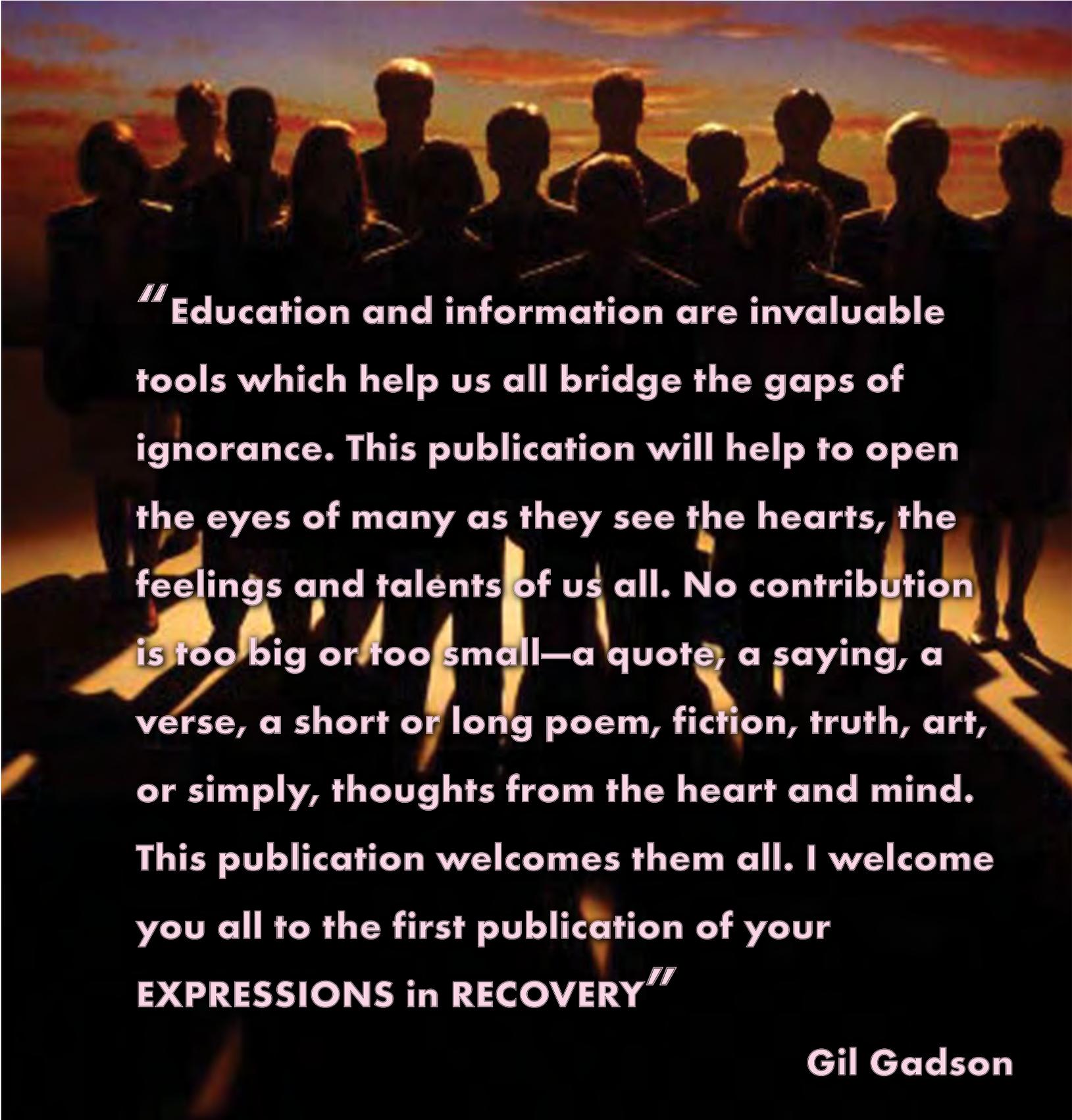


Expressions in Recovery

A digest for people in recovery describing their current state of mind, progress, and future outlook



“Education and information are invaluable tools which help us all bridge the gaps of ignorance. This publication will help to open the eyes of many as they see the hearts, the feelings and talents of us all. No contribution is too big or too small—a quote, a saying, a verse, a short or long poem, fiction, truth, art, or simply, thoughts from the heart and mind. This publication welcomes them all. I welcome you all to the first publication of your EXPRESSIONS in RECOVERY”

Gil Gadson

Our Mission

OUR MISSION IS TO PROMOTE HOPE, FAITH AND A BELIEF THAT TOGETHER IN THIS JOURNEY OF HEALING AND GROWTH, OF RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE ANYTHING WE STRIVE TO ACHIEVE IS POSSIBLE.

TO FACILITATE THIS MISSION, THIS NEWSLETTER — YOUR NEWSLETTER WAS CREATED. THIS FORUM WAS CREATED BY AND FOR THOSE IN RECOVERY TO GIVE A VOICE TO OUR CONCERNS, HOPES AND TALENTS.

Rules for Submission

ART, POETRY, PROSE, TRUE OR FICTIONAL STORIES ARE WELCOME. THE PURPOSE OF THIS NEWSLETTER IS TO PROVIDE HOPE, FAITH AND INFORMATION. IN KEEPING WITH THE SPIRIT OF THIS ENDEAVOR ALL CONTRIBUTIONS MUST BE FREE FROM PROFANITY AND VULGARITY.

Department Descriptions

Here and Now

BRIEF STATEMENTS OR PARAGRAPHS FROM PEOPLE IN RECOVERY DESCRIBING THEIR CURRENT STATE OF MIND, PROGRESS, AND FUTURE OUTLOOK.

Feature Stories

ACTUAL LIFE EXPERIENCES INCLUDING INDIVIDUAL RECOVERY STRUGGLES AND TRIUMPHS.

Expressions in recovery Poetry, prose, art etc.....

Last Word (in closing)

INSPIRATIONAL SUMMARY BY THE EDITOR OR GUEST CONTRIBUTORS.



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Welcome from the Editor

When I was first approached to do this I felt honored to play a part in developing this publication. The opportunity to develop a forum for people in recovery that would be far reaching was more than I anticipated. There are any number of issues that we in recovery face. The stigma that we in recovery face on a daily basis can be exhausting and counterproductive.

Education and information are invaluable tools which help us all bridge the gaps of ignorance. This publication will help to open the eyes of many as they see the hearts, the feelings and talents of us all. No contribution is too big or too small—a quote, a saying, a verse, a short or long poem, fiction, truth, art, or simply, thoughts from the heart and mind. This publication welcomes them all. I welcome you all to the first publication of your “EXPRESSIONS in RECOVERY”

Gil Gadson.

Here and Now

Short reflections

Where I'm at with my recovery? I'm blessed because I get to give back to society by being a positive role model and a better father to my kids. I'm learning that recovery is the key to success. I know I need to focus on me before I try to help somebody else.

Jermaine Johnson

Spirituality has helped me tremendously. To know that each day brings something new and more exciting. I'm constantly learning new things about myself. It's vital for me to help others—it aids in my spiritual growth. Today I am responsible.

Bennie Wheatley

Gratitude, God and the fellowship of my brothers and sisters in recovery sustains me. The new climate of recovery which is peer-based has encouraged and strengthened me. Life is ever-revealing and the power of the human spirit has me spellbound.

Gil G.

Basically, I feel like I'm making an impact on my own recovery as well as others. I'm more productive, open-minded and willing to give and share. I'm practicing leadership but willing to take orders before giving orders. I'm much more patient and this is all through the grace of God, and the N.E.T. Everything Must Change and individuals that I've met, especially those who took the time to help me through this process.

I am blessed

John E. Dorsey

Here and now I'm sober. I have a chance at being a father again. I can't change the past but I can change the future.

I don't beat myself up today. Today God has given me a chance to live happy. Part of my recovery is the pleasure and privilege of helping others, thus helping myself.

Jake Fleming

Just for today, now that I have stop using, some days in recovery seem slow. However, if I stay into today...minute by minute, second by second, I have once again achieved another 24hr goal.

Doyle W.

Now I have to reflect on where I am in my life. It's amazing to notice my own achievements, to catch myself thinking: "Did I do that, was that really me." When I respond slowly instead of reacting results are usually positive, which stimulates my self esteem. It feels good on the inside and shows on the outside. I am self-motivated. That lets me know I can be better at anything I do. However, I am not well yet—the best is yet to come!

Wanda Hudson

Being in recovery has given me a sense to enjoy the little things, like smelling flowers and looking at the stars... today I can appreciate the little things in life.

Wanetta Tenient

I'm doing great. I volunteer every chance I get everywhere and anywhere I can. I love what I'm doing. I never thought I would be where I'm at in life. I've been in and out of this process a number of times. Now it's working and I'm very happy. I use the tools I've been given on a daily basis. Life is good. I take it one day at a time.

Lenny Brady

Featured Stories

The Story of Brooke

It's been said that no child wants to be a drug addict when they grow up. I was a child who was adamant that I would not be a drug addict when I grew up. My mother was a drug addict, and I knew that I wanted to be nothing like her. When I was told I was just like my mother, or that I was going to end up like my mother, I would grow extremely angry at even the idea of it. I was a child who grew up mostly without and ultimately lost my mother to drug addiction. Once I learned that my mother had died as a result of a drug overdose I kind of lost it. I was a somewhat troubled kid already, but that sent me over the edge.

At the age of twelve I started using drugs. I wondered what was so great about them that my mother would give up her child and her life for them. I wondered what was so great about them that my father would send my brothers and me up to our bedrooms so he could use them with his friends. Along with the drug use I was not emotionally or mentally okay. Thoughts of suicide were a daily thing by the age of 13, and after a suicide attempt, I was hospitalized for what would be the first of many times.

It was during this first hospitalization that I was given the diagnosis of having bipolar disorder. I refused to accept this; I did not want to see myself as being messed up. I did not want people to view me as crazy. I did not want to need medication for the rest of my life.

Through the ages of 13-17, my life was a whirlwind of institutions, drug use, detention centers, anger, group homes, and misery. I was told by a professional at one point that I was going to end up being institutionalized for the rest of my life.

Finally at the age of 17, I was sick of living in institutions. I was schooled at this point regarding what the doctors, therapists, probation officers, judges, and my father wanted to hear....and this is what I told them. I was able to graduate from high school with a basketball scholarship a result.

Unfortunately, I did not realize that what had kept me from drugs long enough to accomplish this was the accountability of my probation officer's little plastic cup. It was never that I was ready to stop using, or that I believed I really had a problem. I just didn't want to go back to jail or the hospital or a treatment center.

Once I was off probation the summer before starting college, I began using drugs again. I swore it would only be on weekends— it would only be marijuana. Weekends became longer, the list of acceptable drugs to use became longer, and by the time I was halfway through my first semester of school, I was right back where I had been before, but worse.

Ultimately, I dropped out of school. Life went quickly downhill from there. The next five years were a nightmare that ultimately led to my entire existence revolving around

getting high and using drugs. I had ended up just like the mother I never wanted to end up like, and the only thing left to do was die.

At the end, I wanted to die more than Microsoft Word could ever allow me to express. The thing that stopped me was nothing short of the work of a higher power; for it was compassion for those few I loved that would not enable me to commit suicide. Upon realizing that fighting off suicide on a daily basis was probably a sign of not so good mental health, I decided to get help. I sought outpatient help under the premise that perhaps I did have a mental illness. Perhaps I did need medication. I did not seek help or my drug problem.

When as a result of the assessment process (and my complete desperation-driven honesty). I was given a drug and alcohol therapist, I was infuriated. I did not seek help for drugs, I just didn't want to kill myself!

Ultimately, I saw this outpatient drug and alcohol counselor for approximately a month, and during that time, I went from completely denying a drug problem to realizing I needed help. Although scarred from years of institutions, I agreed to go into treatment. This was what started my road to recovery.

I now have three years of continuous abstinence from drugs and alcohol. I accept that I live with what is termed as a mental illness, and I continue treatment for this as well. My life today is a miracle. My life today is beyond my wildest dreams. At one point I had accepted my fate to be that I would end up like my mother. There was a long point in my life where I became ok with that and did not envision anything greater for me. Today, I live my destiny, and that destiny has included not only living without drugs, but also reaching back and helping others do the same. Others who are like me, others who are like my mom.

I've gone from being told I'd never make it out of an institution to going into institutions and helping others make it out. Recovery is possible ...I know this because I am living proof.

Brooke Feldman

Living "Just for Today"

I'm an addict and my name is Karin. I'd like to share a bit of my experience, strength and hope with anyone who cares to read this. I have suffered with the disease of addiction since I was eight years old. I only found this out when I came into recovery.

My disease did not start with the use of drugs and alcohol, it started long before that. I won't go into all the details—I would have to write a book. But, I can tell you that it has been a long journey. It would not have taken so long if I had just lived the "program." I had to be beat down

continued on page 4

Living "Just for Today" continued from page 3

physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually to a degree. I am going on 54 years old and I have 15 months clean from drugs and alcohol. Yet the core of my disease is the real issue. As a child I was abandoned by my mother and that left me emotionally "damaged." So as a result, in relationships I act in ways that always caused me pain in the end. That's when I started drinking at 12, smoking weed at 16, taking pills, cough syrup and acid.

As you can see my addiction progressed as I got older. Then at the age of 31, I started using crack and my life spiraled out of control. I thought I had control before because I always held one or two jobs at a time. And I took care of my four children on my own so I never believed I was an addict.

My first attempt to stop using drugs was in 1988. I was clean for 100 days exactly and I just knew I was okay. I went back around people, places and things and I guess you know the rest—I got high again. So I kept on drinking and using until 2000. I said I was going to stop because it was a new millennium. I'd start my life anew since I was still living.

Well..... that didn't happen either, because all this time I was using and stopping, in and out of relationships. I was hurting people and I don't even know why. In 2004 I went into a drug and alcohol outpatient program for the third time in all these years of using. I also was in treatment with a psychotherapist. I learned that I had an abandonment issue. After being in group therapy for four years.

My counselor suggested that I apply for peer specialist training. This came about because I was doing so well with the drug and alcohol abuse and emotional issues. I applied and was accepted onto the training program. I completed with flying colors and I am now a Certified Peer Specialist. My classmate, Mr. Gil Gadson asked me to share my story of struggle, hope and triumph, I am very glad he did. I titled my story "just for today" because that's how I got 15 months clean and that's how I live today. I find that when I project too much into the future I disappoint myself and sometimes others too.

So just for today I ask my higher power to guide me to where he wants me to be. Give me the courage to do what needs to be done and the wisdom to know what I can and cannot do. Just for today I live by the principles of NA and I apply the 12 steps in my daily life. So if you are someone trying to find a way out of your addiction to drugs I can honestly tell you that NA works. So let go and let GOD, One day at a time—just for today.

Karin Hines, Love and Respect.

Eddie Simpkins..The recovery person

During 2002-2005 my life was 100% pure destruction, moving to Texas to handle a family matter—a serious matter...o.k. My mother had cancer and I was chosen to take care of a beautiful mother named Donna but inside I was thinking who's gonna take care of me.

My mother had to stop working because of the treatment she was receiving for cancer. So me being myself, I decided to get a job at night and take care of my mother during the day. The first job I got was working at a night club (you must read on to get the name of the night club). I was

working the door at the club (me with money in my hands. The cover charge was \$ 2.00 per adult. For about two months everything was fine at the club but at home my mother was starting to lose her hair and that was the first sign of that stuff (cancer) being inside her.

The more things broke down at the house the more hours I was working, trying to hide the pain I felt for my mother. While working at the door my boss gave me something in a brown bag and said get rid of these for \$50 a piece. I did so well, the boss gave me three of them and my pay.

Did I mention that I suffer from co-occurring issues: depression and substance abuse? Working at a nightclub didn't help. In the year 2004 my mother was laid to rest so I decided to move into my boss's house about one mile from the club. I could do what I wanted to do (more drugs) and still maintain a job. I learned a good lesson, never live in your boss's house and work for him at the same time, because he could fire and kick you out at the same time.

The more cocaine I was doing the more I became isolated from my friends ("friends" that gave me drugs). I lost about 37 lbs during that period. The year 2005, I finally admitted to myself, I needed help. I called on the people who would not judge me but help me (my real family— my brother & sister. My brother had experience in the recovery process, so between the two of them they double teamed me about going into treatment.

"Me being me, I said. I'm not stealing or robbing anyone for it." My sister and brother explained, it's not about that, you don't have yourself, to tell the truth. They were right. So here in this city of brotherly love, I'm searching for myself. But what am I looking for? Now I'm in Kensington seeking my first sign of recovery. By the looks of it, 80% of Kensington didn't know the first rule. Just don't pick up. Every other person was high. Now I'm thinking, how I can recover under these conditions.

I have learned, it's wasn't about them, it's about me and my recovery. Being locked down for 60 days, that was the rule or the intake process. I started to be part of something nice. The recovery within myself. My walk, talk, and the glow that people speak about were there. While at my treatment center I was asked to run a house (I only had 6 months clean). The owner saw something in me that I didn't see. I was always good at communicating.

What I didn't know was that communication and recovery go together. Talking about my experience and the way I felt made me comfortable about who I am. The thing I realized that Philadelphia is a forgiving city and a city of options.

I went on to run two more recovery centers, received certification from the Department of Behavioral Health and Mental Retardation Services, and still managed to stay in the right lane of recovery. It's the best thing that ever happened to me. We do recover. I now suffer from depression only.

Here are some of the things I live by:

1. Pray & go to meetings
2. Be honest about the past without reliving it
3. Stay connected with people that are on the recovery side of things
4. Share my recovery experience and things that work well for me

The name of that Nightclub: Rockbottom
Somewhere I never want you to go

Eddie Simpkins

Altonya Sheppard--in the spirit of gratitude

I am a 32-year-old woman by the name of Altonya Sheppard. Throughout my life, I have always felt different and out of place. My life had always been what I perceived as one let down after another due to forcing myself to feel and be included.

Drinking, drugs, sex and not even emotional and mental collapse unblurred my vision. However, prison cleared my vision so that I may see the path that always sat before me but was too afraid to venture onto.

God had the undivided attention that he'd been requesting for years from me. I learned, accepted and

embraced who God says I am (AND I STILL DO) that's a seed that must be planted and nourished so that it may grow into an abundant garden for others to enjoy.

I firmly believe that my purpose is to shine light where darkness falls so that millions may know that they were created for greatness which is my destiny. Speaking words of hope, love and encouragement always lights a fire in my spirit. Through the non-profit organization that I and my sister are planning to initiate, there will be a never ending flame embedded within.

Always remember, power lies within me and I have the authority to activate it and use it. Life is a never ending black hole if one fails to fill it with love, joy and peace. Fill your heart with these and you'll experience never ending abundance.

Expressions in Recovery

A message to...

Condescension

arrogance

insensitivity

feelings of superiority

Do you see?

Do you see when you talk down to me you limit the possibilities of who we can be.

you could learn, I could learn...

to be better at this.

Do you see?

when you are condescending and unfeeling you destroy hope, and stagnation sets in

because you keep me where you are—unable to move forward

Do you see?

I am the expert at what

I am feeling, at what I feel, what I need and where I want to go in this life.

you did not and perhaps cannot

understand my pain—

unless I tell you and you truly listen

Do you see?

You are no better than me

and if you don't really care...

I will know—you can't fool me.

and it may hurt.

Why can't you see?

If you are humble and recognize that you

are not doing me a favor—

you will

enrich yourself with—

empathy

compassion

patience

understanding

knowledge

love

and blessings that will follow for doing the will of a higher power.

open your heart and mind

please—

respect me...

What follows will exceed

your wildest expectations — I promise

Orlando.G.

6x9

Energy comes in and jewels are formed.

Inside this place rationale though is not the norm.

Go into metaphysical realities—open eyes through rhymes—so you can see that all the world is not as it seems.

Wake from the dream

Look at it from my standpoint—in a 6x9, stuck in the joint.

Wake everyday saying "what's the point?" in trying to pursue a goal.

Got here trying to get money to hold, fold over and it ain't over, no it's just begun, cause' one day I'll be number one,

This sensation of my mind racing, steadily pacing, linking up thoughts and ideas allows me to show no fears—in the face of adversity.

World ain't as it used to be, truthfully, it scares me

Can I be safer in here in the cell boundaries I know so well, mind freer in this self imposed hell than so-called free society.

Tell me how can that be?

Quinn K. Martin

Secrets

We keep our secret places away from our faces try not to leave traces upon lips or fingertips —

realizing that slips could cause trips

that we don't want to take

so we continue to feint and fake.

To keep the cat in the bag we play mental tag and lies can't lag or tongues will wag. No matter what we wear, that secret's always there—permeating the very air that we breathe, inter-locked into the fabric that we weave of our souls....

where it takes hold

and our destiny it molds.

Quinn Kenneth Martin

Which do you choose?

To live or die which do you choose?

to be happy or sad

which do you choose?

to love or hate

which do you choose?

to be right or wrong?

which do you choose?

to be a man or woman?

which do you choose?

to be young or old

which do you choose?

William J. Bonds

The Last Word

As I read all of the contributions, one thing stood out—commonality. So many of us are always quick to point out the differences we have instead of focusing on the beauty of our similarities.

We all basically seek peace and prosperity however we choose to define it. I have made the mistake in my life of judging others, of putting labels on them before I really got to know them.

It is a human action upon meeting someone that consciously and unconsciously we box them in our minds. First impressions are not always accurate. My mentor and sponsor taught me to look for the beauty in us all. He reminded me

that we all have character defects. Therefore, I must humbly and graciously be patient, listen and learn.

There have been times I have hung my head in shame as I listened to someone confide and tell their story. I now realize how it was a privilege, an honor to be trusted.

By humbly listening and caring, I have learned the true benefit of sharing. I see others as an extension of myself, another arm of life that has joined me on this quest to live the best and richest life as humanly possible.

Share who you are, listen to those who wish to share—this is our strength and it makes us the experts and gives us the tools for our recovery and the ability to help others.

Gil G...Editor

Thank You

Thank you, to all those who so enthusiastically participated and contributed to this introductory issue. I must take the time to thank Arthur C. Evans, Jr., Ph.D., Director, Department of Behavioral Health and Mental Retardation Services. His vision, courage and foresight has opened the door for so many who thought they had nothing else in this life. He is definitely heaven sent. I remember being at a function and Dr. Evans turned around

and joked with me about something light and trivial.

What struck me was his ease, manner, graciousness, openness and humility. I was instantly put at ease and thought to myself how fortunate and blessed we all are to have the Director of DBH/MRS be someone who truly cares. This man has taken up permanent residence in my heart. I am eternally devoted and grateful.

Last but not least is someone who has become my teacher, mentor, advisor, confidant and if I may—my friend, the DBH/MRS Director of

Communications, Gary Brown.

This man chose me to be the editor of this publication. He had faith in me and gave me the opportunity to help develop this publication. His advice, which is still ongoing, has become priceless. He has made me a better writer, editor, and human being because of his patience, skill and guidance.

Thank you Mr. Brown for who you are, for who you have been and the promise of tomorrow. You are nothing short of extraordinary. Love ya much.

GIL GADSON



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