
elm city echo

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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.

Editors Madeline Batt, Sophie Neely

Site Leaders Eliana Swerdlow, Theo Elliman

Vendor Coordinator Laila Bendrai, Lucy Liu

Volunteers Bella Gamboa, Jess Powell, James Wedgwood, Charlotte Young

Designer Quinn Lewis

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letter from the editors

Dear New Haven,

Welcome to the Spring 2019 issue of Elm City Echo! We are so excited that you took the bold step of buying a copy-- maybe at the junction of High and Chapel Streets, on the Green, or another corner of New Haven entirely. In any case, thank you for your thoughtful and much-appreciated contribution to alleviating homelessness in our community.

What is Elm City Echo? The Echo is a street periodical that showcases the work of those experiencing homelessness in New Haven. Our job as editors is to facilitate the writing process for those who choose to share their stories, compiling their pieces biannually to be sold and distributed by homeless and housing-insecure vendors in the New Haven area.

The sixteenth issue since our founding in 2011, this particular edition of the Echo grapples with family, romance, tragedy,

addiction, incarceration and spirituality, through the mediums of personal essay, poetry, fiction and visual art. In "The Streets I Roam," Xavier gives a rhythm to the twists and turns of homelessness. Equally vibrant, imaginative pieces like "Communing with the Wind" by Cedric illuminate a more poetic perspective of the world. Reflecting on past life experiences, Dan's "Motivation Speaks" teaches us to sustain a positive attitude and spirit of adventure despite tragedy, pushing forward much like the protagonist of "At the Window's Edge" by Kevin. On the other hand, more light-hearted pieces like "At the Cocktail Party" by Harry remind us that sometimes, life's challenges allow us to be a little more creative and a little more fun.

You may be wondering how the name of our periodical fits into the picture. When New Haven first became a colony in the seventeenth century, it was one of the earliest models of city planning, featuring

nine squares with one set aside for public use, the New Haven Green. There, elm trees were planted as a gift to the local pastor, and today in 2019, elms still stand in the Green, a public space where all are free to gather, regardless of gender, ability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, housing status, and racial or ethnic identity. Like the Green, the Echo is a place where all readers are welcome, and like the elms, the Echo is intended as a gift and an act of reciprocity: the sharing of these writers' words, coupled with your act of reading them. So once again, thank you for being here and supporting the Echo as an act of generosity, a gesture of goodwill, a symbol of hopeful new beginnings, and most of all, an expression of community.

Yours,

Madeline Batt & Sophie Neely
Editors-in-Chief

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where your money goes



75% to our vendors

25% for printing

When you buy the Elm City Echo, 75% of the price 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.

love & family

Baby Girls

Gladynel

I've got two daughters; one is Dayana. She's five years old, and she lives with her grandmother. I just lost her three years ago. I think a lot about my daughter, and I want my life to get better for her. She's got a sister, sixteen years old, but she's never met her, because the older sister waited for me in Florida. My older daughter is a good girl, but I have a problem, because I don't have a place for my two daughters. I want to see my daughters. I want to do everything for them. I want to see her happy. I miss my daughter, and I want to see her.

But I've got a problem because I'm addicted. I'm a good mother, and I've tried to get bet-

ter, but I've had bad luck in my relationships. I am a good person. I like to help people, and I like helping the people who have hurt me. I don't care what they did to me in the past — I forgive them.

I've got a lot of medical conditions, but I'm a happy woman. I pray to God that everything comes back together to me in a good way, because I'm suffering a lot. I'm scared sometimes, because I don't want to relapse again. And I pray that by the end of this year, by Christmas, I can see my daughters and give them the gifts I've held for a long time and have never given them.

My Son

Pamela

His name is Edward, and in my eyes, he was perfect.

Only one problem: he was a junkie from the age of 17 to his death at 32.
He was my son, my last child born in 1984. Lived till 2017.

Heroin was his choice of drug, and fentanyl took him out.
The world lost a very creative person when Eddie left.
In my eyes, he does not even know he's gone.

It was instant.

No pain, and he was gone in seconds.

That's how fentanyl takes you.

The only people who suffer are the people he left behind:

me
his father
siblings
other family members
friends.

This drug robs you and your family of life, happiness and love.
I will miss him every day for the rest of my life.
My baby, Eddie.

The Deceased, My Husband

Zuri, *translated by Luca*

When her husband died in New Haven, he was in a motorcycle accident.
He died instantly. She was in the funeral home on the day they buried her husband

She stayed with her sister-in-law, who threw her out in the street after three days. After that, she went to the brother-in-law, and she slept there three days until she couldn't sleep there anymore because of the operation in her shoulder. She came to do the interview at Columbus House and was accepted. When she came, I [Luca] adopted her-- she got a good family that cares about her. She's also got a boyfriend who's good to her. Even though her boyfriend got his own place, she wants to do her own stuff, get her own place. So far everything is working out.

This Is a Story That Will Blow Your Mind

Raymond

This is a story that will blow your mind.

Here is a story about two people who fell in love. The woman's name is Danielle, and the man's name is Raymond. These two people met over 20 years ago in a small town called Milford. In this small town, they would take walks around the duck pond, and they would talk about their future and get to know each other. They dated for about 10 years. During that time, the two fell deeply in love. They cared for each other so much that they decided to get married. So they set a date to get married. After about 2 years of marriage, they were going to have a baby. Danielle got the good news that she was going to have a baby. So she went right home to tell her husband, Raymond. When Raymond heard the good news, he was so happy that his eyes started to tear up. He told Danielle that this baby girl was the most important thing to him, so much so that he would rather not go to work that day. He would take Danielle out to buy a crib for the new baby.

After the baby came, they decided to name her Mariah Rose. Mariah was the best baby. She never cried or made a fuss. As she got older, Danielle and Ray decided to have another child, because it was going so well with Mariah. So when Mariah was five years old, Danielle and Raymond had another baby and she was a girl. When the baby was born, Danielle and Ray told Mariah that she would be able to give the new baby her name. So out of six different names, Mariah chose the name, Jordan Emea. When Jordan was born, Raymond told Danielle that these children and her were the most important thing in the world next to breathing. Raymond would give his life for them.

For about four more years, the road was very bumpy. A lot of hard times fell on Ray and Danielle. Danielle had gotten sick with a tumor in her brain. The tumor was making her go blind.

Danielle got very upset with this news from the doctor. They wanted to operate on the tumor but before they operated, they couldn't tell Danielle and Raymond if she was going to get better or if it was going to get worse. Because of where the tumor is in her brain, she could lose her sight forever when they take it out. Danielle was not happy with that at all. She was not going to go through with the operation if that meant she would lose her sight. So it is an ongoing battle to this day.

I, Raymond, want to say one thing about this: I don't agree with Danielle's decision. I think that no matter what the change is of her losing her sight forever, she should still go through with the operation because she has a better chance of living longer. Even if she can't see, she can still love and live for every day and have a good life with her kids and family. She is a very loving person and never deserves this to happen to her. So I will spend the rest of my life trying to get through this. With all of the help we receive now from the Columbus House and the doctors, I know things will get better. And to believe in God is always a good help.

Back to our children and DCF: two years ago, DCF came to knock on our apartment door with three policemen, which was a big surprise to us. I called Danielle on the phone to tell her what was going on. She asked me to have the people from DCF and the police please wait for her to get home. But they didn't wait. They came into our home and told our kids that they were taking them away from their Mom and Dad, and told me to get the kids' clothes ready to go. So the girls started to cry and scream very loudly. They didn't want to let me go, but the cops told me that if I didn't give my girls to them, I would be arrested and go to jail. I didn't want my girls to see that happen to me so DCF stole them from us. Then our lives fell apart.

My Best Friend and I

Bernadette

Every time I write something, it's usually about the bad times. This time, I'm finally going to write about the good.

My best friend Eileen and I had such good times growing up as kids. I played baseball, and I loved it. I played third base — well, all over. Shortstop, second, and I even played in high school. I was good, and so was she. We also played basketball, and I was good. I was good at all sports. We always played — we were tomboys, but we also played with dolls, Barbies.

We shared everything. Our mothers were always together, and we lived next-door to each other. I really miss my childhood. And my brother had horses — that was our passion. I love it. I rode English and Western, and I have a trophy for English jumping. We used to take care of the horses. I can remember, when we fell off, Eileen and I, I landed right on my back. I couldn't move for a minute, but we got up and started going after the horse. We were way behind it, and we lost it. But, thank God, he ran back to the stables! I was scared to tell my brother, thinking he was going to yell at me, but he didn't. He just laughed. I don't know what or how I would feel if I could go riding now. For sure if I did, it would feel like I was at the gym for three days working on my muscles!

“Every time I write something, it's usually about the bad times. This time, I'm finally going to write about the good.”

life story

Apartment

Gisela

I'm homeless because I lost my apartment because of stupidity. I regret losing my apartment; I can't let it happen to me again.

I had a good life. I worked with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and had odd jobs here and there. I've been a widow since I was twenty-one, and my husband left me good. I have four good children and nine grandchildren. The oldest of my grandchildren is 23, and the youngest is 10. I raised two of them, and they're crazy about me. I have a son in the army; he's been in sixteen or seventeen years.

I've learned a lot here at Columbus House, because you live with different people, different cultures, different rules. I have goals. I want to stay clean, and I want to live in tranquility. I don't want no problems.

I love music, like salsa: Tony Vega, Tito Rojas, Victor Manuelle, etc. I love to dance salsa; I learn quick. I watch people, and I can pick it up quick. You know it's funny-- my father taught me and my brother and sister how to dance, and I taught my kids, and they taught their kids. I listen to salsa to relax and forget about things. Really and truly, it helps. It's a tough life, but the strong survive.

A Woman Raised Three Foster Kids

Ida

We're going to write this story about my foster kid. I have three foster kids, one named Alice. She was the first one. Later, I took her brother, Ken; I raised their mother, Mimi, and their father, Jake. They were teenagers when they had these babies.

In 1989, I took in another. Lucille Bowers,* my cousin's daughter. These kids are already late 30s, grown. These foster kids came between my husband, Robert Wilson,* and me. He had been in the army. He does volunteer work at the food bank now for the vets, but we're separated. These three foster kids came between us.

I don't live with him, because he was messing around with women. One of these women had hepatitis. He didn't want the VA to tell me what was wrong with him, but I wanted to know, because he's my husband.

In 2017, he got a Facebook put on his phone, so I asked him who was the person who helped, how did you get a Facebook? He couldn't have gotten it on his own. He said that I was lying. Two weeks later, I found out that he was messing around with a woman I thought was my best friend; she was the one with hepatitis. A few weeks later, I heard about another one. I played spades with her, every Thursday.

I found out later, in the hospital in 2018, there was another woman — she talked about messing around with my husband at my uncle's house.

This is how I got in here [Columbus House]. I was so upset I jumped on him in April 2017. The day he got Facebook, I'd been to the doctor and got cortisone in my back. I asked him to help me take a bath because I'm disabled. He left the house and didn't come back until later. So I jumped on him and choked him.

In February, he got money from the scratch. My daughters came and called me a bitch, whore, everything. One of the daughters, Lucille, married a boy who is a molester. She didn't bring her baby anymore to see me. She and the other daughter came the next day — I told her, you gotta go home and take care of your daughter because of your boyfriend.

My husband had left when it was raining. He leaves with the daughters and comes back later. He says that I put him out. That's when I turned around and patted my bottom at him.

He gave them money to get their hair and nails done,

but not my teeth. But I'm not doing bad by myself. I have a place to rest my head, eat food, and take a bath every day, and that's not too bad.

I'm paying for a babysitter, \$350 a month, to watch my dog, because my dog saved my life when I fell in the flood. That's my baby. We were going to live under the bridge.

Robert and I were going to work on getting our marriage back together, but he listened to everything the kids said: "Talk to the VA, and they'll put your money somewhere she can't get to it; they'll help you."

He got money and sent it to his brother in South Carolina so I couldn't get to it. We have government lawyers now. Let the government fight for me and for him. I have proof that he abused me for years. I can't take it no more.

I left my number with his brother and sister, but he never got in touch. I went to the food bank today, but I didn't want him to know my address. I have an aunt that takes care of me. I have friends that help take care of me. My clothes being washed — there's a guy here, he's a nice friend, and he does my laundry and pays for it. I have to borrow money to pay for my meds, I have to pay here every month, but I also have to pay back the people who helped me pay for my meds.

I don't go nowhere because if I go somewhere or run into Lucille and her husband, and her babies come up to me — if they call me grandma — they'll spank those babies so hard their feet will fall out from under them.

They broke up my marriage, and my husband should realize that the Bible says that man and wife are one, not one plus foster kids. Until he goes to church and learns that, I don't want to be with him until he realizes we are husband and wife.

Everything is in the Wilson name in the South. He said the government can't find out about him, but I know better. He lived with me for fifty some years and claims he doesn't have to pay rent, because the army doesn't want him to. That's why I don't have my Section Eight, because Lucille kept that house so nasty that coffee stuck to the floor. It was enough for me to be evicted. I was evicted twice because of her. She's nasty.

*Note: Lucille's and Robert's names (and all the names in the first paragraph) are pseudonyms, at Ida's request.

The Story of Candi the Escort

Danita

I never thought I would do any of the things I never said I would. But, one day, I met this guy who lived in Hamden at Dixwell Avenue. To put it simply, it led to the worst mistake and experience I ever made. I slept with men to support myself. At the same time, I supported his and my drug addiction. At times, I guess, I got used to it. Then, it got really dangerous because all the money I made went to drugs—not food. He was the type that didn't have to work. He was disabled, but not so disabled that he couldn't make plenty of drug deals. He didn't have to worry about getting anything.

He acted like he fell in love with me, but I found out that it was all a lie. He only loved me because I was making enough money to purchase his and my own drugs. He started threatening me with his dealers. He said that if I tried to leave, he would have them hunt me down and put me in the trunk of their car and take me somewhere and dismember my body. I was very scared to leave. He would take all of my money, even when I didn't want to give it up. I wanted to just run away from him, but I didn't know anyone from here since I'm not from Connecticut. So, that made it much worse.

One night, I was very tired of seeing customers. So, I laid down to rest, and he started yelling at me. He told me to get up to make more money, which I had already done that day. We started arguing, and he started hitting me in my stomach, where I had been cut up from past surgeries. I was so scared. I thought I was going to pass out, because I've always been very sick with anxiety, depression, high blood pressure, and stomach issues. Finally, I ran out of the house, and I found this bar around the corner from the apartment building. They were so kind to me. They helped me out and called the police and an ambulance. They took me to the hospital, but, unfortunately, the hospital didn't do anything except keep me there for a few hours. They gave me a paper with 211 phone numbers. I couldn't think of anywhere to go. Then, my niece popped up in my head, so I went there in West Haven, Connecticut on Campbell Avenue. She let me in and helped me, and she called some places for me. Thank God I ended up in Columbus House. There really is a God up above.

Being in the Columbus House has been a great experience for me. One day, I was thinking about going outside to smoke a cigarette, and when I did, I met this person who told me about adult education. I took it upon myself to check it out. The next day, I went, and now I'm going there, and I'm enrolled in the GED classes. In March, I will be starting my CNA class.

God is always on time. You just need to have faith in Him, pray, and always believe in Him. He will work it out for you. I have a whole lot to put on paper. Really, I can write a book and get paid. But I don't know quite yet. I might think about it. Who knows what the future holds. I hope to write a book.

Where I Am From

Virginia

I was born in Puerto Rico. I came to the United States about forty to fifty years ago. In my childhood, I used to go with four or five of my cousins to the river, where we would play. We were all very close then. We aren't all in touch like we used to be.

I grew up with my two parents and two brothers. I was close with my parents. For her work, my mother cleaned City Hall. My father built beautiful houses. When I was a child, we moved to the city from the country.

I liked living in the country better, because there, I was near the river and my cousins. That river in the country was a small river. We would spend hours there, though—at least two or three hours each time we went.

I wish I could go back to Puerto Rico. Here, in the United States, it is cold, and I have to stay inside all day. Right now, though, I'm planning to go back to Puerto Rico in January or February. I'm so excited, because I will see my cousins. We'll go to the beach together, and they will take me to the store to buy some clothes. I'm hoping to stay in Puerto Rico for about three weeks or the entire month.

Living Life in a Top-sy-Turvy World

Mary Ann

“I feel like I lost my place in the world after the loss of my husband, after only eight months of marriage.”

I am 54 years old, in search of my place in the world. Life has had its ups and downs, struggling with mental illness, addictions, and being homeless. I feel like I lost my place in this world after the loss of my husband, after only eight months of marriage. Since then, the world seems empty but somehow still revolves around me. I feel as if I am waiting to get off the emotional rollercoaster. I walk through life with a smile in hopes of maybe someday having a place of my own. Not to mention, I wait in hopes that one day my prince charming will arrive. :) So if you know where he is, please feel free to inform me.

Leaving Las Vegas

So I lived in Las Vegas for thirty-one years and then I moved to Connecticut. Then I met my daughter's mother and my daughter was born in '99. I had a good job.

So I quit my job, because I felt pressured by my daughter's mother, so I left Connecticut and moved to Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania where I stayed with her and I got me a nice apartment in a senior citizens building, where I received a lot of help. Me and my daughter's mother split maybe about three months after being there.

I looked in the paper, and there was a murder and my daughter's mother was involved. She was seeing a guy two doors down, and the guy's wife came home from work, and he ran out the back of my daughter's mother's house and ran into his house, and his wife seen him, and he killed her.

And my daughter's mother was in fear for her life, and she left everything that night, and she moved to Atlantic City, where I in turn followed her. After her being there for a week, she met a man and her and her five kids moved in with him, and she did not tell me this.

So when I got there, I was on the street.

Then I got involved with some bad people and I moved back to Connecticut. I ended up in the shelter, Columbus House, for eleven weeks. I received disability after four years. I moved out of Columbus House in February 2018 into a three-bedroom apartment with two windows.

When I moved in, everything was fine.

I stayed for seven months and it was the longest seven months of my life. They turned out to be the roommates from hell.

Lots of drugs.

Everybody was doing heroin, fighting, slamming, banging doors.

My medication—I have a nurse that comes to my house seven days a week. I've had multiple panic and anxiety attacks that have sent me to the hospital because of this apartment. I since moved two weeks ago and for now, I am at peace waiting for my own apartment.

“Everyone was doing heroin, fighting, slamming, banging doors.”

Sincerely,
Patrick

Double-edged Sword

DRMC

I've always been around drugs, from selling them in the street, but I never did anything like heroin or cocaine when I was younger. I just smoked weed and dust, but I guess that's a bad drug. But when I was thirty-one, I got shot, and I had a zipper from when they had to cut me open. The doctor prescribed me to 180 percocets a month; that's six a day. And then they just took them from me cold turkey, because I smoked some dust and had it in my system. So then I started using heroin, because the effect is the same, and that would take away the sickness and the pain, because that's what happens when you don't get it in the morning. This is why drug addiction is like a double-edged sword, because you wake up sick when you don't have it. So now I have to go to the Apt Foundation every morning. They give you methadone so you don't wake up sick, and you'll be normal. I've been going there for a year or two, but I had a relapse and stopped going. But now I'm back, and I've been going six months.

Getting Back on My Feet

Anthony

My name is Anthony. I was born in New Haven, Connecticut. I grew up in a normal Italian Catholic family. My parents escaped World War II, and they came to America, where they had me and my brother. In high school, I was into powerlifting, and I liked history, law, and criminology. I never did drugs in high school.

When I turned twenty-three, I met a girl on the Internet. Her name was Amber. She was from New Mexico. At the time, I was working armed security and going to Housatonic Community College.

I took some time off and visited Amber in New Mexico. We fell in love. We dated a year. We were in a long-distance relationship. Then, I moved down there. I got my CDL and started driving trucks. She didn't like me being away from home. So, I took a test for corrections and passed it. I became a corrections officer for Valencia prison in New Mexico. We got married.

Then, she got her master's degree in special education, from University of New Mexico. She started working, and I was working. Things were going well. On November 25, 2006—Thanksgiving—she died of an overdose of medication. It was accidental.

I came back to New Haven. Two years later, my

father died. After, I was in a motorcycle accident, and I shattered my leg. One year later, on December 25, 2008, my mother died from a heart attack. I was alone, but the deaths left me money—about \$75,000.

I went to culinary school to become a chef. Being on pain medication for my leg, I did pretty good cooking. I worked at the New Haven Lawn Club for twenty years. So now we are at 2013, when I started really getting with pills. In 2014, I lost my job, because I got high at work.

When that happened, I went back to driving and armed security. I got help and got on methadone.

When the government found out I was on methadone, they took away my CDL, and I lost my gun permit for doing the right thing and getting off drugs. I lost all my money in the bank. I had no job. I became homeless. Now, I am dying to find a job and get back on my feet and go to school for pharmacy. Get a job and get back on my feet—that is my goal. I pray to God every day, and I hope I will survive.

Family Ties

Patricia

Two years ago, when I first got into the relationship, I was single and looking for my soulmate. My youngest child is thirty, and my middle girl is thirty-three, and my oldest is forty-two. I have seven grandkids. I was staying with my daughter, helping with my grandkids. I knew it was too good to be true: flowers, out to eat, the movies, the whole nine yards. The year after I moved in with him, that's when things changed.

I came up for domestics; I finally got away from him. I was very scared of him. He used to hit me. I was in a really bad relationship for two years. I finally got away five months ago. I had \$41, just enough to come to New Haven, and that's how I got here.

I was seeking housing, trying to start my life over, find my destiny. I've had a best friend since I was fifteen. She'd been looking for work for me. Five months later, things changed. For some reason, my daughter ended up calling me and said she had a job for me. I hadn't seen her for thirty years. She has a family house, and she wanted me to come down there, for live-in help. It was perfect for me. There's free rent, and she's gonna help me get on my feet. That's my destiny and my blessing. So I'm gonna start my life.

Really, I prefer to play with the kids than the grown-ups. I love my kids, because they love me, because they think I'm a little kid too, 'cause I'm four-foot! Maybe... 'cause the first time I ever had a child, I was fifteen, so I was never really a kid myself. So it's still in me. It's still there.

Celeste's Journey

Celeste

I think my drug journey began when I was 16 years old. Hanging around with people that I really shouldn't have been. Bad people that would later show their stripes. But it would be too late.

It was all started when I lived on Waterbury, doing drugs I wasn't supposed to be doing, and my drugs caught up with me, and I started living in Stony Brook. That was a craziness right there, a bunch of learning things-- so that was pretty good.

After my stay at Stonington sober house, that helped at first. That stay was good. The crew, they were good at first-- then they turned ugly. Not so much to me but to each other. At first, it was fun. The other girls started breaking rules, and I was not into them. I just started getting into it when it was my time to leave. I stayed three months. I had to take my first trip to the psychiatric ward. It is very healing, if you let it help you. So down I went after a while. Then I went to other psychiatrists, which weren't that great, so I went down even further.

After that, I went to North Haven to a sober house. I thought you weren't meant to be at a sober house until you're a drunk. It was me and four other girls. It was OK then, but the four other girls were too much. So they sent us to a shelter. I say "we" because it was me and another girl who went to Columbus House. Now I'm at Rapid Recovery and we're about to be kicked out of my apartment. That's another "we." There's a lot of fill-in-the-blanks.

I'd like to have my own place. Nice house, but I kinda know that's not gonna happen. I think sooner or later, it'll happen. Just got to stay positive, which is kinda hard around this time, because right now I'm trying to get into the Lighthouse.

We're working on getting another apartment, which we're very close to doing. Not just me. Me and someone else.

I feel I have to put one foot before the other. I feel like I need to do this by myself, so I can see if I can do it. Sometimes I think I need help, but stupid ass me doesn't always get help when I need it. That's one thing I gotta learn to do, which is kinda hard for me. I feel

okay right now. I feel like I can pull this off by myself-- some days I feel like I can't, some days I feel like I can-- today I feel like I can.

I have a 29-year-old daughter, who kinda helps me but she's in a deep hole herself. So she helps me when she can, and that's not much, but I understand. Her and her baby's father are constantly at it over the phone. He lives in Hartford, I think, and he always has some way to piss her off, or he does something. And my grandson, Arthur, is 7 years old now and he still wets the bed. I told my daughter he needs to see somebody, cause there's no way he should be wetting the bed at this age. From all the things I've been through, I know I can spot anxiety and stress when I see it.

He's very anxious and rambunctious when he plays at school. He's been sent home a couple of times for being anxious at school. His mother is too busy keeping the home together with the bills. Actually, she needs to be seen by somebody, too. She's got that anxious thing going on too. She takes it out on him and he takes it out on her. I try to calm both of them down, but it just doesn't work because the father is just as bad, if not worse.

He's supposed to give them a certain amount of money each month, and he's been playing around saying he can't do it and this and that, and they're both going crazy. I wasn't there for her for a certain amount of her age. Until seventeen, she stayed with her father. Her father left me to be with a so-called female friend, who lived right next door. When he found out that I was doing drugs, that was an excuse to break up and go with the next-door neighbor. When he left me, he tricked me into signing my rights away, and whoever I tell, they seem to be like, *That's stupid, how could you do that?*

I found out a lot of things by him being almost twenty years older than me. He taught me a lot, including a lot of trickery by him. So after we broke up, the dumbass turned around, and I used a lot of things he told me, on him. My mom also saw a lot of this trickery, but I was so in love I didn't see it. He passed in 2000. My mom said, *Lord knew what he was doing by taking him away.*

“I feel like I can pull this off by myself—some days I feel like I can't, some days I feel like I can—today I feel like I can.”

Lost Time

Anonymous

My friend, Mary, had three children, and I would like to share a story about the middle child, Chris, who always felt inferior. Chris became a rebel. He was hyper and disobedient, and he had a bad attitude. Since he was a young boy, he lied to his parents. During his childhood, he hung out with gangs. He never finished school. He didn't get past his first year of high school.

When Chris was eighteen years old, he was caught doing something illegal with a gang. He denied his involvement. Still, he went to jail for doing drugs. He was there for about eight or nine years.

Chris blamed his parents for his time in jail. But it wasn't his parents' fault. They cannot be blamed for his choices. Chris' parents had guided him well. But he spent his childhood rebelling against them.

Chris is now twenty-five years old, and he still blames his parents for his mistakes. His parents have stood up for themselves. They've told him that they are not at fault for his choices and actions. It was his own fault that he was disobedient and did not learn from his parents' careful guidance. He does not want to face the consequences.

When Chris got out of jail, he had no friends. So, he went to his parents. His father helped him get back on his feet, as if he were a little kid again. A few months later, he got a job. Now, he has a baby girl, and he's trying to be a good father.

Chris matured very late. Because he was late with everything, he couldn't enjoy his childhood. He couldn't enjoy high school. It's important to remember, though, that he is responsible for his bad childhood. Chris neglected himself. Because of his bad childhood, he is in pain now. He is in pain over his lost time. He can never recover that time.

Learning

Luca

I had never learned about computers. I took a basic, 6-month computer class and learned how to do a resumé. I graduated on September 21. It was the best thing that ever happened in my life and another step to my GED. The pastor from my church came to my graduation; so did my son, daughter and grandchildren. It really made me feel like a female, a woman, made me feel like a real person that accomplished something in my life. It's not too late to learn something new.

My Country

Huberto

I'm Cuban. I came here in the 1980s. I follow baseball. It's my favorite sport, and my second favorite sport is boxing. My favorite sports team is the Detroit Tigers; I like to see Detroit win. I played baseball in Cuba, but when I came here, it was too late for me to start playing. I started baseball when I was eight years old. That's when I could see my friends and my brothers-- they all used to play, and I used to play with them at the parks. I came looking for a new life in the U.S. All I did when I came here was work and watch baseball. I was in Tampa before; my sister got me to come over to Connecticut in 1982. I wish I could go back to Cuba. I can't wait. I can't wait to see my country again. I know my country: the weather, the beaches, my neighborhood and the people I grew up with. Hopefully, sooner or later, I can go back and see my old people. I can't wait to see them again.

Starting at the Bottom

DRMC

Total, I did about ten and a half years, not straight or in one stretch, but close to each other. Today, my son is seventeen, so I haven't really been in his life. Now I have a daughter, and the pattern is starting to repeat; I don't want that to happen with her. She needs her father in her life, especially in this type of world. She's already turned eleven now; I missed more than a year of her life, just this past year. I still talk to her, and yes I still talk to my son, too, but it's awkward. I'm supposed to be his father, and I'm in here. He's always asking me, "Hey Dad, can you get me some Jordans?" I used to be a drug dealer, but now I don't have that kind of income. That just goes to show you how you hurt more people than yourself when you go to jail. You hurt your family.

I've been here six months, and it's just starting to help. They're helping me get a job. I'm thirty-seven years old, and I'm writing my first resume. Basically, I'm trying to find a job, because I can't deal drugs anymore. I had to keep going back to it, because I'd come out of jail and have no money. I'm just trying to do it the right way but trust me, it's hard for someone my age to have to start on the bottom.

“That just goes to show you how you hurt more people than yourself when you go to jail.”

My Story

Susan

I'm a sixty-year old homeless woman with diabetes. I've survived three heart attacks and a stroke. You could say I'm unhealthy and homeless. In my life, I've suffered from depression and anxiety. I'm stressed to the max. I've been an addict since I was seventeen years old. When I was seventeen, a drunk driver hit my friend and I, head-on, at fifty-five miles per hour. I seriously and permanently injured my back. The surgery to correct my back had only a fifty-fifty chance of being successful, so I chose not to go through with it.

I was prescribed pain medication for years. Then, my prescribing doctor died— that's when I discovered I was an addict. I had been an honors student all through school. I had completed two years of college. Then, the accident occurred.

In pain management, I was prescribed methadone— which I was uninformed about. I was on it for twenty-one years. I had to go to the clinic six days a week. It was a chore! It rotted my teeth and bones.

Currently, I'm going through the procedure to have my dentures made. I recently detoxed from methadone as well. It was the hardest thing I've ever done. I don't sleep more than three or four hours a night. It's going to be a six-month detox. I'm trying to be strong and tough it out. I'm doing it. Each day gets a little easier. I hope to one day go to the grammar schools and tell my story to the students— hoping it may help someone.

My Real Life

Wilson

I was born in 1970. My mom went to Puerto Rico when I was three years old, and we were living in Puerto Rico in the projects — I grew up in the projects. My life wasn't easy, but it was good, because I had my mom and my dad and was in school.

But I took the wrong path and started smoking in school. When I was twenty-one, I started snuffing heroin in Puerto Rico and went to prison for two years. I got out on probation and starting stealing cars from different towns and cities in Puerto Rico. I got arrested again. When I went to jail in '92, inside of jail one of my supposed friends told me, "Chino, if you do heroin by nose, you throw it away. You wanna try it with a needle?" I started doing heroin by shooting in Puerto Rico jail.

In '96, my brother was killed — a deadly shooting— so they didn't take me out of jail. After that, they called me to the office, said, "We've got bad news," blah blah. My father had passed away. Then in '98 they gave me the test, and I was positive for HIV.

I thought, "I'm going to die, so I'm going to do this and keep doing this."

I had come to Bridgeport for the first time in 1989. I was

doing good, had a family, and started working as a mechanic, painting cars. I went out, partied, met a couple girls. They were crazy, doing heroin, crack, shooting.

My life isn't easy. I'm on medication because I'm bipolar, and sometimes bad thoughts pass through my mind. But I'm here and trying to get help. I'm thankful to God I'm here today, because in Bridgeport I had two ODs and a shooting drive-by in '92.

If I had known the drugs were so bad, I wouldn't have done them. I wouldn't have spent my life, money, family on that. I have no kids. I've been with a lot of women, but no kids — I didn't give my mom a grandson or anything.

But I thank God and I pray, because when you pray to God, He hears you. Thank God for this; I feel blessed to be here [Columbus House]. This is the last opportunity God gave to me. I'm feeling good, taking my meds, waiting on housing, working on doctors' appointments and stuff. I'm going to stay here in New Haven. I'm not going back to Bridgeport, where my mom and brother are. I talk to them, though, on the phone.

Thank God that I'm here. God is good.

Motivation Speaks

Dan

I just came back to New Haven from Texas, but I was born in Meriden. I went to Texas because I like to travel, and meeting new people and going to new places. Also, down South, there's more hospitality, and businesses are more family-oriented. Family-oriented is always important.

I've been overseas and all over the United States. I've been to Waikiki and Maui in Hawaii. Nice place. Expensive. I've also been to Puerto Rico and Aruba: a lot of money involved, but no drinking age! I like tropical islands; there's no one going anywhere there.

I'm half Irish and half Italian, and I've been to Frankfurt, Dublin, and Holloway in Ireland, and Sicily and Napa in Italy. I've still got family over there. Actually, I've got relatives in the Irish and Italian mobs; my mother's father went to school with Gotti.

I first went to Ireland when I was fourteen years old. I went with my father, who was in the National Guard. That was my first time travelling, besides going up to New Hampshire every other weekend to visit relatives. My father died three weeks to the day of my car accident; we had just buried him. Now, there's only me, my brother and sister left, and they want nothing to do with me, because I have no money... I still want to go to Spain. I like the culture and the food, fried bananas with beef adobo. Vermont disappointed me, but if you like to smoke weed, that's the place to be.

I'm fourteen years clean. Travelling hasn't changed me, because I've always been a happy-go-lucky person; it was the car accident that enabled me to be fourteen years clean. You just need a little motivation to get you going. I was a football player and doing my thing. But everybody takes their legs for granted. The moment they lose their legs, they say, why did that happen to me? But I know someone in that accident who died. It gives you perspective in life. You appreciate things a lot more. People take things for granted; you start appreciating what you had.

A word I would use to describe myself? ... Awesome. I'm all right considering the accident. I lost both legs, but I've always pushed myself around. People tell me get a motorized chair, but then you get lazy really quick. It's easy here. I just laugh at people and keep a smile going. I never got nothing negative to say about anything. Now I'm learning to go out the door and do what I do. I'm eventually going to get out of here.

poetry

At the Window's Edge

Kevin

Standing at the window's edge
thinking of the trouble ahead.

Decisions that will be made
hurt and pain cannot be avoided today,
let's open the window just a crack.

Is there a breeze? Or are there flies and gnats?
Is there a chance we can close this window back?

What if it slams and the glass just shatters, cutting
our wrists and necks?

Is it really that bad to face this relationship we made?

Why can't we call it quits...? Shake hands and start over as
friends.

What's wrong with honesty and honor? Sincerity holds
so much power.

Forgiveness followed by a hug. Let's edify one another in
the mist of this emotional shower.

Baby, we're standing at the window's edge.
No one wants to jump. Let's support each other instead.

Friends then it shall be...stepping away from the window's
edge.

I Am

I Am

I went to the store to get some food,
and when I got there,
I forgot why I went.

How silly of me.
I saw this dog, and he looked at me
and barked. I asked him

“What’s the matter?” He turned
around and ran away.

In my life, I like to do good
and help people. I like to walk
with other people too.

This makes me sing. Once,
I sang a song about Jesus,
and someone said,
“Sing it again.”

We went outside, and I sang
it again. There, I saw this lady
who was walking a cat.

I said, “Hi, Kitty Cat.”
The lady asked me
what my name was.

I said, “I Am.”

I went back to the house,
where a man was sitting inside.
I asked him, “Who are you?”

He said his name was Hammer.
Then, he asked me
why my name is “I am.”

I went to sit down,
and he started to cry.

I did not know what to do
but to keep to myself.

I was glad that he helped
other people
and even pets, too.

I think to myself:

Roses are red
Violets are blue
and, to him, I said
I love you.

Prosperity Comes with Due Diligence

Cherim

Life is like an art project
You must make a mess
In order to succeed.

Bloom brightly where you are
So elegantly you may soar.

Blessed are those that inquire
For they find their own heaven
In which they transpire!

So
Catch your pieces and
Hold on tight
To your personal heaven
In which you may delight!

I love you

Danielle

So now it keeps resorting back to this horrible pain that's just too much for any person to withstand,
And every time I try to go, you always try to tell me no--
But every day we try to change,
But all our pain remains unchanged,
And I never know quite what to do--
And I never loved someone as much as I love you.

Brother

Noel

"Brother"—I am your brother ...

Brought into this world and while I'm alive,
I'm learning a game, the game is called survive.

Brother

Don't ya know I am your "brother"

Junkie on the streets
Pushin ain't it neat?
Smokin little jays
Lettin people pay

Brother don't ya know?
I am your brother.

I may not be the only one,
You may not have seen me the only one (alive!!)
I am your brother.

Muggers on the corner
Meeting come to order
Robbing people's houses
Killing innocent spouses
Saying certain words ...
That's never been heard

Brother
OH NO
Brother!!

What Is?

Cedric

What is love if you can't say it or show it to the one you care about?
What are emotions if you can't see them?
If there is a God, then is life on Earth just a test for a placement in
the heavens when you pass away?
And is judgment day the time when you are tried?
Love is a very twisted thing to have, but once you find it never let
it go, because you might never get it back once it's gone.
Always remember that love and emotions are the most important
thing in this life.
They should always be near and dear to you.
They are the most important thing.
Love is a way of life; it's a happy time to be with someone.
You never can tell if you have true love.
If the person you love is always asking if the love is really there,
then how you can love that person?
What is pain when it's never explained?
How do you know when you're in pain?
When I'm in pain, I can feel the weight holding me down, keep-
ing me from screaming out for help.
Someone find me.
Help me out of this horrible place.
I can't see what is really real anymore.
I see nothing but darkness.
It wants me to come in and fade away with life
Just to forget that I'm even alive.
Try not to think of the pain.
Try not to lose your way.
Try not to lose your way of life.
Because my life is coming to an end.....

The Streets I Roam

Xavier

I have no home so the streets I roam,
I'm condemned from within punished for a life of sin. I medi-
tate with hate that's not up for debate. A sheltered life ignored
my strife. I became naive to how the world worked used and
abused insanity because my reality vulnerable was I, I can't
deny. The dark side is my light, light is my fright. So the streets I
roam still with no home. No hope no belief in nothing can't pre-
tend, I have no friends. The streets I roam there's still no home.

Snow White

Kevin

There are diamonds you can't touch
in the mist of snow, no dust.
There is a cold that fills the air,
chills the bones beyond compare.
There is a peace in the season of winter;
a silence both far and wide.
The bears can rest, and sleep, and
shut their weary eyes.
There is a peace in the season of winter,
no footsteps in the snow.
Fathers oversleep, mothers warm their feet
until their children rise up to say,
"It snowed all night. I must take flight
And go outside to play."
What a season! What a joy! What a time to rejoice!
What a gift! What a treasure!
Winter time is such a pleasure.

Faded Petals

Carlos

Thoughts surround the flower...
This contorted flower
that just only wants to feel the sun,
the rain,
the wind,
on its now almost brittle petals...
its leafless stem goes
down into its roots
just to feel that warm tender part
supposed to be nourishment to help it
grow...

How does one be born again?

Paul

By confessing to the Lord Jesus Christ and believing God.
The father has raised him
from the dead.

Asking in his name
the Lord Christ Jesus in your name
I came unto the father seeking to be
filled with the Holy Ghost,
and I thank you for
giving me his wonderful
gift that will help
me in remembering all things
you said, Lord, and teaching
me all things you did.

Amen.

My Rainbow

John

My rainbow of mysterious size
that leaves many people surprised,
as the colors of the world
surround my hemisphere.
There are people around me
shedding tears.
As I fly high in the sky,
searching for my silver lining,
I hope the clouds I'm climbing
are not holding any rain.

faith

Dealing with Tragedy

Paul

My grand aunt's passing really made me so sad. It was like there was no more love in me, and I felt so upset that I began to use drugs. I would have many nightmares. Soon, I went into a depression, and I couldn't really talk about what I was feeling, because I was so hurt about being left alone with no grand aunt. My grand aunt was the mother I never knew.

So, growing up with her as my mother really made her passing hard to deal with, because she was the only family I knew. It took some time, but I eventually started trusting God by praying and singing his praises. I began to see that soon I will see my loved ones who have gone to heaven before me. When I started seeking the Lord, he began to comfort me and a peace came over me.

How I Survive

Ernest

I survive by praying, going to church, asking God to help me each and every day. People don't know that God helps you regardless of what the circumstances can be. He looks upon your life and helps you. You just have to ask him. He may not come when you want him, but he will come.

Pray for each and every body and yourself. And everything will be alright. So just keep it in God's hand, and you will be alright.

I am religious to a certain extent, but I believe in God. He helps me, and he helps you. Just keep praying. God bless you. Amen.

The Gospel Truth

Lee

I'm a friendly person, easy to get along with. I try not to do what I do, but I got into drugs.

Here I am, at Columbus House, because I'm homeless. I hope in the future I find somewhere to live. I heard about T-mobile, they said they were helping on my journey to get my apartment. So far, so good.

I lost one of my sisters to cancer. It was kinda hard to deal with. I do believe in God. I pray a lot. I'm sixty years old but I have some obstacles in my way, but they're going to get worked out.

I was born in North Carolina, on the farm, and I was raised as a Christian. There was a rule in the house, we had to go to church. Mother wasn't happy unless we went to church. We

didn't have much to wear, but we wore what we could. School was the same way; she did what she could to make us presentable in the eyes of other people. Back in those days, we were kinda tight on money. My father wasn't too much around, always on the go, went places, getting ladies-- that was a rough stage for my mom. When my father passed away from liver cirrhosis in 1973, my mother brought us all up to Connecticut. So I mostly grew up here. As time went on, she remarried, and had another baby, a girl. Now she has Alzheimer's disease. She doesn't know who we are. She's eighty-five years old.

My mother's a strong lady, a very strong lady.

A Journey from Madness unto Freedom

Luis

Eventually a person has to face their own fears. It's a reality, which happens to appear in many shapes or forms. Sometimes these obstacles formulate themselves in the depths of our mind, body, and spirit, creating a deprivation of energy unto ourselves. This brings on forms of mental illnesses, which land under depression. This could go on for several years if it goes undiagnosed or never treated. From experience, I self-medicated my fears with opiates. Unfortunately, this was the route for me. Keeping me in this cycle of a chronic progressive illness characterized by loss of control, referred to as addiction. Nearly twenty years with creating excuses and rationalizing my consumption with these opioids kept me in the wall of denial. I've learned that until becoming rigorously honest, recovery for me would've been to no

avail. Through the grace of God, I was given several chances. The only reason I'm still alive to share my story is because of not giving up. The ability to bounce back came from a desire to change my life completely. I must say, I never lost anything because of my addiction. I gave things away.

Today I am sober, in early recovery. Still experiencing the P.A.W.S. [post-acute withdrawal syndrome]. This is an entire new way to live, and I would not give up for anything. This is my time in life to blossom and love myself, and keep all my hope alive. Especially having God carrying me and guiding me the days it feels as giving up. My motivating factors are my Savior Jesus Christ, my fiancée, Sandra, and my unborn child. Their love completes my life. All I need to do is stay focused and never, ever give up.

Excerpts from "Journey from Maddness"

Luis

Everything begins once there is an attitude change. Especially one's life. The entire world becomes new unto your eyes. Life is then beautiful again. That's the outlook in which a real man experiences his heart. Upon embracing the universe. The world is now in your hands. The new beginning commences.

First the journey towards environmental atmosphere made anew. This is the cornerstone upon the empire which one builds. To be honest, there is a goal resting beneath the realm of the potential soul. Here are the talents and prizes, which will conquer all the trials and tribulations.

Making straight all of the crooked places which prevent one from setting standards. Known for nearly half a century that certain powers and abilities were already obtained. Now the moment has arrived to excel and ex-

pose all these positive attitudes. In an optimistic fashion, it's an adventure plus a journey.

Of course, every new beginning has its mountains.

Through determination and some persistence, change can occur. There have been many missed opportunities. This doesn't mean that one's life is nothing but failure after failure. Everything has its process. The first thing which is essential consists of a new positive attitude.

This attitude only works along with a rational vision. Something seen as tangible and concrete. A goal which is obtainable. Nothing is unrealistic. Life has so much to offer a person that in order to reach success, one has to share those accomplishments with the world. In essence, it's the only way to enjoy anything earned in life. People are more prosperous when showing their qualities unto those who are less fortunate. Helping others become better is another way to enhance lives. One step at a time makes journeys obtainable.

Every now and then, I ask myself what constitutes happiness. This is a very important question. Literally without some type of contentment in our lives, there would be nothing but pure anger. These emotions if not taken seriously could and would eat away the person's spirit and soul. That's how serious this happiness can be. These are several ways for one to exercise good positive reinforcements. One is to maintain a balanced, well-nutritional diet. Keeping one healthy and away from any sickness. Health is highly essential. Very needful for one's life is to become proactively involved in every positive aspect. Prayer and Faith is another form of positive reinforcement. In order for one to survive our blessings, one needs to establish a relationship with God. Here is the time when all things work together for his goodness. One thing that has remained the same is this certain enthusiasm. An energy which has kept my drive consistent. In other

“Literally without some type of contentment in our lives, there would be nothing but pure anger.”

My Story

Gisela

I am an addict. I have been clean for quite some time. I am a strong believer in God. I know there is a higher power. I thank God every day for helping me make it through.

I hate racism. I hate people who use the word hate. I think everyone should be treated equally. I love my family a lot, especially my grandkids. I have someone in my life that has helped me make it through. His name is Humberto. He is good to me, and I thank God for him a lot. I thank God for the opportunities he has given me. He has helped me through a lot of bad things that have happened to me.

homelessness

How the Homeless Live

Ernest

The homeless live according to how things is. They sleep where they can sleep, eat where they can eat. Some eat at a soup kitchen. Some eat out of the garbage. Some sleep at bus stops. Some sleep in the park, on the green. Now, since the police stop people for sleeping on the green, they sleep anywhere they can sleep.

People have a tendency– they don't like to be told what to do and how to do it, or they get crazy. People are going to do what they want to do, regardless of what they're told. But they don't want to break the law. They get a little 219 from the city. Not enough to do what they have to do. Therefore, they got to survive the best way they can.

So, we can pray. And ask God to protect us and be with us.

One Foot Out of There

Luca

November of last year, I moved to Columbus House. I met a lot of clients and staff, too. Some of the clients, they are disrespectful with people. Some of the staff are good. Some don't treat clients with compassion, like they are nothing in life. I am waiting for my housing. I have one foot out of there. No one is going to jeopardize what I got. I got eleven months of accomplishment. God willing that I get out before the end of this year.

Untitled

Arthur

I want to stress that education is no sure way to success, and I'm living proof of that. During the 1960s, the United States pushed the agenda of skills trade, then they switched to pushing college. Now I have a Master's degree and I apply to Subway and I'm told, "You're overqualified," that I "won't be here long." The reality is that my education has come to be a double-edged sword. Once you lose your job, it's hard. It's a humbling experience. I just want to tell people so they can be better prepared for job loss, develop a support system, and get into a career that will have longevity, like those in food or trade, because technology is slicing at jobs these days.

When we live in a country that values power, prestige, and privilege, none of that settles down to the bottom half of society. The greatest example of this is New Haven, with Yale and its 30 bil-

lion dollar endowment, paying no property taxes. You walk down downtown New Haven and it's like the West side of New York. New Haven shows the contrast of the haves and have-nots and within this context, education can't/ doesn't guarantee your success. This can all be exacerbated by the color of your skin, which I believe plays a role.

I don't know if this is a story or the ramblings of someone who is disenfranchised at the moment. I got a Master's degree at the School of Connecticut, and I'm struggling to survive right now. But spending the past few months living in New Haven has truly shown me what America is really about. As I always told the foster kids I used to mentor, education is no guarantee for wealth or success, but it can/ will prepare you for the experiences and opportunities you'll face. So now I'm just waiting for that next opportunity.

Trust Issue

Bernadette

I'm at the Columbus House because I am homeless. There are a lot of challenges there. And there are rules that you have to follow. The rules really don't bother me. I can handle rules because, growing up, I didn't have any and I did whatever I wanted. It's just living with a bunch of people, all living there together, and I just don't understand how people can steal from other people. We all have different personalities, but some people steal, I know because I've been stolen from. I don't say anything about it, I just keep it to myself. There's a lot of drama that goes on, and somehow I'm always in it, probably because I try to keep to myself. That's what I'm dealing

with now, but I just try to let that stuff roll off. Dealing with some staff, they are very disrespectful to me. I could say some incidents that happened, but I won't. But those are minor things, really, is how I look at that, because it's nothing compared to living in the street and being homeless. Things could be lot worse. I just pray on it. I was born a Catholic, but I've been going to a lot of different churches. It does help when I go to church. I'm not so angry anymore, I feel a sense of peace. I do try to stay by myself and just watch to see who's who and who's doing what, because I have a trust issue.

First Time

Arthur

Living in a shelter for the first time has been humbling and eye-opening. Being told to get out, when to come in, when to eat, when to shower, sleep, wake up, do chores has been the most reflective. Thirty-eight years of independence, spontaneous parties, and gatherings are gone. I have dealt with shelters in New York City as a case manager working with families. As a single male, it has been different. Longer placement for housing, which means longer stay. But I met a special man, a 76 year-old angel. He talks, listens, advises and suggests ideas. This interaction has made my stay easier and manageable. He has not complained one day and relies on his faith in the Lord. It has been a calming influence.

“Thirty-eight years of independence, spontaneous parties, and gatherings are gone.”

fiction & history

A Boy and His Dog

Raymond

This is a story about a boy and his dog. The boy's name was Brian, and his dog's name was Max. Max had a very long tail. Brian would know Max wanted him to go outside and play when Max would wag his tail. Max would wag his tail a certain way, and Brian always knew just what Max needed. Sometimes, Brian would take Max to a favorite park of his where Max could run, jump, and play "fetch" with no leash! Brian loved bringing Max to that park too, because he could also run and play! Max had a particular favorite ball that was very important to him. It was the first ball Brian ever got Max. Max was always a very happy dog. When Brian would throw the ball, Max always ran to go "fetch" the ball.

After Max was about three years old, he always went out with Brian to play everywhere they went! But then Brian noticed a change in Max one day. Max suddenly seemed sad, rather than happy like he usually was. Max got sadder and was acting very tired, and Brian just didn't have any clue as to why Max was so sad. Brian took Max to the Veterinarian Hospital. Max was terrified of "The Vet," because every time Brian had to take Max there, it was never for a good reason! The veterinarian doctor would always poke and stick Max. Max did not like the vet, but it was necessary. Max had

a very rare blood disorder and had to get shots from the vet for it. The shot hurt, and Brian felt bad for Max. Max wasn't doing well, at all, and started having trouble going to the bathroom or for a walk. The vet said to Brian that he needed to do bloodwork on Max, so they could have a closer look at what could be happening to Brian's beloved dog.

A few days passed, and the veterinarian called Brian to tell him the bloodwork showed that Max had a very high white blood cell count. Brian asked the doctor what could be done for Max, and the doctor told Brian that they could only try to put Max on some medicine that may help, but reminded Brian gently that Max had a very bad health problem. Also, he said that if the medicine didn't work, poor Max would die a certain, inevitable, painful death. So, Brian tried to give Max the pills that the veterinarian had prescribed for Max. After eight long, painful months, the pills didn't help poor Max, and he got sicker and sicker, as Brian, his beloved owner, grew sadder and sadder each day, and eventually decided it was time for him and Max to say, "See you later." And with tears in his eyes, he whispered, "See you again, my dear friend," and Max slipped away in Brian's grieving arms.

Abusive Parents

Anonymous

Marilyn — teacher in preschool.

Dina — girl.

Jose and Nancy — husband and wife; parents of a seven-year-old girl; always abuse their daughter, Dina.

Nancy was a prostitute. Her husband, Jose, made her work in nightclubs in order to have money to spend. Jose abused Nancy in that way. Also, he was the kind of person who abused others and had authority in his home.

Before Nancy married him, she knew how he was. He said that he would be a good man and that he wanted to marry her. But when they married, everything changed. After one month of being married, he changed completely. He made his wife work in nightclubs, entertain men, and sleep with them in order to have money. Jose made her a prostitute. Nancy became pregnant at the same time that she was a prostitute.

They never took good care of her daughter, Dina. Dina never ate right; she had to prepare her own food. Sometimes there was no food in the refrigerator. Dina dressed badly going to school. She didn't know how to brush her hair. Jose and Nancy abused her, beating her with a belt for nothing, and made marks on her small body.

The teacher knew that something was happening to Dina. She saw marks on Dina's body. And Dina talked to her teacher, who called the Department of Family and took Dina to a foster home.

Nancy gave birth to a newborn, Michael. She never took care of the baby. Nancy and Jose never changed, and they left the baby alone at night in order for Nancy to go to the nightclub.

A neighbor knew that and called the police. And they found the baby alone and put the baby in a foster home, too. The police found them, and they went to prison.

Dina and Michael were placed in a good home. A family adopted them together. They were happy.

A Man Named George and "The Phantom Ship"

Danielle

The city of New Haven, Connecticut is a very busy, densely populated, bustling city. It's a very fast-paced city with a lot of history (a real lot). In the early 1600s, before Connecticut became a state even, it was still a busy place-- a colony that had many merchants, peddlers, settlers, and many of the residents had immigrated here to Connecticut from all over the world.

One of the immigrants to come to Connecticut in the early 1600s was a man by the name of George Lamberton. George, along with his wife, Margaret, came to America from White Chapel London Borough of Tower Hamlets, which was in Greater London, England. George moved to New Haven, Connecticut to be near the water. He loved the ocean and was the Captain of a very large ship

he owned. He was also a merchant.

On a foggy day in the summer of 1646, "Captain George" and his crew of over 200— yes, that's two hundred— seamen boarded his ship in the New Haven harbor and set sail. Mysteriously, and still to this day, it is unknown what happened to them, but once the ship sailed out of eyesight into the fog on the horizon, neither George, his 200 seamen, nor the enormous ship were ever seen or heard from ever again!

George Lamberton and the 200 seamen aboard the enormous ship were tirelessly searched for. With no clues as to what happened, no one was ever heard from or seen again. In 1647, George and his 200 crew members were presumed dead, or lost-at-sea.

The Pest

James

A pest bugs you while you sleep eat and watch television. Chilling with friends and family, the pest asks you too many questions about anything the pest can think of to ask you, and the pest ask you what time you go to bed and what you get, so the pest can do it all over again the next day—a week a month and a year from now. The pest can show up at anytime or any place you may be at. The pest is always asking you about the bible or God. The pest can ask you questions about your whole life and friends you chill with or the pest can ask about your job where the job site is. The pest can leave its Pestness around you after they stop bugging you about stuff they pest you about. There are real pests around you today tomorrow and forever. There's a real pest that tells you what to do and how to do it. If you ever get touched by a pest run walk and scream at the pest. The pest is always asking you for money and food or can they stay for a couple of days but the pest stays a week to a month. But the pest always over-stays their welcome to get the pest away from you and your family and friends or to not talk to them. Sometimes the pest asks to use the car or your phone.

The Couple

Anonymous

This couple had three children (two boys and a girl). They had a babysitter that sometimes took care of them. The babysitter noticed that the two of them preferred the boys; they paid attention more to the boys than the girl. The girl was four years old, one boy was seven, and the other was ten years old. The girl felt sad and neglected. The babysitter noticed that and felt very sorry for the girl. The babysitter talked to her parents to let them know what they were doing to their daughter. They became so upset that they fired her from her job. They hired another babysitter and she noticed the same thing. But one day, they went on a trip all together, and it was rainy. They had a car accident and the four-year-old girl died in the accident. Everybody else was fine, with no injuries. They buried their daughter at a funeral. Now the parents missed her. And now they remembered the way they had treated their daughter. And it was too late now. The only thing they could do was say that they felt sorry, to please forgive them for everything.

The end

At the Cocktail Party

Harry

I went to a party at a swank apartment complex. Everyone in attendance was holding a red plastic cup with beer in it. But I was not holding a drink. Many of the guests said to me, "Dude, why don't you have a drink?" I gave a different answer to each of them. Here were my answers:

1. Because I'm not thirty.
2. Because I'm a non-conformist.
3. Because drinking loosens your tongue, and you start saying "like" all the time.
4. Because I don't want to be mentally impaired.
5. Because drinking is a crutch and I don't like crutches.
6. Because I have to walk home.
7. Because everyone here is holding a red Solo cup.
8. Because I don't like the food.
9. Because I drank something at home.
10. Because I am protesting the nomination of Judge Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court.
11. Because this is not the beer that made Milwaukee famous.
12. Because my canteen is in the car.
13. Because they don't have my favorite beverage (peach tree schnapps and cranberry juice).
14. Because I gave it up for Lent.
15. Because the bartender looks like Bill Cosby.
16. Because it's St. Patty's Day, and there's no green vodka.
17. Because it would make me feel like I'm on a reality show called the Real Housewives of Milford.
18. Because there is a wicked leprechaun on my shoulder who keeps telling me to drink the green beer.
19. Because I would rather smoke pot, but nobody has some.
20. Because I don't want to be one of the lemmings who are going to jump off the nearest cliff when this party comes to an end at dawn.
21. Because people are playing beer pong without a table.
22. Because there were 99 bottles of beer on the wall. Since I didn't want the drunken crowd to start singing that song, I refused to take one.
23. Because the world's most interesting man said, "Stay thirsty, my friends," and I'm just trying to follow his advice.

The Disobedient Daughter

Anonymous

A mother and father, who owned a good company together, struggled with their disobedient daughter. They only had this one daughter. They named her Sara. They gave Sara everything they could offer her. Still, Sara was an irresponsible daughter.

Sara finished high school, and her parents were proud of her. Although she never married, Sara had many boyfriends. These relationships were not very serious though. She traveled to many states and countries. She traveled with each of her boyfriends. Her mother and father gave her money for all of these adventures. Sara called her mother when she felt like it.

One morning, Sara had a car accident. She was killed at only eighteen years old. Her parents and other family members were devastated. It was very painful for all of them. It was too painful. Now, these parents do not have their daughter anymore. They cry often. They experience pain and loneliness in their hearts. This family cannot enjoy time with Sara anymore.

But, God save these parents and give them salvation. They let all tribulation to Jesus. God, comfort them. Amen. God is the answer for your life and theirs. The entire family has received God.

Communing with the Wind

Cedric

As the wind blew, my ears heard the sound of a gentle song. It was a beautiful symphony that had the power to engulf my soul, as I could hear the passion in the tone. I tried to follow the person who was singing this melody of bliss, but to no avail; I just couldn't find the source of the song that echoed in my head as the wind blew. As I walked aimlessly through the meadows under this star-filled sky, I wondered if the song I heard was the wind blowing over the land, as if to signify a sign of hope. But as I almost gave up on trying to find this singer who touched my heart, I came across this beautiful lake with a waterfall. In the center of the lake was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen. As I tried to call to her to find out the name of the song she was singing, the wind stopped blowing when she stopped singing. She started to slowly make her way to me. It was like her hair was that of gold shining in the moonlight, and her eyes were such a light blue that they looked like they were glowing. I asked her for the name of the song she was singing, and what she said I will never forget: "I was not singing. I was talking to the wind about the world and this beautiful night we are having." I then asked why the wind stopped blowing, and she simply said it was taking in the beautiful view.



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