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STREET SHEET IS SOLD BY HOMELESS AND LOW-INCOME VENDORS WHO KEEP 100% OF THE PROCEEDS.

STREET SHEET IS READER SUPPORTED, ADVERTISING FREE, AND AIDS TO LIFT UP THE VOICES OF THOSE LIVING IN POVERTY IN SAN FRANCISCO.

CURRENTLY ALSO DISTRIBUTED BY STREET SPIRIT VENDORS IN THE EAST BAY.

Harry J
The Street Sheet is a project of the Coalition on Homelessness. The Coalition on Homelessness organizes poor and homeless people to create permanent solutions to poverty while protecting the civil and human rights of those forced to remain on the streets.

Our organizing is based on extensive peer outreach, and the information gathered directly drives the Coalition’s work. We do not bring our agenda to poor and homeless people: they bring their agendas to us.

The STREET SHEET is a publication of the Coalition on Homelessness.

Some stories are collectively written, and some stories have individual authors. But whoever sets fingers to keyboard, all stories are formed by the collective work of dozens of volunteers, and our outreach to hundreds of homeless people.

It’s slavery or homelessness he says
He chooses
His hard
Dignity

One day soon
All the homeless
Will join force
And then

My lord
I am young
And grimed

A mad-eyed boy’s
Brindled pitbull
Brought onto BART

‘Money is the root of all evil
Do yourself a favor
Give me yours’

Pregnant and stressed
Any help is a blessing

Help me
And the boy
Thank u
God bless

Hungry
Hungry
hobo

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This isn’t how it always was.
The homeless, you see, were not what you are led to believe.

A ladder you and your brother seek.
Behind my camp, my stuff, my bottles, and cans.

We weren’t always in the way.
You came to see us, don’t you remember?
This was a famous café, under the freeway.
Your mom and dad, your family, and friends.
Well, this is how it all ends.

A wash boy, a table buser, so very important, needed.
Then the costs went up, and they were the first on the street.
No longer clean and neat.

Then again, an owner to the manager, tells a waiter or two,
I can no longer pay for you.
Next on the street, but with families not able to eat.

Then a bartender, an assistant manager.
Now an owner with no staff, cleaning, and cooking.
No more sleep for him, stress, and anger kicks in.

Then there were three.
A cook, an owner, and the last waiter, me.

No more glorious food, but whatever you could get.
Cruel old patrons.
So willing to give a tip before, now rudely shut their doors.

Now all the doors are closed, blocked by wooden boards.
Everything is taken and sold off to pay off debts, an owner stands alone in the cold.

This is our home now, a tent trash, rodents of the street.
Starving for food where everyone came to eat.

So, take your ladders and go back to work and remember how it all is.
Because.
It may not be how it always was.

---

Weathered walking through desert sands
Wind pushes against fragile joints aching
While remaining gentle momentum

Footstep metronome

a strap, carrying only necessary supplies
it cross-sects the torso.
Within the satchel contains multitudes
of relics long lost to
the mind’s fortress, places only local to a specific heart,

To the desert’s hollows
As they whistle on

Just like I, trudging forward
Knowing this body as borrowed
continuing onwards until I finally reach that line in the distance
The one that separates ground from sky

I wish it would kiss me
just how the sun kisses it nightly
escaping view

The wind continues its violent push
Can’t they see the nebulas have just arrived?

Without the ability to see much else besides what lays before me,
I search for those landscapes tucked away behind my eyes
Always and only for
for safe keeping
To crack
unlock the vault

away from stimulus
silence
be the code I search for

the way my eyelids close every night,
synonymous to seeing stars*+~
ROUND TRIP

exit wounds
that refuse
to be one way tunnels
a knife's point gets sharper
the more it dulls its edges on rock
when these flowers
who could not be saved by others weeping
have dried
will creased hands press to preserve them between pages?
nothing can live behind glass
put a frame around a starving family
and suddenly they become a philosophical question
rather than anyone's responsibility
you dream and work so hard
I've watched
your needles
suture your fingers to your tapestries
whip-stitched edges of skin
dye tethering traits
of blood-caked sweaty threads
no number of tears could wash out
I've turned my hands to the soil
facing my fingers with roots
listening for stones that speak
our blood and others blood
lives there too
in the dirt
their palms spread toward us
fingers curling into fists
to fit all of our hearts
both our hands so dirty and lovely
elbow deep in the mire
we carve and sculpt out sanctuaries
from cavities in the jaws of waste
you with wild piercing metaphor
and humor
me with what rough service
and sweet patience
I can muster
you staying true to you
in the midst of transformation
incites me to put myself to the task
so much so
we'll form the next chrysalis
before fully hatching from the last
so much so
we'll leave so many of our poems unnamed
in an attempt to pass them off
as merely conversation
tho they laugh
scream
and tremor
out of our bones
in this world that makes
heretics of healers
saints of cops
and salesmen of presidents
(when they aren't busy butchering)
what spaces we save for sweetness
is a secret we seem to have
but somehow never seem to keep it
cuz sweetness depreciates in value
the more we hoard and heap it
who really ever has use
for a word like goodbye anyway?
when the wars wage on
our fingers fail to rest
and shoes warm their soles
by what fires will have them
your feet slip their palms
along the edge of the high wire
while my skin was fired from a cannon
both failing to draw blood in their spectacle
many people in a car crash
remember the impact
the screeching sparks
burning rubber
and broken glass
I remember looking over
and catching your eyes
in a heart beaten sigh of relief
each emerging from our rubble
our eyes blaze to the world,
"don't speak to me of drought
Till your tongue has lashed the sky
and broke open rain from clouds"
our ears filled
with the echoes of broken shells
whose voices we take to heart
you throw your arms out
casting seeds you found
between their teeth
across the field
I use my thumb
to press them just below the ground
Tucked in to sleep
Till some harvest moon
the wolves nuzzle you in the alley
and protect you
from the winter concrete
with their fur
our eyes howling at moons
when our voices are too parched
if these folding tenements could speak
they would say,
"Walk on sister
whatever doors and windows
are not already smashed
you may kick down
to build a home
you've long sought for
scaffolded more
by who is sitting in the circle
rather than any form of architecture
are cracks in old paintings
the places where the brush hesitated?
or are they pockets of scrutiny
left from eye born holes?
or are they canyons
where someone
breathed too close and passionately?
or are they fissures where life
persists to escape
from these temporal cages of creation?
are these the places
we get free?
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EVERYBODY IS A STAR RISING

AboVe Their Social Condition

Paul Thomas Jackson

Some homeless man says, “You label me, you negate me,” echoing the premier Existentialist Søren Kierkegaard. He articulates, “You may be tempted to hate me for being homeless and since my life, like yours, is hard.” The sorry fellow can shame as well as fascinate me, recounting the tragic story in which he starred.

The comforting belief you could have picked him in a police lineup isn’t, you know, always true. (Unsure which one he is if circumstances tricked him. But sure he is close and, after all, could be you.) Too many of us are prone to blame the victim if we lack insight and don’t know what to do.

Is anyone an island? Never needing help from someone? “You are never strong enough where you don’t,” said Cesar Chavez, inspiring victories still hard won. For having left someone out, how shall we have atoned? How will we serve so many when we’ve just begun? If we fail to truly live in community, we won’t.

The cards the angels dealt some from the deck left them few choices, incurring homelessness, like an albatross hanging round their neck. Escape is near impossible and through duress. Tragedy befell them, devouring their paycheck. It left them no pot to piss in, in a mess.

Do you assume they belong in a facility? The call requires professional judgment to meet each one’s needs and respect their autonomy. Undereserved today, they face begrudgement. The call requires professional judgment to meet each one’s needs and respect their autonomy.

They didn’t set out in life to make such a scandal. The scandal is ours in our homelessness prevention; unwished for while in their mothers’ dandle. They didn’t set out in life to make such a scandal. The scandal is ours in our homelessness prevention; unwished for while in their mothers’ dandle.

How justice is to be realized in Fresno lies within each community member’s heart. Though many an intellect quickly says no, he said you won’t hear justice above the din “is not always just.” But if you don’t lend an ear, “The cry of the poor,” said Howard Zinn, “is not always just.” But if you don’t lend an ear, “The cry of the poor,” said Howard Zinn.

How will we serve so many when we’ve just begun? If we fail to truly live in community, we won’t. If we fail to truly live in community, we won’t. How justice is to be realized in Fresno lies within each community member’s heart. Though many an intellect quickly says no, he said you won’t hear justice above the din “is not always just.” But if you don’t lend an ear, “The cry of the poor,” said Howard Zinn, “is not always just.” But if you don’t lend an ear, “The cry of the poor,” said Howard Zinn.

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Writing, Artwork, Photography, Poetry, and More!

Write about your experience of homelessness in San Francisco, about policies you think the City should put in place or change, your opinion on local issues, or about something newsworthy happening in your neighborhood! Or create art that uplifts homeless people, celebrates the power of community organizing, or calls out abuses of power!

Visit www.streetssheet.org/submit-your-writing/ or bring submissions to 280 Turk Street to be considered.

Pieces assigned by the editor may offer payment, ask for details!
Shiny cherries kindled by traffic
hang off the lip of a drain slit
shattered silver ash wisped
over pinched crimson smirks
achromatic plumes hang
like a lazy hologram
I lit and watched the orange edges split
staring through the haze of exhaust
packing pages into palms
igniting street side fire smiles
cracking chapped lips
racing wind pipe sidewalks
exhaling bus stops
Exiting passengers ask
do you have an extra smoke?
blue box of coffin nails
Native American logo
he presses between his lips
flushes ember glow over dry knuckles
flicks stale whim and grins
on a hand to block the wind
windows glazed with breath
where names drawn with heat melt moments
charred leaf trails air
our entrances incinerate
like words in the urn
burn into tasteless filter
yellow ochre cuticle
souls like mutilated matchbooks
left for the wind

On the rooftop across the way
five crows are meeting. They strut
about against the foggy sky, cawing
and discussing the current state
of affairs. They wonder why humans
suffer so much, hurt so much, destroy
so much. They are aware the remedy
lies somewhere in the love nestled
between the feathers of their black wings but they are a cranky bunch
and not always willing to share.

Meanwhile, the lemon tree in the yard
between the birds and me offers up
its yellow fruit, the cars stream by
on Guerrero, and this old pole, right
outside my window continues to lean
as if being pulled in a tug-of-war
by the jumble of electric lines it holds
(one side always slightly winning).

Struck by a sudden generosity, one by one
the crows swoop off the roof releasing
their healing wisdom over any passers-by.

I sit on the streets all alone
Deep in my thoughts about the days that are gone
A complete stranger – a friend whom I never met,
Walks by;
Put on a smile and says “hi!”
So I think, and ask you:
Is there on earth a more pure and beautiful thing than that?

the world, our world
she is so beautiful
yet, so hypocritical...
there are so many “normal” things here,
that are unbelievably wrong.
it can hardly be justified,
as much as one tried.
but still,
- and some might say therefore
I can surly say,*
the world is so beautiful...

The sky is blue, the grass are green and yellow leaves are flying
around smoothly.
I sit on a bench, smoking and breathing; stare on pedestrians,
and wait…
For what am I waiting?
I don’t know.
For whom am I waiting?
I don’t know either.
Until when will I be waiting?
I have no clue.
But yet – I sense and feel:
It is good to wait…

Im not very patient
But I must be.
Waiting is essential,
It is the only key…
I was raised by wolves
And they never really ever understood me
Lights out, start the film, reel rolling I never crossed the finish line
But I sprint the first mile
I’m searching for the Easter egg that is joy
Tricky-ass leprechaun that it is
Roll credits

Deciding which bad choice to make
Scoffing imperiously
Waving away problems like flies
Gaining altitude
Make it or break it
I close my eyes
And go to my beach
Breathe in the salty air
Dig my toes in the sand

to know we are alive
STREET SPIRIT—THE HOMELESS NEWSPAPER OF THE EAST BAY—IS CURRENTLY FUNDRAISING TO GET BACK IN PRINT. WE HAVE RAISED OVER $100K THIS SUMMER, WHICH WAS AMAZING! WE ARE CURRENTLY 150K AWAY FROM REACHING OUR GOAL.

YOU CAN HELP STREET SPIRIT GET BACK OUT ONTO EAST BAY STREETS BY DONATING ONLINE, HERE:

PAYPAL.COM/PAYPALME/STREETSPIRITNEWS

STAY CONNECTED BY JOINING OUR NEWSLETTER!
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