I AM

I believe I am more than what I think,
and so much more than what you see.
A passing thought in my mind or yours,
does not define me.
or give others a clue to who I could be.
I smile, I laugh and sometimes cry-
and as life unfolds, I’m still finding out why.
So walk with me, be you friend or foe,
and as my dignity and courage grows,
I’ll let you know...
...just who I am in this space and time,
as I live in this world of yours and mine,
...wanting in my soul...to just be me...
...emerging from my chrysalis,
as free as can be!
Expressions in Recovery 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
Editor or guest contributor’s inspirational summary.

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For additional copies of current and past issues visit
www.dbhids.org/expressions-in-recovery

Resources
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800-273-8255
Mental Health Crisis Line 215-685-6440
Domestic Violence 866-723-3014
Protective Services 877-401-8835
Phila. Community Center 215-223-7700

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As we grow, a form of sophistication develops due to the world we live in and we take on a way of being that we justify by family, tradition, loyalty, love, responsibilities, inner and outer influences and any number of things and faces we wear that we believe helps us to survive, function, get along and often just be accepted.

But who are we really? Do we long to sing and dance at the top of our lungs, to write words that move and inspire, to help those who cannot help themselves, to create works of art and release the doves and eagles of our souls that beg to soar beyond the clouds or to simply be able to say yes or no and/or I love you with no negative repercussions.

Who are we really? Come with us the pages of “Expressions in Recovery” where truth, honesty and fearless courage are displayed as we reveal who we really are meant to be.

Gil Gadson
It’s real simple

We can’t be someone we’re not. It’s just too hard. It’s like telling a lie. You gotta’ keep it up and remember what you said the day before. I was in jail when I decided I’d had enough. I always wanted to be a barber. I didn’t really want to sell drugs and be a thug. I learned how to be one but could never get it right because I never really wanted to hurt nobody and it never felt right no matter how much money I had or how high I got. I’m a barber today. I dream of one day owning my own shop. Other people have done it so I know I can too and I know.

TIMOTHY BANKS

Living a lie

For most of my life I lived a lie. I robbed, I stole, I hurt people and I hurt myself too. I kept trying to fulfill a reputation that was not me. The true me believes in dreams. I’m a creator. I’m a romantic. I love to play with words and make people see the things in my head and the way I see the world. I’d like to make dreams a reality through the plays that I now write. These days, I help others and I love doing it. These days, I’m still discovering the true me and what I can do and it’s just beginning.

TYRICE GILMORE

I wore a lot of masks

I was a person who wore a lot of masks. I didn’t want to feel, deal or heal because I was dealing with extreme grief and misfortune from a young age. I always wanted to be like the family next door. The mother, the father, the sisters and brothers—I wanted all that and couldn’t get that image out of my head. I started looking for love in all wrong places and found myself sleeping in cardboard boxes, hoping that the chemicals I was putting in my body would take me somewhere I hadn’t been and was, as I wished every day that I was someone else besides myself. But I got tired of living the way I was living—trying to be someone else. I prayed night and day—asking God to help me change my life and to give me gifts to help others so they would never have to go through what I went through.

Today I am in touch and in love with me as I go back to the places I’ve been and extend my hand and whatever I have to those who are still where I was. This is the real me and I love her very much.

ARLEEN BEST
Be yourself

Why hide the fact that you have a thirst for knowledge? Why can’t students bear the idea of being seen carrying a Bookbag? Living in a dangerous and rough neighborhood means you have to put on that face—a lump of coal to cover that diamond which is yourself. The prisons and cemeteries are filled with people who chose not to, or could not bear with showing their true selves. Television shows and movies have more than enough actors to assume roles and pretend. The mirror that is used every morning should not just there for makeup and hairstyles—it should be used to see the true you. It should be an instrument used to see into your soul.

Humans are not mass produced. We are not Barbie and Ken dolls different skin tones. We are not robots, programmed to be one way. We are created to be different not only in outward appearances but to differ in our thinking and personalities. If we all put on masks or different faces to hide our true selves, no one would have gone and flown a kite attached to a key in a lightning storm for fear of being labeled or perceived by others to be insane and/or different. Striving to hide who we are and pretending to be who we are not can result in internal conflict. Having various faces can cause more issues than being labeled, defined or perceived by others. A person can lose themselves in the charade they put on to hide their true selves. Not knowing oneself can be worse than losing your keys by far. A person cannot find their true selves under a couch.

Take an infant for instance that is brand new to this world. He/she doesn’t think: “Maybe I should get dressed and sit my behind down and stop talking gibberish.” No. they are being the only way they can be—themselves. A child doesn’t have a home-face, play-date-face or church face. So if an infant can be themselves, why can’t adults? Why choose to be another Agent Smith in this matrix we live in? The world can and often is a harsh and ugly place. Why can’t we show the beauty in individuality and diversity. If a Picasso was all one color, hue, shade, tint and tone would you pay to see it? The role you play on this earth should be your own because when the curtain closes, which would you rather hear: “They conformed well—they were just like (Insert name here).” Or……they were truly an individual and can never be duplicated. Oscar Wilde said it best: “be yourself…. everyone else is taken…..”

MALCOLM DIXON
**EXPRESSONS IN RECOVERY**

**HOW WE FEEL...**

*The road we travelled brought us here and we have travelled far. We came to heal and face our fears, and this we've done thus far. We write to share our heart and faith and show that hope is real. Our higher power said to share, so this is how we feel.......*

**Just let me be me...**

You can scandalize my name
You can dislike me for not playing your game
You may not like the bold way that I talk,
or the cocky swagger in my walk.
Just remember...
you don't know the contents
and depths of my heart.
You don't know that with each day's new start,
I'm on my knees praying
for a better day for you and me
and even for those not yet conceived,
trust and believe and...
just let me be me.

I know that I dance to my own tune,
and my animation may disturb the room.
But you're judging me much too soon and
killing the chance to let life and love bloom.
All I want is the freedom to breathe,
—to stand under life's tree and bathe in its' leaves,
to wade in uncharted waters and unexplored seas,
to climb life's mountain,
unlocking locked doors with faith's keys
and for you and you and you,
to...Just let me be me...........................

**Just be you...**

Now that you can claim
these roots you've sown and grown,
God will make it rain—
A golden rain to soak those roots
And strengthen you once again.
God has laid a plan for you
A soldier... he sees you clear
Your walk, your talk, and all you do, and you do it with no fear.
I've watched you speak with your heart
I've watched you change a room
Fear ran away, doubt covered its face
And your strength chased away the gloom
So today we say
To one such as you
Push on and do what you do
Keep sharing your essence
With who you really are.
And the spirit that lies in you.
Like I said , you ain’t done.
God's ideas are like grains of sand.
And he's laughing right now
As some of his best work...is thinking and making plans.
Just be yourself..............................

**STORM**

**Nobody ever told them...**

He was numbers runner—
ever needing pencil or paper...he remembered everything,
he was actually a mathematician but...
...nobody ever told him....and then he died.

He could fix and rig anything with whatever was handy,
because he was poor and necessity propelled him.
He was actually an inventor, an engineer and architect but...
...nobody ever told him ..and then he died.

Children adored and loved him and he often sat with the elderly with
the utmost understanding, respect and kindness--often surprising
everyone around him, even though he was a gangster and feared.
He was actually a social worker and a humanitarian but...
...nobody told him ...and then he died.

He organized and ran a lucrative, organized, criminal empire that
stretched throughout the city. He was actually a CEO of a Fortune
500 company but...
...nobody told him...and then he died.

He was a self-proclaimed thug who could mesmerize you with his
verbal skills, his descriptive stories and play on words.
He was actually a poet, a playwright and a songwriter but...
....nobody ever told him...and then he died.
He would sneak away to the library and lose himself happily and blissfully, sometimes absorbing as much knowledge as he could, always in pain and alone, surrounded by ignorance and no one to share what he had learned.

He was actually a professor, a scholar and an intellectual but... nobody ever told him... and then he died.

He would tag his name on walls, always making designs and works of art with gifted hands to forget the everyday hopelessness he suffered in the hood.

He was actually an artist and a sculptor but... nobody ever told him... and then he died.

We gotta’ tell ‘em when they young
We gotta’ tell ‘em their live’s have just begun.
We gotta’ show ‘em that we really care
We gotta’ find out, share their dreams and always be there.
We gotta’ touch ‘em sometimes and make love feel real
We gotta’ make doing the right thing have irresistible appeal...

...and we gotta’ do it now ‘cause...
Nobody ever told ‘em that they are beautiful, smart and strong
and that there’s a special place in this world where they can belong.
We gotta’ tell ‘em..........

So today we say
To one such as you
Push on and do what you do
Keep sharing your essence
With who you really are,
And the spirit that lies in you.
Like I said, you ain’t done,
God’s ideas are like grains of sand.
And he’s laughing right now
As some of his best work... is thinking and making plans.
Just be yourself..............................

I got fired today...

I got fired today,... and laughed when I told my wife
I got inspired today
as I regained my life.
I stripped off the suit and tie.
that was my uniform
and felt so refreshed
not having to conform to the norm.
Now I can really be my very best and
I’ve saved up some money-
me and the wife gonna’ put truth to the test.
No longer do I have to be phoney
tonight I’m going to pray.
I’m gonna’ ask God to be my guide
as I embrace this truth everyday
with my arms open wide.
As I step out on faith,
and as I search in this world
looking to find my true place
as it turns and swirls.
I’m not scared anymore and
my hand has stopped shaking.
I remember standing in my boss’s office-
nervous and quaking.
my stomach in knots
trying to be someone else,
...when all I needed to do was just be myself.
I’ll be back soon—a brand new man,
a man with his own plan and freedom in his hand.
Cause I got fired today... yayyy.........

ORLANDO COLEMAN

I got fired today...

JUNIE
I can remember the pain and stress of being this creation of the streets filled with desperation, insecurity, wanting to be accepted and belonging to something. I can remember the factories, lugging bags, parcels, packages and boxes with hands meant for something else, that were too heavy—not just for my aching back and arms, but for my dying soul that longed to let loose the true things in my heart and mind. I can remember jails and cellmates with extraordinary talents and gifts locked away from sunshine, recognition, fruition and fulfillment. And I can remember the sadness, misery and depression of dreams deferred and the lights of various spirits being snuffed out too soon.

I have been fortunate and I believe blessed enough to now see the fruition of who I really am and what I can really do. I am no longer embarrassed to admit that the true me is a hug-a-tree, save-the-whale type of guy. I can cry at something sentimental—at the birth of a grandchild and my daughter simply saying the word “Dad” as I shamelessly embrace those that I love with a fierceness and everything in my heart.

And the wonder and beauty of it all is that this real life is still revealing it’s very best with indications and promises of so much more to come. There is an everyday reality we must all face due to responsibilities amongst other things, however. If I could have a wish fulfilled, everyone would be able to just be who they really are, be loved, recognized and respected and seek their dreams through self-fulfillment and being right where we all want and should be, each and every day...Imagine a world like that......Paradise.

Gil Gadson
Editor