MISTER HARDTIME

Dee Allen

One afternoon, around
My high school days,
Grandma Lillie
Took time away from
Sewing clothes and talk show
On daytime TV to tell
My little brother and me
An important tale
About a guest
Who often came
Uninvited. Hard to predict his moves—

Being a teen-aged girl
And young mother in
The Great Depression of the 1930s,
She already knew
The guest personally,
As did her sister Vivian, her daddy
Lonnie and Lucy, her mama.
In those days, there wasn’t one person
Standing in a bread-line or begging the next
Brother for a thin dime who hadn’t met

Mister Hardtime.

If you have
No bread in the bread-box,
No fresh or frozen food in the refrigerator,
No boxed or canned food in the cupboard,
No coins filling up the Mason jar,
No dollars filling up your wallet,
No way to pay
The rent or
Clean your clothes,

Best believe
That’s when
Mister Hardtime
Comes for a house call,
Knocking on your door,
Counting on your
Despair, answering him.

Let Mister Hardtime in
And those hard times
Last longer.
W: May Day 2018

Small flowers crack concrete
The winding roads lead to a small A-framed Baptist church
a simple structure where complex questions reside
a stain of quandary’s residue on the pages of a holy book
the winding roads unfurl wisps of gauze colored mist exposing
A blush of hurt
the minister is a pleasant man who brings to mind
a ripe pear as i sit and take in his sermon
feelings don’t replace facts, he says
and i look at the facts of this church
a wooden table with a nativity scene
a piano pulpit
American and Christian flags on either side
ceiling fan
people who utter yes and amen in
the appropriate pauses where the profound
makes its sound
"Feelings don’t replace facts"
i walk out the
doors of this church,
built in the 1800’s
Its symmetry intact
(A fact)
i look up
and see a single
yellow leaf fall
my eyes follow
as if caught
in a thought of
water
landing on
a bare branch.
cought before
hitting ground
feelings don’t
replace facts
but sometimes
they do
(c) 2018 Tony Robles
They were the secret places
You'd go there with friends
Maybe a meadow, a tree,
A basement, a cabin
No one knew where they were
Only you
And your small band of friends
You called them hideouts
You called them forts
Now where are those friends?
Their last names are forgotten
Where are those places?
You could have found them without a map
You could have found them with your eyes closed
Now you keep your eyes open
Especially at night
Find a dry square on the sidewalk
Keep it as neat as you can.
Don't let anyone else near it
Be ready to move
If the policeman returns

FORT
Cesar Love

The tired homeless man
worked his way across traffic lanes
to stand on the divider strip,
hoping that drivers
would open their windows
and hand him change.
Not terribly likely
but he had no other plan
than to stand in the cold,
breathing in fumes,
seeing stern faces
turning away.
He spotted me
standing on the sidewalk
and he smiled.
It melted my heart.
I came and thanked him
for smiling at me.
Then the realization
spread over his face —
despite everything
missing in his life
he did have something
to give someone else.
He had his smile
and it mattered to me.
Without being asked,
I gave him a dollar.
We both were richer that moment.

ECSTASCENE
Dee Allen

System: Activism
Her poetry
Gave medicine
To the broken
In heart & mind,
Revolutionaries
Found within
Their ranks sometimes.
Her plays
Gave us
Reason to laugh
At the misery
Associated with poverty
In our lives brought to heel
In one act or two.
A different play
For each
PeopleSkool
Kept things interesting
For the privileged
And underprivileged students.
Always where
The excitement is—
Teach-ins,
Movement strategy
Meetings, radio shows,
Street protests,
Film and
Arts festivals,
Confrontations
With politicians—
Yet calm, humble,
Eloquent through it all.
Berkeley-born dreadlocked
Daughter of Caroline
On the ground reporter
Digital resistor
Afro-Punk
Not on the forefront
Melted into the scene
With Poor Magazine

DESPITE EVERYTHING, HE SMILED
Vivian Imperiale

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worked his way across traffic lanes
to stand on the divider strip,
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W: 9.13.18
[ For Laure McElroy—1972-2018. ]
1. Shema here, shema hear me, a child born and raised originally in Superman’s capitol of Death, whose rule is trumpery.

This stack of matzohs I fling one after another across your Rosh Hashanah clear to your Yom Kippour like a paroxysm of memory, a matzohgraphy of unforgettable irony of ironies: you, who were so holacausted by the nazis have created the largest concentration camp in the world, in Gaza, yes, we in Gaza, when Sari Shobaki 18, Amir Al-Nimra, 15, Louay Kahn, 16, Kami Halas, 14, Nasser Shurrab, 18, Louay Hasan, 13 organized a series of non-violent protests calling for the return of Palestinians exiled all over the world, you murdered them in cold State blood or sniped their legs or slingshot arms off and—irony of the ovens where the nazis incinerated so many of your families—those New York settler thugs celebrating a wedding were crying out: “Ali’s on the grill” referring to Ali Dawbsheh, whose 18 month-old body they’d burned to death.

2. Dilapidated shacks or even tents in which we live all crazy now without a capitol filling with apartheid.

Gaza, we’re Gaza who may rainbow: Dareen Tatour, you magnificent “terrorist” poet, and you, Ahed Tamimi who physically took on a couple of Israel’s cops, you of a family of grassroots activists, sister of Razan Al-Najar, that glorious 21 year-old who gave her life helping to nurse the wounded in the protests.

We don’t hole up. We stuff malice, be terror cool, steer no one wrong, even as arms are torn, even as wounded legs are smoking.

His name was Alonzo Poor, African American in his 40s He lived like the homeless Sitting on bus stop in Bernal Heights I would treat him to a coffee He insisted on 6, 7 packets of sugar He told me to “Take care of your grandchildren, Love them”

In January, 2017 A friend of his told me He died of liver or kidney failure After I saw a homeless friend of our Shooting him up with street drugs He was my friend, Alonzo was, So is the homeless, mutual friend I have since found out Sugar is bad for heart and liver.

May God bless the vulnerable, the elderly, the children May everybody march so that Government officials elected by the people Provide for peoples’ needs.

I wrote this poem so people don’t always put the homeless down for using drugs. I wanted to express how human and vulnerable the poor, specially the homeless are.
I knew the day would come soon.
At last I have keys to a clean quiet room.
Thank you for all the gifts you've given.
I'm grateful to have a safe place to live in.
Enjoying my comfort, grateful for space,
Looking ahead to a much larger place.
Grateful for the money, the clothes and the food,
And everything else that makes my life good.
I really enjoy greeting people I meet
Knowing I no longer live on the street.
Giving a smile when I sit for awhile,
Willing to go that extra mile.
As my day starts out sunny and clear,
I thank God for you and all things dear.
Grateful to have a brand new start.
Thank you, everybody, from the bottom of my heart.
There's nothing better than peace of mind.
I'm healthy today and doing just fine.
So grateful for positive people in my life,
Lessons learned that have made things right.
You added me to your Christmas list
Let me thank you with a hug and a kiss.
I'm grateful to come to this place I know,
Much happier today: I'm good to go.
Writing fulfills my goals and dreams,
And truly lifts my self-esteem.
Hope you've enjoyed reading each line,
You can tell how much I love to rhyme.
I wrote this poem so people don't always put the homeless down for using drugs. I wanted to express how human and vulnerable the poor, specially the homeless are.

I'M GRATEFUL (2018)

I KNOW A PLACE (2011)

I'm grateful to have a safe place to live in.
Enjoying my comfort, grateful for space,
Looking ahead to a much larger place.
Grateful for the money, the clothes and the food,
And everything else that makes my life good.
I really enjoy greeting people I meet
Knowing I no longer live on the street.
Giving a smile when I sit for awhile,
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Hope you've enjoyed reading each line,
You can tell how much I love to rhyme.
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Homeless I am, but I know a place where
I feel safe. I can put on my happy face, yes
I see this place as lilies in the valley ...Blooming
buds of people, pets and kids, this place I know
is sweet like cookie dough ...A community with
unity, these lilies lend a hand wherever I stand...
not just money, food and clothes ...A scent in
the air gives a feeling of care.
I know a place, a smile is all it takes to grow
flowers every hour. It lets me know every day
I'd rather go, when I'm down I rush to the other
side of town, whatever it takes to get to this place...
Let me mention I embrace the attention, a hello,
a nod of the head, a laugh or giggle from the tots
coming and going near parking lots.

This place has elegant taste, not giving a sad
face. I thank god for the beauty it brings, listening
to the birds as they sing, I don't worry about a
thing because this valley keeps me away from a
filthy alley ...What I feel is real, I don't
have to steal because I'm not broke or down and
out ...This, I will shout without a doubt
I do know this place.

I KNOW A PLACE (2011)

Sharon Randle

His name was Alonzo
Poor, African American in his 40s
He lived like the homeless
Sitting on bus stop in Bernal Heights
I would treat him to a coffee
He insisted on 6, 7 packets of sugar
He told me to “Take care of your grandchildren,
Love them”
In January, 2017
A friend of his told me
He died of liver or kidney failure
I had stopped buying his coffee
After I saw a homeless friend of ours
Shooting him up with street drugs.
He was my friend, Alonzo was,
So is the homeless, mutual friend
I have since found out
Sugar is bad for heart and liver.
May God bless the vulnerable, the disabled,
The elderly, the children
May everybody march so that
Government officials elected by the people
Provide for peoples' needs.
I wrote this poem so people don't always put the
homeless down for using drugs. I wanted to express
how human and vulnerable the poor, specially the
homeless are.

In Memory of Alonzo

This photo of Sharon Randle selling Street Sheets
originally ran in the Noe Valley Voice alongside the
poem “I Know A Place”. Sharon is now in housing
and wrote “Grateful” to trace the journey from
homelessness to home.

Image credit: Pamela Gerard
I keep going to Peep’s Coffee
The coffee isn’t great
But the place has been
A has-been place where
It still happens and once I killed
A roach there by accident
And the coffee is constant in its consistency ranging from Watery to a semi-syrupy serum that takes care of what ails you
A tight budget keeps
Me coming and I don’t
Got a plot to piss in but
The coffee is only 75 cents
A cup
On the wall is a Calendar stained with a Year that passed away many A fuckin’ moon ago and the Coffee keeps coming, keeps Pouring, sometimes bitter, Sometimes better with grounds Floating, never weak
And the conversation is a Tangle of stops, stutters, Guttural flutters, laughs Curses and good natured Teasing
“Say man, this Some nasty ass Coffee”
What you call it?
It’s called arabaca-dabra Blend
And a big Swig is taken
“Taste more like Arabaca-dabrabullshit”
Laughter, wet with Words down the wrong Pipe, forgotten and Coughed up
And the guy at the Counter of Peep’s coffee, A Chinese guy who makes More than coffee replied,
“I piss in your grits”
Laughter
and the grits are served up in the grittiest of ways the way it should
Peep’s coffee
A unique Blend
When I hop onto the 38 Geary headed downtown again,
For another century of living to work and working to live,
I stutter quietly while we all sit there in silence staring, longing for a friend,
I lie, and pretend, that I’m currently not depending on alcohol just to fend,
Off malicious content circulating through the tabs on my newly installed browser bend,
And I may be over 7 months sober, but my attitude and behavior, haven’t warmed up from being colder,
So now I’ve got a chip on my shoulder, and a swagger to act older,
To impress who? The people on this bus?
Perhaps it seems to me, no one wants to trust

The Canon of Misunderstanding

I see hope but I am seen as nothing
I feel sorrow of the heart yet life sees no part
Everyday I awake my needs the same as humanity
yet society only sees what I lack
I know what loneliness is when life would rather spit on the street than recognize me
I see the activities of the holidays when dreams become real
it’s joy seen on there faces as they get into there cars and headed home
there home filled with warmth
and as I smile at them
I know there is no couch that awaits me
for my home has no walls
it’s dwelling perpetual
always known and yet never entered
I see many things
hope for many things
But most of all i wished to be understood
so life might know the canon within me
and see that my dreams,hopes,and desires
are just like there’s

written by A Voice in the Wind aka shorty from MSC South actual name Simeon (Mike)Omeha wishing you all a kind and encouraging new year

ANTHONY BOURDAIN

(June 25,1956 NYC to June 8, 2018 Strasbourg, France)

Morgan Zo Callahan 6-18-18

For viewers of the award-winning series “Parts Unknown” and for curious seekers of parts unknown, anywhere, everywhere, here’s a short poem, a tribute to Anthony Bourdain, (creator and presenter of “Parts Unknown”) who died tragically on June 8, 2018:

Gift given, passing to Mystery
your soul’s next curiosity
Bye Adios Shalom Warm Abrazos Grazie
Hello, are you in the invisible world, sweet Tony?
We feel you, cordial world shrinking peace wishing phenom
Sharing parts unknown, sisters & brothers awaiting
the kind touch of a faraway magnanimous friend
Human being man traveling lip licking man, afraid & fearless, solitary & outgoing
Brilliant touching Stories like prayers: no person unworthy of interest,
unqualified for fairness
Respect dignity, nourishing secrets of food, life & heart are revealed
Tasting deeply the juice of good living, suffering, despair, & hope there is no other place to go in the visible world.
I'm out here. I don't have any choices left.

and tell me to shut up and sit down. Or leave. That's why

The shelters, you couldn't pay be enough money to go

Shelters:

than any smile.

But I'm not happy anymore, I'm not happy at all, so

I don't understand. Something needs to be done and said.

I don't understand. Something needs to be done and said. But I'm not happy anymore, I'm not happy at all, so depressed. I see depression in so many faces, more so than any smile.

Sweeps:

I never would have dreamt this up in a million years, doing this. I mean to me the DPW is high priced thieves. I don't see any hope. I don't understand why the city is doing this. I mean to me the DPW is high priced thieves. I mean what's going on? How can this city tear their people down?

I don't understand. Something needs to be done and said. But I'm not happy anymore, I'm not happy at all, so depressed. I see depression in so many faces, more so than any smile.

Shelters:

The shelters, you couldn't pay be enough money to go back to them because they condone my phone being took and tell me to shut up and sit down. Or leave. That's why I'm out here. I don't have any choices left.