like a kid with a toy
 I was ensconced with joy
 It wasn't meant to be
 The bottle—my folly
 Pushed us apart
 Crushed my heart
 The bottle—my folly
 Hold me closer while you drift away
 Lost in melancholy
 A dream
 Just

Oxygen*Anonymous*

Heart beating fast
 the oxygen coming in
 or is it
 Can't breathe
 or can I
 Face and Hands going numb
 People crowding round
 get the hell away from me
 I'm getting too much air
 Oxygen is suffocating
 tears on the floor
 Hands clinched
 Scream
 Breathe in, Breathe out

The Late Blooming Tree

Anonymous

A revolt as a sapling
Would have been so grand,
Before I ever grew a branch.
The lessons, early, would still stand,
But, instead I had to wait until the late,
The summer into the autumn of my life,
To taste this sweet freedom.
Right before the cold winds blow—
When all of the gardeners have given up,
And some of my branches have fallen off,
Is when I see where my strength comes from.
Fresh blossoms, late to come,
Changing into a delicious golden fruit,
Cling to my dark, rough bark.
My ripening wisdom, sweeter than gold.
Come pick from me...
The late blooming tree!



Joseph Sinkiewicz

Open Letter to President Obama

Arnold R. Moore, Jr.



Thomas B.

This economy stinks. I know you fell into this, willingly, but with a belief that you could help. This open letter is to that cause. We, as a country, need jobs to build a viable nation. A job would rebuild a stronger tax base, fuel the economy for business, and give self-esteem back to our working class heroes.

Now, where to find these jobs? We have a growing sector in the green area. Many new and not so new technologies are emerging towards making a cleaner, natural and more earth-friendly environment. This can be a very intense market for labor and other highly skilled jobs.

This is called HOPE for the FUTURE. Our nation has not been involved in large-scale projects, such as the Hoover Dam, the Panama Canal, etc. for way too long. We need a major project to get behind to create JOBS. This is what I propose...

Plastics of all sorts are put into the landfills. Yes, we have some recycling of these plastics, but more is needed. ALL plastics must be mandated to be recycled. ALL PLASTICS! Body parts from wrecked cars to the scratched plastic glass in your kitchen cupboard, the lids on soda fountain drinks to the Styrofoam coffee cup you had this morning, they all MUST be recycled. Although one may argue that many plastics won't stick together, they ALL have a common element, CARBON. Using carbon binders and heat will combine these plastics! This could create jobs for researchers to investigate.

These combined plastics would then be extruded into pipes, more jobs. These pipes would be put together along the Interstate System medians, ugh...jobs! This Interstate Highway System is an artery system that reaches across the lower "48." In these pipes would be WATER. This water would come from the Atlantic, Pacific, Gulf, Mississippi, and Great Lakes. The Saudis have very good desalting plants that we could build to make this water usable, BINGO...JOBS. This clean water would be pumped using SOLAR and WIND power (jobs) to be used by farmers ZOWIE...NO MORE DROUGHT PROBLEMS.

The water could be used by the Forestry Dept. for underground sprinklers to keep the forests wet. WOW...NO more unplanned FIRES (installing jobs). The Insurance Industry would be happy about that in California, alone.

As I hope you see, this would create many jobs in maintaining this system for many, many years. We ALL need HOPE and this would give HOPE to so many, just in the near future, as well as beyond.

Thank You for your Time,

Arnold R. Moore, Jr.

Emotional Interference

Lenno W. Moore

See, as a young buck the OGs told me to, “always use your head; stay in the moment son; never allow your heart to gain entry into the decision-making process.”

See, the difference is this, the heart is ambiguous at best while at the same time being overly compassionate. Now when it comes to relationships this can be a very dangerous thing. Now that’s the meaning of Emotional Interference.

When things get bleak in our darkest time, we tend to start using our brains, as opposed to our d—s. Our saying: resolve as well as street wits. We find God and all the apostles when we fall hard on our luck.

Trust and believe, would’ve never come to this had I’d listened to the OGs and kept my wits.



Thomas B.



Thomas Gray Owens Jr.

Time After Time

Thomas B.

The fences are high and the barbed wire looks razor sharp. I walk across the yard—there are the inmates, and then the guards—I ask myself, “How did I get here?” Love, where it all began. I am laying on my bunk looking at the ceiling, thinking back to the day I took her flowers to her job. I was so happy doing that, I was going to make her day. So I walked up to the counter and asked, “Is my wife here?”

“Your name isn’t Ken?” I said no. My smile went away. I turn around and walk away and said tell my wife I love her. At this point in my life I had to get a grip and move on. So I met a friend, he was 74 years old with his gray wrinkled face and bushy eyebrows. We became friends, he did not belong in prison. He had Alzheimer’s and can’t remember things so we help each other talking, and I started writing letters for him.

It’s funny the people we meet in our lives that get us through life. Today I am going to live life, and get through and meet new people who can encourage me to get back where I was before. I seen a lot when I was in prison and am going to learn from my mistakes and am going to be love and give love when she comes around. Today I am grateful for the little things in my life. The shelter, the food, and the groups that come there.

As for you, the reader: please pray for healing in my heart and for encouragement to get where I want to be in my life. Thank you.



DJ

What Do You Do With a Lonesome Soul

Anonymous

What do you do with a lonesome soul.

Do you bury it and put it in a hole.

Do you put it on a mountain high,

A spectacle to passer by.

. . . or do you shoot it with a gun.

Do you play with it for fun.

Do you laugh at it.

Do you sing it a song.

Do you kiss it. . . Kiss it,

All night long?



Thomas Gray Owens Jr.

Leave You Behind

Thomas B.

The day your heart beat with mine
 I saw your eyes glisten
 And I saw your fears fall;
 I saw your lips tremble
 When my name Jesus called.
 It was just a matter of time
 In this old life of mine
 Until the day I had to leave you behind.

I know you still remember
 That day so long ago
 The day our last kiss
 Told me all I need to know.
 I know your tears were real
 I know the pain you feel,
 For in that moment held in time,
 Your heart beat steadily with mine.

I saw your lips smile,
 I saw you walk away,
 And I heard your loving whisper,
 Darling, we'll be together again someday.



DJ

My Beloved

Mufasa

My Beloved is the lily of my heart.
 She is my Beloved and I am hers.
 I close my eyes and I see her.
 The wind carries her smell, her sweet scent to me.
 I feel her in a way so deeply, one only I can understand.
 She is my Beloved and I am her man.

Freedom

Thomas B.

I stand in the
Mystery of the
Great unknown
Looking, wandering, and Free.

The wind dances
And it takes my breath away
Ecstatic each day just to be free.

I sing with laughter
Watching the stars go by
Hearing the waves by the sea.

For the spirit is
With me unbounded
And free.



Thomas B.

Tomorrow is Another Day

Jiangling Zhou

How many times were you told,
 “Tomorrow is another day?”
 Every morning it sounds like someone’s repeating it,
 But replaced “tomorrow” by “today”;
 Today is another day,
 Ho-Ho, time is exactly life,
 Time is wealth with no replacement,
 Time is much heavier than gold, diamonds. . .
 Like it or not,
 Another day begins today.

Wake up, it’s 6 o’clock already;
 Hurry up, it’s 7 o’clock already;
 Are you ready for another day?
 Another day could be usual,
 Another day is a plenty thing you could spend,
 Another day is cheap stuff everyone could waste,
 Another day might begin the day after tomorrow,
 Two days after tomorrow. . .
 It may never become another day.

It’s like a cycle,
 Day by day,
 Week follow week,
 Month after month,
 The sunshine is the same golden bright,
 The moon light is the same silver white,
 The stars still twinkle in the sky. . .
 The tide is coming and is going,
 But the stream sings a song to run in the sea,
 Just like yesterday never came back.

Have you felt life is short?
 That moment might be the end of your teenage,
 Might be now.
 If you feel that way,
 You should say,
 “Today is another day,”
 You become a manager of your life,
 You become a master of your life,
 How many tomorrows in your life?

Unlimited or limited?

Community Reactions to Issue 1

“I read “Talking Sidewalks” and was so impressed by both the content and the layout. . . . I think this is a great idea and I hope it brings attention to those stories largely unheard.”

—Carlo Robustelli, Mayor’s Assistant, Chapel Hill

“How wonderful! Congratulations. I hope it can get into the hands of many, many people.”

—Sally Greene, Town Council Member, Chapel Hill

“Until now members of the homeless community have had little opportunity to share their stories. Finally, it’s their turn to do some of the talking. . . . The project is a move towards social inclusion by letting the homeless engage with the rest of the community and vice versa. Community discussions about important social issues like homelessness are not complete unless everyone has the chance to speak. We can learn a lot just by listening.”

—Daily Tar Heel Editorial Board

For questions, comments, or to get involved, email talkingsidewalks@gmail.com

Read it online at www.talkingsidewalks.com



In Memory



“Homeless people see it all; all people see when they look at the homeless is what you want to. My own goal is a literary periodical, with items by what I’d have to call the local “literati”...It’s one of the sad truths, it is up to us to bring to public attention, keeping ever in mind we are of no more value at the level of worth and our souls haven’t any more value in God’s eyes...Let us continue this joint effort and just see what we come up with. I have a feeling it will be worthy, indeed.”

Phillip Rodney Personette
1953 — 2008

This publication is in memory and honor of Phillip Personette and his work as a literary advocate for the homeless community.

Sponsored By



Funded By

*Department of English
and Comparative Literature*

*James M. Johnston Center
for Undergraduate Excellence*

Carolina Community
MEDIA PROJECT



For questions, comments, or to get involved, email talkingsidewalks@gmail.com

Read it online at www.talkingsidewalks.com