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Elm City Echo

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When you buy the *Elm City Echo*, 75% of the cost goes directly to the members of the homeless community who are involved with the publication. These individuals will become permanent vendors, selling copies throughout New Haven. The remaining 25% pays for printing and stipends for our writers. Our operating expenses receive additional support from donations and fundraising through the Yale Hunger and Homelessness Action Project.

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Elm City Echo

Issue 12 • Spring 2017

Mission

The Elm City Echo aims to create economic and expressive opportunities for marginalized members of the New Haven community who are experiencing extreme poverty and homelessness.

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Letter from the Editors

Dear New Haven,

Welcome back to another issue of the Elm City Echo. If this is your first time opening an issue—welcome. We're glad you're here.

The Elm City Echo is New Haven's only street periodical. We are a platform for the voices of New Haven's homeless. Our volunteers visit shelters in the city each week to help individuals find a story they want to tell. We define story broadly: a piece of nonfiction, fiction, poetry, an opinion piece, or any other form of expression. Twice a year, we publish these stories in the Elm City Echo, which our homeless vendors sell around New Haven, keeping the majority of the profits for themselves.

You might have noticed that we look a little different this time around. After we increased our price last issue, we realized that there was room to expand the Elm City Echo. In order to print more papers, publish more stories, and hire more vendors, we've changed our style a little bit. It's still the same content. We just want to make sure that the voices of New Haven's homeless are heard by as many people as possible.

Like many around the country, we have read recent headlines with great trepidation. Stories like the ones we publish are always important because they hold often-marginalized voices. These stories are particularly important right now. "The Cost of Freedom" by TG reminds us not to take freedom for granted, and the love displayed in "Missing My Grandson Kayden" by Lisette reminds us what we stand to lose.

We hope, always, that this love trumps hate.

Yours,



Julia Hamer-Light



Khushwant Dhaliwal

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Whistling trees

by Ana

Wandering down the path, whistling trees
Breathing, thoughts that no one sees
No direction, guidance or care
Leaves blowing without a scare.

Knowledge is a wonderful thing
Open your eyes, bees, butterflies in the air
I am afraid for how painful is the sting
Continue wandering, as I try to beware.

Stepping on twigs trying to be quiet
Sneaking around wondering what's there
Enjoying nature is quite a riot
As in this world I have no care.

Oh how I would love to walk free
To be able to fly far away
Nature is freedom for me
I sit down and to God I pray.

Homelessness does not discriminate

anonymous

I come from a wonderful home. My father was an executive at a phone company. My mother also worked there. When I was eighteen, I graduated from high school early. I was a nursing aid for seven years, then went to college for drug and alcohol rehabilitation. I have a degree in that. Then I moved to California.

I'm an educated woman. I was a product manager for software projects – I traveled all around. I was the woman with the briefcase and the fancy car. I had 250 people working under me at one time. I was a great manager. I designed training and implementation plans for the software. I would say, "This is what you need to do." I'd say, "Go into that room and take no prisoners, and if you have any problems, just give me a call." But I was humble. I was never arrogant. Still, I was good at it—I have my father's tenacity and business skills, but I have my mother's passion and compassion, her gentleness. I'm kind, but if

What if?

by Ana

What if things weren't what they seemed?
What if ants didn't crawl and bees didn't sting?
What if trees never grew and flowers never bloomed?
What if things changed, what would you do?

What if the grass was always green on the other side?
What if the world we live in is all an illusion?
What if one day, the sky is black?
What if things changed, what would you do?

What if our reactions were all the same?
What if our thoughts became reality?
What if our hearts were made of stone?
What if things changed, what would you do?

What if I wasn't the woman I am?
What if the sun wasn't shining?
What if the leaves didn't turn color?
What if things changed, what would you do?

anybody tries to mess with me, they'd better get out of the way.

I had a penthouse in Canada back in 1995. They would fly my boyfriend up every other week so he could stay with me. He was wonderful. He owned a sprinkler business, he traveled all over. He was very prominent and he was my soulmate. We were together for 16 years, until he died.

When my father got sick, I dropped everything to take care of him. I took care of him for three or four years. He died in 2004, and ever since he died it's been a struggle. I've had no stability.

But on August 12, Martha's Place called me and said, "We have a place for you." They call me Mama Pat, and I get along with everyone. The girls are wonderful. We really help each other out. The other women here—they all

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support me. They ask me every day: How are you doing? How are you doing?

I'm still standing. I don't do drugs. I have a wonderful friend who's a minister, and every week we go shopping, to church, and to lunch.

I went to the federal court by myself. Anybody who goes to the federal court by themselves, they say—she's got balls.

I've gotten so much stronger. I know that once I get my own place and life changes for me, the weight will come off. I'll probably meet somebody special. I just got my hair done and highlighted, I cut it all off. I keep myself up. Things will be good again. I have no doubt.

When am I happiest? When I'm on my own and I have a cute little place and I'm with my friends. I love to travel and entertain, go to the movies. And I love to give. I raised my niece financially. When I'm back on my feet, I'd like to get involved in something for the greater good.

This person said to me, when things turn around for you, it'll be a test. The people who hurt you, don't let them get to you. My feeling is, God steps in when the devil thinks he's winning. And the people who helped you, pay it forward.

What advice do I have for others? I think when you're working you should always save money. When you have a good job, save, save, save.

Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. It gets dark. It gets very, very dark. But there is a God and this is a test. It's just a test. And the test is, do you have faith?

Keep yourself well, keep yourself straight, and keep the faith. Nothing stays the same, and God will help you, but you have to do all the work. He'll put it in front of you, but your job is to recognize His gifts.

Untitled

by Mike

my Self told me about her telling on him.
let's get this right—he left here all alone,
at night, to work at the factory, to pay
the bills: her Rent, his Light, my Gas,
our Food. Just one big family Living
in this world of Peace and Love and Happiness.
the Most High has blessed me with the Gift of Life,
and I know it's a blessing, Life, and a gift Life;
every day I open my eyes I say thank You.

Start a day over

by Diamond

I got so many doors slammed in my face because of my identity as transgender. I don't think there is a need for me to explain to others who I have inside me. I'm a woman.

I got to Martha's Place a year ago. By the time I had to leave, I went back to substances again. I went to a women's sober house. When one of the ladies discovered I am a transgender, she told the manager. They wanted to put me back on the street. It was either that or put me in a male house. I told her there would be a lot of friction and confrontation if I was put in a male house. My fiancé said he would pay for me to stay at the woman house, because he saw me as nothing but a woman. Because that's who I am.

I'm in a good place now. I have a permit for my housing. I'm going to decorate it as beautifully as I can. I'm going to finally marry my fiancé. I'm going to wear peach in the wedding – it will flatter the complexion of my skin. I'm going to live happily ever after.

Even though I have slipped a couple of times, I know I can start over. My fiancé always says to me: "one thing you can always do is start a day over."

Sometimes when I get into arguments with him, we start a day over. I would ask him how he is doing. And he would ask me how I'm doing. He will say I'm fine and give me a kiss. Then I will give him a kiss. It's happy ever after.

I can not, will not ever say I had or I'm having a bad day because God has blessed me with Life, given me the gift of Life, yes! and I know it. think about it for a moment. what has Life taught me this Day? peace. positive energy. always create elevation. Moral of Story—Live in Life

—Love Life to Live

Thoughts from A Homeless in New Haven

anonymous

People say there is something like healthy fear and it helps you to make the right decisions and keeps you away from dangerous situations. Absurd, I say. Wisdom should guide you in life. Fear in any form is evil and never healthy. The road to fearlessness is love. When you are loving, there is no place left in your heart for selfishness, which is responsible for most of your fears. The bigger absurdity is when people say love hurts. If love hurts you, that means you are selfish, immature, and have no clue what true love feels like. Love is understanding, forgiving, and fearless. It is that simple.

Signed,
A Homeless in New Haven

Me and Maria

by Christopher

My name is Christopher. I didn't know I would fall in love with my friend Maria. We have known each other for over 25 years—I used to work selling flowers. I didn't do it so often, but as I did, I met more and more people. It was an under the table job, I started working on the weekend, then I was doing it everyday. I would come to work at 5 o'clock at night and leave at 12 in the morning. I would see Maria come across the street and I would talk to her. That's how we met. We spent time together at the rest home, Yorkshire Manor. After a while, we got an apartment. On the 25th/26th year of knowing each other, we got married! Our anniversary was in September, on the same day as her birthday. It's sad, but we became homeless. Around 2015, she left to live in East Haven. She is 63 years old and I'm 55. We hope to get together soon, pray that things will be better. Tomorrow, we are going to look at an apartment in New Haven.

Trust in God

by Brian

It's hard to trust in God himself. Every day is hard when you've lost a lot of people in life. It's a hard thing to swallow. I ask God to help during those hard times in life. He helps me sometimes. The pain is a little easier sometimes. I just have to believe in him more. In life, people go through trials. I find it easier when I have people around me in those times of need. Trust helps me during these times of pain. I find peace in life a lot more now because of the family and friends I adore. God is the one true friend.

Caring

anonymous

I came to Columbus House, and it was lovely meeting people and the staff. It was very quiet and comfortable, and while I am pregnant, I am enjoying being here. The food is good and the staff takes care of you. I enjoy feeling the baby kick, move. My baby has been a joy to me 'cause it's my first baby and I'm so excited and very happy with my pregnancy. I get a lot of warm love from people around me everywhere I go. My baby boy's name is Jayqua and I've loved the caring I got from doctors and nurses. It's a really good feeling, and when I went to do the ultrasound, the baby let me feel so good. Seeing him moving around gives me joy and happiness.

Missing my grandson, Kayden

by Lisette

At first, I miss you so much, Kayden, that I can barely function without you.

Everything reminds me of you; I see your face and hear your voice everywhere I turn.

You're calling my name, "Nana, where are you?"

The memories of our time together are constantly on my mind. I can't speak without telling someone about you, and everything they say reminds me of you. Oh how I miss you my grandson.

I love the fact that we spoke last Friday but I still miss you like crazy.

Missing you my Grandson.

The jamboree

by Chris

I can remember when I was a kid. We all learned to square dance and belonged to a club. We would travel 50 miles to dances and earn badges for participating. My brother and I joined "Smiling 8s," the teen club of "Valley Squares." We travelled to Rhode Island for a jamboree of just dancing. Stayed for eight or twelve hours and then left. We had spaghetti sandwiches when we got home. Had a really good time doing this. My mom came downstairs and saw that we had watermelon slices at the kitchen table. We watched the sun come up and told her about the deer we saw. Then we went to bed at 9 am. Slept until the afternoon. That year, we both earned two angel badges for dancing in the jamboree; it was lots of fun.

It's hard to be apart from you, Kayden

by Lisette

So many of my thoughts are of you. Each night when the world is quiet and still, your smile and the wonderful moments we have shared crowd my mind. Then, I find myself missing you even more. Each day, as I go about my routine, you slip gently into my thoughts and make me smile. I wonder what you are doing, trust that everything is going well, and hope that you miss me, too. It's hard to be apart from you, Kayden, because I care so deeply about you, but please know that you are an important part of my life. Though we can't be together right now, we are together in our thoughts and memories. I am here, with all my heart, looking ahead to the time when I can see you and be with you again.

Crocheting

by Chris

I've crocheted since I was fifteen or sixteen years old. My mother taught me. She grew up in the Depression Era when you had to make everything on your own. I also learned how to cook and make baked goods from her. I tried to teach my daughter and granddaughter how to crochet, but it was like pulling teeth.

I've made scarves, booties, and afghans over the years. I can't read a pattern to save my soul, but I make my own patterns and I watch. I used to watch my mom. I make my own patterns now based on color schemes and I've been told I have an eye for color coordinating.

I was first in the hospital for about three weeks. After being diagnosed with bipolar, I started to crochet again. I made a twin-sized afghan in one week. Then I became homeless and came to Columbus House Shelter. I again became bored so I started to crochet again and made another afghan in three and a half weeks, and made a doily to match the afghan. They are going to be a present to a close friend. That is where I'm at right now hoping to get an apartment soon – a place of my own where I can crochet.

The End.

Part One: For English: Press “Huh?”

by Doug

I know that English is a difficult language to learn for those who are not familiar with it. Come on – how many different pronunciations of “O-U-G-H” are there?

But there are those whose native language is English. Sometimes they make a simple error by using a wrong word without realizing it.

For example: Soon after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, America went through an ANTHRAX scare, when the powdery substance was airborne. An elderly woman from Seymour died from inhaling it when it was found in her mail. Around the end of that October, I was talking with someone about the event. She said that “it was a shame about what happened to the woman who died from AMTRAX.” I wanted to ask her if the woman died from inhaling a train or simply got run over by it...

Another example: I was talking recently with a few people about the pros and cons of gun control. One person in the group said that it was in the Bill of Rights – the second COMMANDMENT to be exact – that guarantees people the right to bear arms. Of course, he meant the second AMENDMENT...unless the second amendment deals with worshipping false idols...

Of course, there are those who tend to make up words out of existing words or mix-up verb tenses as if it were perfectly normal.

Recently I was having breakfast with a group of people. I overheard a woman ask someone if he wanted more TOAST. The man did not hear her. She “repeated” herself by asking him if he “wanted more TOASTS-ES.” Basically, she pluralized a plural, which, in this case, didn’t need to be plural (i.e. three pieces of toast). Up to that point, the woman had come across as a relatively intelligent person. When I asked her about the slip of tongue, she chalked it up to “poetic license” instead of “poor grammar.”

But the one “word” I’ve heard quite often over the past five years – and have come to despise – is the non-word CONVERSATE. Shall we conversate about the word “conversate”? It is neither “converse” nor “conversation.” (Sidenote: My definition of “conversate” is what a pair of sneakers did last night around 6:00 – converse-ate.)

Then there is what I call “verbal abuse.” Examples being: “when did you did (do) that?,” “where did you went

(go)?,” “I seen-ed/saw-ed (saw) you earlier,” “I been done that (I’ve done that),” and the ever-popular “he do (does)?”

In short, hearing the way English is being spoken today, yo deseo recordar Español yo lo aprendí en el colegio.

Part Two: There’s something fishy going on here

by Doug

This is not an original piece by yours truly. I remember reading this somewhere in high school in the early 80s and it has stuck with me ever since.

“GHOTI” is pronounced “FISH.”

I know...I know...I can hear you now. Part One was something about the English language – misuse of words, verbal abuse, etc. Now this...what the...?

It’s all very simple once you read this explanation –

- 1) “GH” is pronounced like an “F” in words like “ROUGH,” “TOUGH” and “COUGH.”
- 2) “O” is pronounced like the “O” in “WOMEN,” (a short “I” sound as in “TIP” and “LIP.”)
- 3) “TI” is pronounced like the “TI” in “LOTION” and “NOTION.” (SH)

So, you get:
GH = F
O = I
TI = SH

Against all odds:

by Wendy-Marie

Present day, 2016. There isn’t one SINGLE day that goes by without Raymond “Ray” Hiluainia (*pronounced Hill-oo-ay-nya*) thinking about how truly blessed and remarkably lucky he is, for him and his wife both. Happily together for eleven straight, solid, and strong years, and married for seven (no seven-year-itch here!) both he and his wife Jessica (formerly Jessica Winkler), truly do count their blessings and always look at one another with a combination of deep love, devotion, admiration, and most importantly, *respect*. Throughout their time both together and apart, they’ve always been the best and greatest of friends, sweethearts, and most importantly, soulmates.

The two young lovebirds met in a very, very unconventional and out-of-sorts way, for them both, in 2004. Ray, then eighteen/nineteen, hadn’t even wanted a girlfriend, let alone a relationship. He was not in the least bit looking to hook-up with or be with anybody, emotionally *or* sexually. Jessica, then eighteen as well, didn’t believe that she would ever have a boyfriend or be in a relationship, let alone have what she was about to encounter. Their meeting and the events that led up to them meeting were so intense and dramatic that neither one of them ever, ever could have predicted the ways in which they would come together and ultimately fall in love. And deeply and so passionately in love at that.

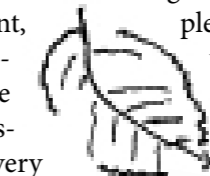
Ray was an extremely mellow, intelligent, kind, and down-to-earth teenager who at eighteen looked the complete stereotypical opposite of what his sweet, sensitive, and friendly disposition was on the inside. Indeed, he was very sweet, gentle, and otherwise also very timid, though he outwardly did *not* at all look like the timid, sweet, and extremely smart young man (and former high-honor student, with a 4.75 GPA) that he truly was. Ray was an exquisitely handsome young man with a 1950’s rebel biker tough guy look. He was very built and muscular, five-feet-ten inches tall, had a baby-faced innocent young complexion with bright bluish gray eyes and upturned nose, and had only a handful of piercings and only one tattoo on his bicep. He always travelled on his motor-

How a single and Profoundly Horrible Incident Drastically Changed A Young Man’s Life, and Ultimately Led Him To The Girl Of His Dreams and Future Wife

cycles, especially his favorite Harley-Davidson chopper, and was planning to be a professional bike builder after graduating from high school in 2003.

However, his ambitions did *not* include getting arrested, going into jail, and then meeting his future father-in-law and eventual wife! He met his future father-in-law, Garrett Winkler while he was in prison, in the minimum-security ward where the prisoners, like him, were only first-time offenders. Garry was a Christian teen-counselor in the prison specifically for young men in the prison system who really needed both mental and spiritual guidance and help, and quite coincidentally, Ray Hiluainia, or inmate 0339669 as he was now known—no exception—was in need of extremely deep and thorough emotional therapy and regaining of his Christian faith. Pastor Winkler, who saw that within Ray, was more than happy to help and get the job done.

Before the horrific events of his crime, Ray had never even committed one single offense. Mellow and very easygoing, Ray usually never allowed anything to get him down, let alone let something make him so hurt, angry, and upset that he would end up getting into a horrible near-fatal fight and getting arrested for it. Ray didn’t believe in violence, and even though he was an incredibly passionate boxer and weightlifter, Ray never even used his size and strength to try to have his way or intimidate people. All in all, Ray was a great big muscled teddy bear. Which is why it was completely incomprehensible and unforeseen that Raymond would do what he would do to get into jail in the first place...



Year 2028

by Carl

A group of adults, in space on a ship working for a salvage company on a mission to find a missing ship called the Proxima Centauri that disappeared 6 years ago. When they find the ship, it is abandoned. The crew is mysteriously missing. They don't understand why or how, so they check the log in the cockpit for the last log-in to get an idea of what went on. There, they find some mysterious writing that they just don't understand.

When they get the ship up and running, they are able to acquire footage from the video log of what happened to the crew. They are all bewildered at what they find. And now they're going to be looking for answers to what happened. They are stuck on the ship looking for answers.

One of the crew members had a brother who went missing on the Proxima Centauri. She is there to find out why he went missing.

So while they're on the ship, looking for answers, mysterious things start to happen. The ship starts malfunctioning, the crew starts seeing things that aren't there. So they think this ship is playing with their mind. They're going crazy due to an unseen force and start blaming each other for what they're seeing. So they try to contact the station where they live to inform them of what's going on. But they have trouble getting in contact. The ship won't let them.

All of a sudden, they hear mysterious footsteps from something or someone on the ship. The captain starts sending people out to try to figure out where this mysterious noise is coming from--this person or thing. He sends two at a time. It's a small crew, just ten people. The two encounter a mysterious figure--an alien-like creature of some kind. It has claws and razor-sharp teeth and it's ten feet tall. They start shooting at it. It dodges them and takes off. They run back to the front of the ship to inform the captain. The captain decides to hide them in the front of the ship while they figure out how to take the creature down.

So the captain decides to send out another two to find out where the armory is to take care of this. The creature sneaks up behind them, attacks one of the males while the other is trying to shoot him, and rips right into him, killing him instantly. The other male runs for his life, shooting back at the creature while he tries to find the armory.

He finds it, gets inside, closes the door, contacts the captain, tells him what happened, and asks what to do. He tells the captain that this alien-like creature is skilled and smart. It knows how to attack. And how are we going to take care of this? Because if we don't, one by one we'll die. He knows now how the crew died. He tells the captain that they should get the hell out of there. But the captain says no, he wants to stay there and investigate because he doesn't know right now if the creature killed them, so he tells the crewman that they need to stock up on ammunition and hold out the best they can. He's sending someone down there to carry what they're gonna need. He tells them be careful, be mindful, and watch out. Because if not, they're gonna be taken out one by one.

The captain sends one of his crewmen to the armory to bring his shipmate back. He gets to him and knocks on the door to be let in. They've started gathering weapons and ammunition when suddenly they hear a noise outside the door. They look at each other, realizing it's the creature. They decide to wait and see if the creature leaves. When they hear no sudden movements, they open the door and head back to the main bridge. They return successfully to talk to the captain and drop off the ammunition.

While they're on the main bridge the captain decides to hold a meeting on how to stay safe without getting killed. The captain doesn't want to lose any more crew members. He wants to save his crew. So he concocts a plan to find out what happened to the previous crew and take out the creature. He was searching through the data and found out that they were killed off one by one by the creature. So now he wants to save lives here instead of losing them. They all gather what they need and head out to kill the creature. As they're heading through the corridor, they hear something in the distance. One of the crew members has a tracking device and can sense the sounds getting closer and closer. The crewman with the machine watches the creature draw nearer and nearer, until he realizes that it should be right next to them by now, but they don't see it. The crewman realizes that the creature is playing a trick on them and could be sneaking up from

behind. So he warns the crew to look behind them as well. The creature comes from the ceiling, grabs one and pulls him up, killing him instantly, and the other crewmen start firing, but misses the target. They all start running to get somewhere safe.

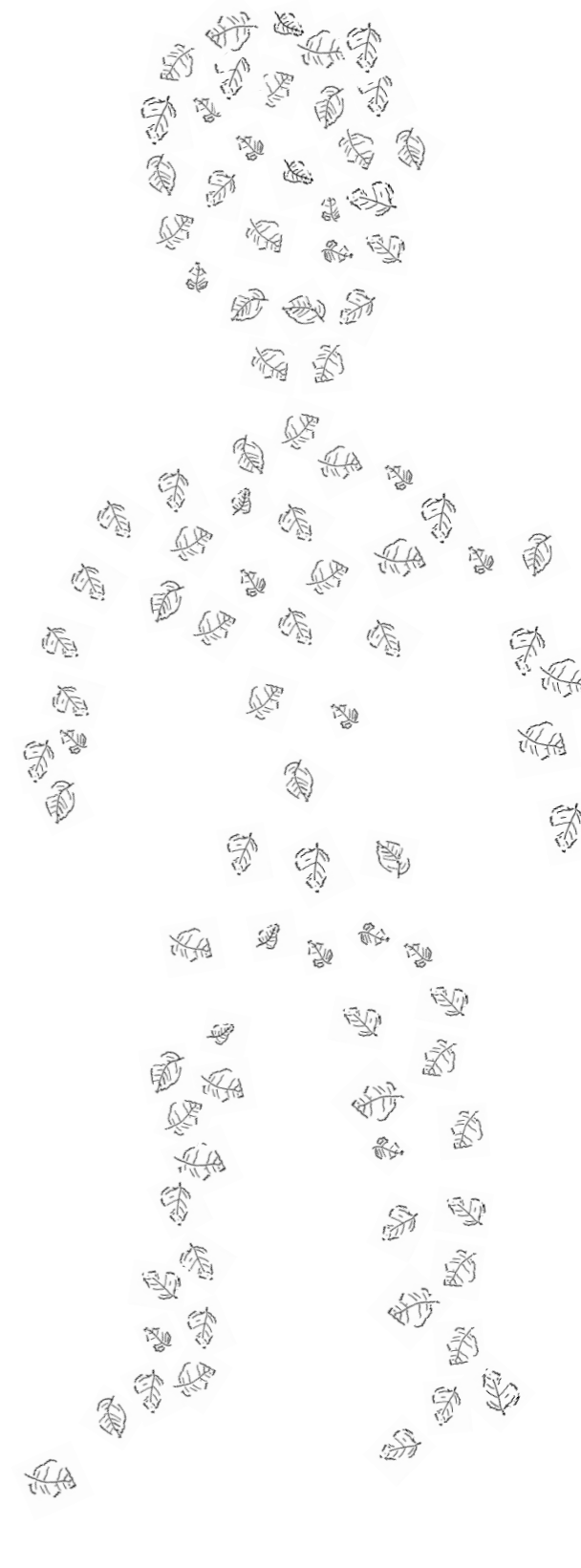
They stop hearing sounds, and think it disappeared again. They head out to find it and kill it. They head out down the corridor again, slowly but surely. As they see it approaching on the radar, they start preparing. But this time they're smarter. They have guards in front, behind, and facing up. As the creature approaches, they start firing in all directions. They are able to hit the creature and kill him without losing any more lives.

So the captain says, "Now that the creature is dead, we can grab the data and leave." So they grab what's left of the bodies, carry them onto their ship, and get the hell out of there.

They return to their destination and drop off the evidence to the admiral. The captain shows the admiral what went wrong with the previous crew. He explains that they lost two crewmembers and he wants to give them the burial they deserve. And then he explained that an alien creature had killed the previous crew members, and they had killed the creature. The admiral thanks him and promises the crewmembers will get the burial they deserve. Then the captain asks what they will do about the brother of the female crew member who lost his life. The admiral says they will give him a proper burial in a memorial way. The admiral says, "You can leave now and go explain what happened to your crew."

He gets to the crew, talks to them, and thanks them for everything. He talks about the losses and how they'll be remembered for their service. And then he tells them they can have some time off until their next mission. Then one of the service men walks up to the captain and says, "Where do we go from here?" The captain says, "Like I said, enjoy some time off. You will be notified about our next mission. Now I'm heading back to my quarters."

The captain headed back to his quarters and, finally, he sat down for a well-deserved rest.



Misunderstanding

by Abraham

Understanding what “misunderstanding” is
not a matter of verbal expression study
in a high academic center;
But a matter of being victim of something
that would knock you out...
When something happens to you, you can too
hardly accept it against your will.
When you love a woman, you can hardly
accept her misunderstanding;
When you love a man, you can hardly
accept his misunderstanding;
When you lose your precious belonging, you
can hardly accept misunderstanding;
When you win or lose during a contestation, you
can hardly accept misunderstanding;
When we read or see how the Jews are persecuted, we
can hardly accept misunderstanding;
When we hear how the criminal people can do
this today, why do we hate Israel?
Being a victim of misunderstanding is known only
by the real human beings...
As for others who accept telling lies against the truth,
they,
are false human beings among us;
In and through all religions we inherit today,
never let misunderstanding stand!



Tears from the deaf culture

by Abraham

When someone has no hearing problem,
he is the happy member of human society.
When he needs no hearing test or audiogram,
that's his permanent happiness card;
When he never loses this permanent happiness card,
he never gets tired of hearing...
Unfortunately, the Deaf culture is an automated
gate, opens when we need hearing test.
When we have hearing problems,
our permanent happiness card is lost in the society!
No solution will allow to recover our permanent
happiness card as long as we can't hear.
When we understand and see this phenomenon,
we start yet pouring the ocean of tears.
The hot tears of despair and hopelessness,
for no one can replace this hearing loss;
The hot tears of the Deaf culture will flow
and carry us to where we don't want.
Yes, it's against our natural need that we
use the Sign Language tools;
Yes, we would use and love Sign Language only
if we enjoy this method of communication
that seduces so many other people!
As for me, my permanent happiness card is lost since
I was 12 years old and my tears are always
flowing despite my life in America!
Today, I'm 52 years old, I've no income,
no food stamp, no home, and no job despite
my skills and education.
Why can such a situation be possible in the
territories of America?
I'm not surprised at this phenomenon, but
I'm in tears for misunderstanding.
Those who hate me and have no respect for me
cannot make me pour tears...
They can outrage me, strike me, and even kill me,
but they will never overcome me.
Because they are too weak when they attack me
through lies and dishonesty...
So, let me swim in the tears of the Deaf culture...
For I'm innocent and proud to read and
write with no man's help...

Building up

by Wycliffe

From Jamaica, I came to the USA in 1971. I've lived here for 45 years. Must say it's not been a bad life, but for the last few years it's been very hard to find work. Even though I'm experienced in a lot of fields—in business and the trades. I worked at Jordan's. I worked at Belcare, where I taught people how to use computers. I worked in car dealerships on Whalley, three of those. Worked at AT&T. I was an account executive. I'd come in, get their bill, and show them a comparison. I would switch them to another carrier without a glitch.

Sometimes at job interviews people look at me, surprised that I know that. They're like, that's so smart, and I'm like, “Well give me the job!” But there's always turnover in corporate.

It's a difficult situation. Being in this kind of situation. People look at you different. I'm living in Columbus House after losing my apartment. If I don't find work soon, I'll be back on the streets again, still I pray every day that it won't come to that.

After my mother passed and my divorce I started to go downhill. I was drinking. Jobs folded on me—I don't blame them, it was my fault.

I lost my home because of my landlord. We could have paid rent but she didn't ask. She just wanted us out of there.

After AT&T laid me off I started working with the landlord, learning about houses. I learned the trade. Learned how to do windows, floors—if your house burns down I know how to do demolition and build it back up. I learned it from the ground up from a real house that burned down. I worked for her for \$10 an hour and it was all for nothing; this woman listened to the stories of this guy we brought in. She liked to gossip. And she got rid of us and kept him and later she told me she should've got rid of him and kept us. I talked to her the other day—she asked me how I was and I said I was fine. I never told her I was in the shelter.

It hurts. It hurt to the point where—it wasn't my fault directly, but I could've avoided some of the situations. It made things worse for the other tenants. And there was one tenant who left, and that was steady money she lost. Money she worked to get; she worked to bring him in, and now she's gotta start over.

It was all of our faults. But I think things happen for a reason.

God got my back. I'm looking forward to better days. Nights, too.

Been in this country 45 years, never experienced anything like this. It's rough, I've seen it all. It's a difficult situation. I'm in this routine. I'm in the shelter—it's not the nicest place, but I have a bed. And I eat. I signed up for food stamps, which I've never been on before. There's so much inside me I can't let out. I'm just getting tired of the same old routine. And people look at you different. I'm going through the shelter, I'm halfway through. If I hold out now, I can get a place. A roof over my head, a place to eat, to sleep—I'll build myself up from there. I'm just trying to get my life on track. I'm focused on getting a job.

Precious man

by Gabrielle

I'll tell the tale of a precious man
Where in his mind hides a master plan
He fools them all, he plays the part
But all the wrong things consume his heart
For him to want to take it all away
He must be incredibly hurt today
He's been thinking about this for a while
And now a chance to go out in style
Like fate, a weekend spent at home
Now he has a place to be alone
So he wanders into his room
To him could be his future tomb
How many pills does it take to end this
How many slashes to the wrist
And he thinks and he waits
But nothing will calm his heart filled with hate
Maybe this time he buys a gun
And who's to blame for his life undone
He's rash, his thoughts are spinning
Right now the devil is surely winning
So now the question is does he survive
As of right now he's still alive
But his story doesn't stop when I finish writing
Every day he will continue fighting.

There's no place like home (eventually)...

by Doug

Homeless? Who would have thought when I was growing up that I would be in this situation? Hell, who would have thought I'd be where I am now two years ago?

Growing up, I had the same hopes and dreams as a lot of kids – I wanted to be a doctor or a lawyer. I even wanted to be President of the United States (Hmm... from the poor house to the White House... there's a thought...)

As I grew older, I began to hate school. I used to skip school for days on end. Why? Because I was shy and stayed to myself. Picking up on this, the other kids would pick on me; therefore, my grades began to suffer. There went my dreams of med or law school.

(Note – I did go to a local community college for accounting, but quit after a year. I was through with schooling.)

So working was my only option. It was never easy. Going from one low-paying job to another, both full and part-time – cashier, retail, fast food, security guard, factory work. Nothing ever lasted...

...well, except the last job I had. I was there for fifteen years – and absolutely loved it. Annual raises, benefits, stock ownership...

Then the bottom fell out in 2008 when the plant closed due to downsizing when the "Great Recession" started in 2007 – 2008.

At this time I applied for (and received) food stamps and state insurance, both of which I am still on. During the first two years of the Obama administration – on and off – there were numerous unemployment benefit extensions.

In 2010, the landlord of the rooming house I lived in asked me to be the house manager. The job description was to collect rents, make weekly bank deposits, rent rooms, pay bills, etc., for free room and board...

Little did I know where I'd be in five years...

"In any case, his ultimatum was that I had to vacate the premises on or by May 1st or be evicted. I left on May 1st."

"...as of this writing (October 2016), I have an application in for a place right here in New Haven."

"This proves to me that things go around in circles. Things go from good to bad, but eventually swing back to good again."

...and I'll be home for Christmas (hopefully)

In 2015, my landlord and I had a parting of the ways. In a nutshell, he wasn't happy with my job performance. To an extent, he was right; but, in my defense, he expected a bit too much from me at times. In any case, his ultimatum was that I had to vacate the premises on or by May 1st or be evicted. I left on May 1st.

(Sidenote – On April 29th, two days before my departure, one of my sisters passed away. As sad as this was, I had no time to mourn properly.)

I had no family or friends who were able to help me with a place to stay until I got back on my feet; although I did stay with one sister for a few days here and there in May and June, 2015.

From May to July 2015: I lived on the streets for four days, one week at a New Haven shelter that led to a two-week stay in a psych ward, one night at a Bridgeport rescue mission, and finally, one month at a crisis and respite house, also in Bridgeport.

I voluntarily checked myself into a psych ward because everything going on in my life at the time was too much for me to bear. I wanted to end it all. I was diagnosed with anxiety and depression.

My one and only night at the rescue mission, which was a first-come first-served "shelter," was spent sleeping on a mattress on their chapel floor. I returned for a second night. I was told by the director that he "felt sorry" for me the night before; so he couldn't continue to do it.

I spent a month at the Continuum of Care House (a.k.a. "The Crisis and Respite House") in Bridgeport after being discharged from the hospital. They offered limited help in finding housing etc. as opposed to shelters and other state-run facilities that have more access to such resources. The only thing I accomplished while there was applying for Social Security disability.

So I wound up back at the emergency shelter in New Haven from July 2015 to April 2016. This was the shelter

I was at briefly before my hospitalization in May 2015. I was hesitant to return; but I was resigned to the fact that I HAD to be there.

But things were different this time around.

Come November, I began working with a group called Community Action, a group that advocates for people, e.g. getting homeless people housing, applying for state assistance, and disability etc. We met once a week to work on various things.

In late April, I went to Yale Hospital for emergency surgery. I was there for a week. I was released to the Medical Respite floor at the Columbus House for two months to recuperate.

In mid-July, I was released to what I call "general population" at the Columbus House, meaning I was with the non-medical homeless.

I was assigned a case manager who would help me get housing within the six-month maximum length of stay there. (Note – This does not include the two months I was in Medical Respite.) I was also assigned a case manager who would work on my Social Security appeal.

With my case manager, I've filled out a lot of paperwork for various things. It was all well worth it because...

...as of this writing (October 2016), I have an application in for a place right here in New Haven. If everything goes well with reference checks, etc., I should have my own place within the next month! (WOOHOO! As Homer Simpson would say.) So I patiently wait with crossed fingers.

This proves to me that things go around in circles. Things go from good to bad, but eventually swing back to good again.

Remain positive that things get better, I say. If you truly believe things will surely go your way – as they are for me!

Life stories

by Susan

This story was written by Susan over a series of weeks

Week 1

I began my life as a normal kid. I was an honors student and an athlete. I went to school (kindergarten to eighth grade) with the same children. Then we moved to Monroe, where I had to start high school with a bunch of kids I didn't know. I felt out of place, nervous, and insecure. There were two groups of kids--the jocks and the heads. The jocks were into sports. The heads were into drugs. Well, since I was a nervous wreck, I chose the drugs. That was the beginning of the end. I tried every drug and found the ones I felt best on were tranquilizers and opiates. I became an addict and my life has been hell ever since. I am now on methadone to keep me from using and keep me normal.

Week 2

My first story took you from my childhood to adulthood. So now I'm addicted to methadone and klonopin. But I get them legally. Before, I would obtain my drugs illegally (by calling in fake prescriptions). I got caught after two years and got sent to prison for two years (NIANTIC, the only women's prison in Connecticut). It was horrible. I saw things I will never forget. Most of the people were in there for drugs but there were some in there for violent crimes—murder, stabbings, arson, baby abuse, etc. My cellmate was in for murder! She was a drug dealer and one of her workers (sellers) stole \$300 dollars from her, so she had him shot and he died! Over \$300 dollars!! Then another girl was in for two counts of murder for hiring a 15-year-old. He was supposed to light the house on fire when no one was home. She paid with a five dollar bag of pot. But he did it at a time when everyone was home. Everyone got out except for a pregnant woman. She died and the girl who hired the 15-year-old (who told the cops everything) got twenty years for two counts of murder.

After I got out of prison, I went to a drug program for 18 months. While I was there, I did several life changing things. I learned how to function without drugs because even when I was in prison, I was able to obtain drugs and continued to get high. Not in the drug program though. The drug program was called EDON house, which stood for End Dependency On Narcotics. While I was there, I went to speak about my life. From an honors student in a great family, to a drug addict that lived to get high, then to just being sick. I told the truth about everything, hoping to keep even just "one" person from becoming an addict. I felt good when I left the school—very positive.

My personal life started when I finished the program. I got married at age 23 to a very nice looking boy who had everything. We wed and got a small house and he had a good job and I started my own house cleaning business—which did very well. Then I started finding drugs in people's houses that I cleaned. In the kitchen or bathroom or master bedroom. So I started my drug career again and everything fell apart—my marriage, my job, everything I held dear. All I cared about was getting high. So my marriage ended. And I spent the next 10 years doing drugs again. My life was terrible. I did things I would never do if I was straight. I went back to prison and straightened out again. This time I didn't do drugs. I was tired of being sick and tired. I did 20 months and got out. My parents were sick of my crap, so I met a nice guy who had 2 children – 6 and 8 years old. We married, though the mother of the kids was an alcoholic. She told her children it was time their Dad "loved them" and she gave them to us. We were happy and so were the children. A boy – 6 – and a girl – 8. Their mother eventually drank herself to death. The children were upset of course, but we went to therapy as a family and they had counseling one on one. Everyone got over the disaster and went on with our lives. I went out with my younger sister one day and she was getting high. The kids were at Grandma's house, my husband was at work, so I got high again. It ended badly and my husband found out and divorced me. I'll stop here for now and continue next week.

Week 3

After my second marriage ended and I went back to drugs, it was the worst ever!! I started to lose everything by pawning things for drugs, even my car! I traded my Toyota Corolla for heroin and cocaine. I kept moving around from place to place -- sister's, friends', boyfriend's. Then I met a man who was in a group with me (about drugs). I became suicidal and slit my wrists, and received seven internal stitches and seven external stitches, but I survived. I still had the relationship with the man I had met who eventually became husband number three!! My life has been one chapter after another until I hit rock bottom. I went back on methadone and have been clean ever since. My husband is also on it so we ended up marrying, we're still married – eleven years. It's been rough but I often give up on men so I'll just wait this one out. I will not go back to doing drugs illegally. I'm now 58 years old and started smoking pot and doing acid at twelve years old. So I just took off from my teen years until 11 years ago.

My mind used to be so sharp. I was an honors student. Now I tell people I am a senile citizen. I hope my health gets better because I have had two heart attacks—first one at age 40, second one at age 45. Then at age 56, I went into a diabetic coma for five days and went blind for three months. Now I'm stable and hopeful. I hope someone can learn from my mistakes. My life could have been so different. I am now homeless and living at Columbus House, waiting for a place to live. It's real, real difficult. I pray whoever reads this will turn their life around before it's too late.

Thanks for listening, and letting me vent. I still have more stories, such as a rape that happened to me while I was cleaning a house to pay off a coke bill. Lots of things like that. I have PTSD from all the bad events in my life. Don't put yourself in these kinds of situations. Again – thank you for letting me talk and tell some of my stories. I truly hope that by telling them I can possibly stop someone from ruining their life.

The dog

by Chris

When we moved into our new home, we had a Brittany Spaniel dog. Her name was Candy, for the markings on her and the colouring of her fur. We were cleaning out the fireplace, and she decided to investigate. She walked inside but couldn't get out. When we figured out where she was, I had to go and get her out. Tried to just open the screen, but she refused to come. Then I had to get a hold of her collar and drag her out. Her coat was full of ashes and soot, and she had to have a bath. We then made her her own little house out of a cardboard box. We would tell her to get into her house and wait 'til we got back. If she was a good girl when we got home, she would receive some "GGCs" which stood for Good Girl Cookies. She would wait patiently for those.

My father decided to give her a little beer one summer day, and she got drunk. Then all she ever got was some coffee on a plate and that was just for her with a doughnut. We would ask her if she wanted to go get "Daddy," and she would jump in the front seat and wait. She wore the seatbelt and sat up proper in the seat. The only time you would hear her was when we came to a red light. She would start to bark and whine when the car was stopped. Other than that, she was a quiet passenger. She thought she was the cat's meow on those trips. That same year, my brother and I were told to get some wood for the fireplace. The dog came as well. She loved playing with the snow while we dragged over the logs. We happened to find a really big one and brought that into the house so my dad could burn it. This just about fit in the fireplace. We got yelled at for it but it was fun anyway.

Those were good times to remember of years gone by.



Mourning

by Kathy

I became homeless a year ago. The man I lived with, I didn't marry. He was a veteran and he passed on from cancer. I was with him fourteen years, through good times and bad... but mostly abusive. I didn't ask anything from family; I did it all on my own. Because of my health, I was diagnosed with severe depression and PTSD. Did everything I was supposed to, got my social security and now I'm trying to get housing.

He was in Connecticut. I lived in Tennessee... eight months homeless there but I came back because most of my family is here, and my son had started getting really sick.

I just lost my son on September 19th. He passed from complications of a lot of things... he had liver disease. He was in and out of the hospital three times; the third time he never came out. They think I have heart disease, one thinks I'm really sick. I don't know what's going on. I've seen four different specialists, and they don't know what's going on.

My son's last twenty-one days were in the hospital; he went in August 21st. His liver and kidneys failed. He didn't get any better.

It's only October 4th. It's like I'm in a bad dream and that when I wake up, it won't be reality... But it is, I have to face reality, the fact that he's gone. He was my only child, I love him dearly and I miss him dearly. He was a good person but I feel like God has a reason for everything. I guess God wanted him.

I try not to pity myself, I try to be strong enough to say this is what's gotta be done. The saying is, if you're not strong enough for yourself... Losing my best friend ever, my son.

I became homeless because I didn't marry the man... I should've demanded but I was too easygoing.

I'm looking for my own place. I found a place in Milford, about twelve miles outside of New Haven. I grew up in New Haven with my parents. Been to Los Angeles, Burbank, Anaheim, Hawaii... my father was the Connecticut state lottery winner in 1978, February 9th. We had a blizzard that year but we made it up to the place. My father won \$50,000 so I got to go to Hawaii and California; my

mom's family lived in LA. Been to Florida, lived in Tennessee for three years. I love Tennessee.

The veteran was a smoker and he smoked cigarettes. I never got on with his older son. It was all about money... when his father passed, he told me, "You didn't marry my father. Get out."

I took my pride; I didn't marry him. I went up to Maine to be with my family for a while.

I came to New Haven August 16th of last year. I thought maybe my son's illness would reverse itself. The doctors told him it was serious and he was too far gone.

I'm trying to cope... trying to decide whether or not to move on... the only sibling I have left is my sister... all my immediate family has passed on. Two special people that were in my life are gone... I have some nieces here and my granddaughter. She's seventeen, she lives in New Haven. My son passed on young... he was only 33. Left a seventeen-year-old daughter and a thirteen-year-old son. She's just starting her life. As far as I know, she's a good girl and she's in school. She loves school and she works part time. I just hope she stays that way but I'm a little worried, because she got emancipated from her mom. I don't understand the details... she said it was getting out of control and she didn't want to live with her mom no more. She's living with her boyfriend and his family. What I hear is, she's too sweet, too easygoing. She's paying the woman eighty dollars a week to live there... I know she's supposed to learn responsibility but I don't want the woman to take advantage of her. I was gonna see if I could get my own place, if she could come and live with me. It's not easy. I'm tired of shelter life.

My son was very close with his father. His father completely lost it when he died. His father and I have actually become closer since his death.

He always called me every morning... it's like I'm still waiting for that phone call.

Blindness in '95

by Gary

March 28th, 1995. I'll never forget that date. Why? Because I got punched in the eye with a stick in Old Saybrook. I don't even know his name, as I blocked him out of my memory. We weren't friends to begin with. It kind of started over, you know, my town is tougher than your town, just to see who's tougher. There were four of us in the car, and only one of him. The dumb, drunk idiot that I was, I stepped out of the car after he taunted us. My friends stayed in the car because four on one is not very noble. I yelled do you have a problem? He then punched me. There must have been some sort of stick between his knuckles that hit me. I didn't punch him, but I said I'd be back in a week to get him back! My friends came out of the car and saw the stick sticking out of my right eye. One of my friends picked the stick out of my eye, and all I saw was a stream of blood. I felt like I got kicked with a steel-toed boot, so I went to the Yale-New Haven hospital. I blacked out on the way, and lost a lot of blood.

All I remember is waking up in the hospital with a patch and disposable stitches on my eye. But instead of waiting to be released, I decided to leave the hospital before they fixed it (because I told you I promised to get him back, and I did). He destroyed my eye badly though. I still get headaches and migraines above my eye today, giving me pain. Now, my eyes are two different colors – one grey and one blue.



Getting better

by Maychris

First I would like to start off by saying that I'm grateful for you giving me this time to write my feelings and thoughts down on paper. I was raised in low-income housing. My mother used to drink too much. But she always made sure she took care of the house and kids. We always had food, clothes, shoes and more. Thanksgiving and Christmas were always great.

I started using drugs at a young age, I went from smoking weed to putting cocaine up my nose to smoking cocaine. For many years. I decided to turn my life over to God, he has been real good to me. I had to complete my outpatient programs. Now I go to school to get my GED.

I truly believe that things are working out for me. I live in the Columbus House seeking housing somewhere that I can get a better hold of myself with my high power. Please pray for me and my family. Amen.

Childhood

by Jennifer

As a child, one needs love and structure. For me, it was anything but. I grew up without my mother, not because she had died, but because she was not ready to be a mom. I was raised by my father and grandfather. I had a good childhood, despite my mother not being there. I don't have any relationship with my mother, but I have an awesome one with my father. I now have two beautiful daughters of my own, they're 4½ years and 2 years old. I love them both with all my heart. I could never imagine leaving their side. My boyfriend is very accepting of me and both my daughters even though they are not his. I can only hope and try to be the best mom I can.

Life is a struggle

anonymous

Life is hard
Life is simple
Life is unique
Life is a blessing
Life is good sometimes and
Sometimes bad.
Life is good sometimes and
Sometimes bad.
Life gets hard especially when
You got no one to see you through, but
Most of all life is worth it.
Life is like a long journey. You
Don't know where it takes you, but after all, life
Is just about living. Life is life.

I'm from New Haven

by Michael

I'm homeless and I'm trying to get housing and I can't. I don't meet the criteria because being in prison is considered housing. I just got out in June and I have to be homeless on the street for a year before I can get housing, which is crazy. So I don't know what to do. I lost my apartment and everything when I went to prison three years ago. There's only two shelters. The Columbus House and Grand Avenue Columbus House are the ones that got me housing three years ago. Now I don't meet the criteria. I tried everything, everybody just about. There are a lot of empty buildings in New Haven where they could open up other shelters for people so they can help more people, but they don't want to. No one cares, it's all politics. The shelters are so crowded they can't help everyone. I'm trying to get a hold of Rosa Delauro to tell her my situation. It's just crazy that I can't get the help that I need. I get limited income from SSI disability so I need help from a program that will help me with some of my rent. I leave the program that I'm in, Project Moore on Grand Avenue, in nine days and I don't know what to do or where to go because I don't meet the criteria. I just keep praying every day for some kind of help to help me get back on my feet again. I just want to get back my apartment again, I need all the help I can get.

Broken home

anonymous

I was living in a 3-family home for fifteen years and was given very short notice that the landlord was making the house a rooming house for university students. So at this time I was forced to move. It has been a very difficult transition. Currently I am residing at the Columbus House. It's definitely been an experience. For me it has been extremely hard to believe you could be living somewhere all set up and, in the blink of an eye, everything must be replaced. I still can't believe they were able to do this to any tenant on such short notice.

What's been even more amazing is the reaction from your own friends when you're living in a shelter. Knowing friends in every city and growing up with them and then, now, living in a shelter has been traumatizing. You get one life; most of it is hoped to be spent with friends so being here with strangers and going through the most terrifying experience has changed me a bit. I thought I would end up with a true friend who I could live with and share with so that I wouldn't end up in a sort of bad situation. I now have to get another apartment and replace everything, and along the way rethink my importance to certain people. I'm dealing with my hurts, and not understanding why I did not receive a warm welcome when my friends knew that I was going through such a difficult time. And this is why my life was altered.

It's surprising that not a single friend offered space to me because it seems like every single one of them is living in someone else's house. But, when I had to get an apartment, no one offered anything – nothing. Not a ride, no company over to the house, no holidays together. I have always been independent and have had a beautiful place and beautiful things. It will take a while for me to recover from being separated from almost all of that. I hope for the best next year.

Untitled

by Tina

I came to New Haven a few years ago. Looking for a better place to live. I got away from so many things that were going on in my life when I was living down South. All of my kids had grown up so I decided to take me a trip and ended up here.

I grew up in Lumberton, North Carolina, and then moved to Whiteville, North Carolina. I went to school, and I quit in the tenth grade. I wish I could've went back and finished. But you know, we all make mistakes.

Now I live in the Columbus House, and they have been a great help to me, looking for housing and many other programs. We leave at 5:30 in the morning, and at 3 or 4 o'clock we come back in. I have a case manager and see her Wednesdays. Hopefully I'll get my apartment voucher soon, end of October, maybe November—Amen, God is good. That's good because my children can come and see me all they want. I have five kids: one daughter and four boys. I have one son that lives up here with me, Kevin. He's 36 years old. I go to visit him three times a week. I love my son and miss my other kids.

I'm just happy I got four grandchildren by my daughter. I pray for them everyday, my grandchildren...everyday, everyday. I'm just looking to get my place. May God be with me. I can sit in the apartment and say my prayers. I have free time with the Lord and myself—I can pray how I want.

I go to church every Sunday...every Sunday I get saved. Jesus is coming back and I want to go with him. I tell my children, gotta go with him, gotta get yourself together. That's what I tell them.

Amen.

Real friends

anonymous

I was sitting in my apartment on my couch and a knock came at the door telling me that my landlord, Mary, is turning my home into a rooming house for UNH students. In another month, I'll have to get a moving truck and pack five rooms of furniture. At that moment, I was shocked. It would be more ideal if I went to a friend's house but the only option was to temporarily stay in New Haven. I hoped my friends would be open to having a new guest.

I learned—not many will let you reside with them or understand your need during a time of loss and devastation. The most difficult thing about this situation wasn't that it was completely unplanned, but it was that no person's decision should be able to completely alter your life. If you are lucky, you meet that person and you know it immediately.

This has been difficult, having to lose so much so fast. I had been very proud of what I had done for myself. For my landlord to wash it away with such short notice, I must say, was a life changing experience. You certainly find out who your real friends are when you become homeless.

Today is tomorrow for me

by Gregory

My trouble began when I was born around trouble. I tried my best to do good but my kindness became my weakness. Oh well, the damage is done, and I still wonder when will the good stay good and I pass through the damage of me.

Money is evil, because I don't know how to control it. At the same time I enjoy it, doing the wrong thing... but wanting to fight to do the right thing.

Money is my damage control. When it's in my pocket, I'm doing the wrong thing, but I can do the right thing too.

I, by myself, am ok, but around people, I'm damaging to myself because I'm giving money away.

I'm inside of a circle I can't get out of but still will try. Trying is harder for me. And I know it.

Housing

anonymous

I was residing in my home/apartment that I had rented for 15 years when my landlord decided she wanted to make a three family home into a rooming house for UNH students.

On short notice I was left homeless. Recently, I have been residing somewhere temporarily. This has been a very—peculiar situation and process.

I hope to be reunited with a friend and possibly reside with them.

When it happened, I was sitting in my apartment on my couch, and a knock came at the door telling me Mary was turning the owners' two houses and this property, a three family home, into a rooming house for UNH students. I had month to get a moving truck and pack 5 rooms of furniture. All I felt then was surprised. It would have been more ideal if I had gone to a friends house the same as my place but at that time— the only option was to temporarily reside in New Haven. So, I hope my friends will be open to having a guest. This has been difficult having to lose so much so fast. I was very proud of what I did for myself. For my landlord to wash it out with short notice. I must say this is definitely a life changing experience. You certainly truly find out who your real friends are when you become homeless.

What I learned—not many will let you reside with them or understand the necessity at a time of loss and devastating news. What's been most difficult about this situation is it was not only unplanned and short notice but also does not have any similarity whatsoever to the kinda lifestyle I was living. While this is temporary, one person's decision can alter your life. Or, one person's decision can create and make a person's life complete without having to speak of it. If you are lucky you meet that person and you know it immediately.

Homelessness

by Lisa

Homelessness knows no age, religion, or social status. It can strike at any given time. It strips the very essence and soul of you. Your motivation is gone. It's hard to get out of the situation once you're in it. Working might not be the best option—homeless people have less trust for others and may be uncomfortable with social interaction. However, when it comes to survival, we are the strongest. People who have been fed their entire life wouldn't know how to survive in a time of crisis by themselves, without friends and families, without any support at all.

Living among other people in a shelter is difficult. You don't know the person living next door. People may have feelings about you or harm you. People here are so frustrated that they are often in a combative mood. Sometimes you can find like-minded people who have gone through similar experiences. But a shelter is only temporary. When they leave, you feel kind of abandoned. People living in a shelter need comfort just like any other people. They need to be respected, not to be dominated. They are already broken, so if someone adds on to that sentiment, they feel worthless to society.

A shelter is not a place for trust. You can't afford to rely on people's genuineness. They have hidden agenda. They steal food from the cabinet. They have no regard for nobody.

My dad is a navy vet. I'm a military baby. I live for the day. Every meal that comes in this door is a blessing, especially if it's a hot meal. It's a dog-eat-dog world. You get it and you get it now. You fight for yourself. No one else has the time or energy to fight for you. You fight for you and only you.

Politicians need to get more involved with the issue of homelessness. They make us believe that they have our backs, but they do nothing. They send voter registration cars over and want homeless people to vote. Yet they don't give money to get people out of the streets. I've never heard politicians addressing homelessness. They don't hear from us yet they want us to vote. This is unfair.

Everybody deserves a good place to live. Solving the problem of homelessness not only helps the people on the streets themselves, but benefits the country as a whole. The country can profit from the tax that the homeless people pay once they get decent jobs.

The Homeless Man

a series by Tim

Part 1

I got through another week. The weekends are the worst time for me, and for many of the homeless. I've heard many stories of people's lives. It's heartbreaking. I've met some friends who are supportive, some who aren't, you have to be cautious. It's everyone for themselves. I'm thankful for the Fellowship Place and its staff. It's a great place for the homeless to go. I thank the Lord for his grace to get me through another week.

Part 2

The winter will be upon the homeless soon. I hope I'll be able to get through it. My only hope is the Lord. I've learned very hard lessons being homeless. My stepfather told me many times when he was alive... This too will pass. I must believe it.

My stepfather was a kind, sensitive man. He took into his home many foster children, him and his wife cared, and loved them very much... loved us. I thank God he was a big part of my life. I must believe this too will pass.

Part 3

Thanksgiving day was a beautiful day. My three friends from the shelter and I went to Christopher Martin's for Thanksgiving dinner. We arrived at the restaurant at 7:30am and waited 3 and a half an hour to get in. They had a massive amount of clothes, and shoes for those in need. The dinner was great. My friends and I had a good time. I thought Thanksgiving was going to be boring but it wasn't. My friends and I had a good day.

After our meal, Carl, Greg, the Kid, and myself walked downtown to the New Haven Green. When we arrived we sat on benches near the corner of Church and Chapel streets. There were a group of people handing out hats, and other items. While we waited for the bus to take us back to the shelter, several more vehicles pulled up to hand out food. There's a saying: the homeless doesn't starve. In New Haven it's true.

God was watching

by Linda

It was a rainy Sunday and I was unusually depressed. Not for any real reason, I was just down. I was so tired, tired of people, tired of my circumstances, tired of life in general.

So I had this idea: "What if I just walk out into the traffic?" I didn't think about it for long. I drank four shots of Stoli, closed my eyes, and stepped off the curb. I heard a horn blow. But I didn't care, I wanted to die. That was until I heard a voice yelling at me that said: "Linda! Get your fuckin' ass in this van!"

I knew the voice immediately. It was my best friend of 20 years, Cliff.

I got in the fuckin' van and he saved my life that day. God was watching me even when my eyes were closed.

The lives of struggles

a series by Robert

Part 3

This is part three of the lives of the struggles of Robert. I have been living in the Columbus House for about six months now. I've learnt the lives of people – different nationalities and race, the good and the bad of people. To keep myself focused, I focus on myself. I've learnt that everything is not roses like people think it is. I just go forward. Today, I am about three weeks away from getting my own apartment thanks to God and prayers. I am looking forward to getting that key and opening that door and closing it and locking it and dropping to my knees and saying, "Thank you Jesus." This day forward is a new beginning of the life of struggles. I am looking forward to keeping my goals straight, focusing on God and myself. In Jesus' name, amen.

continued from previous issue

Part 4

This is part four of my life of struggles. I'm looking forward to my own place and enjoying life every day. Now I can enjoy my grandkids and my family. I'm looking to help others in their life of struggles. Keep your head up and walk with God. Pray with him and others every day.

The cost of freedom

Per diem friends

by TG

I paid a lot for freedom. This liberty didn't come cheap. We paid with 16 hour workdays at jobs that have no 401Ks.

I paid with the hours that I spent in the DMV lines and voting lines just to get more fines. Freedom isn't free. We paid with our moral fiber and family values. Choices aren't made. They are forced between party lines when I must choose between the lesser of two evils and believe that two devils can represent me. Victory isn't won when the race is fixed. Racism doesn't truly exist when the colors are mixed. Freedom isn't free. We buy our freedom in bottles and capsules and trade in our bravery for cowardly suicide bombings and blame all of the terror on the National Rifle Association instead of realizing that we have become an unsaved nation. Freedom doesn't equal equality. Freedom isn't in this democracy. Freedom is only free for those who work for it.

I waited on the platform
Watching the seasons change.
How warm weather friends
Turned lukewarm and then chilly.
Understanding the meaning of
Fair weather.
How emotions are as fickle
As the wind.
Rising and falling
Like waves on an ocean shore
And as unpredictable
As the flow of currents.
Dragging a piece of drift
Wood to its newest location.
Relationships caught in tidal wave.
Never stagnant. Changed. Ruined. Drying.
To bring forth new life and new
Beginnings.



Thanks for reading!

