THE COLORS OF A RAINBOW...

It is said that the rainbow was given to us as a covenant between God and man. It is said that in every human being possibilities exist and that we should always believe we can. It is said that love is as vast as grains of sand and it can be found if only we’d hold out our hands. It was thought that some of us could never find their way through and do the things we were designed to do but on these pages the proof is clear adversity is only a challenge and illusion is the definition of fear. Today, that mountain is not so high the sun is still in the heavens and birds still fly high. Children still laugh and play in spite of worldly pain and we get up each and every day again and again and again. Obstacles can be moved and pushed aside on this road down life’s highway which now looks so wonderful and wide. Because hope has stepped in and brought a belief that life is as beautiful and vast as the depths of our seas. We now step into righteous fights as if we’d already won smiling and knowing all the time that this life has just begun. We are the Rainbow, the gifts of mankind, lighting the way. We are the Rainbow, the rain is gone, we are here and us and the Sun have something to say… Look at the Rainbow!
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.

Section Descriptions

Adversity & Determination
The Turning Point
Understanding
Truth and Support
Love
Life and Purpose
The Last word

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The City of Philadelphia

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www.dbhids.org/expressions-in-recovery

Volume 15, 2015

Do you know someone doing extraordinary things in your community?
Nominate them to be a Champion of Transformation today.
visit: bit.ly/TransformationChampion

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
Editor’s Note

This was not an easy task. I have accumulated so many inspiring, uplifting and awesome stories throughout the over six years as Editor of Expressions in Recovery. When it was suggested to me that I do a, “Best of the Best” edition, my eyes widened, my heart skipped a beat and I became excited, and then it hit me that what I had to do would not be easy. How do I pick which submissions would be included when all of them are original, true, gut-wrenching, life-changing, and pertinent to us all?

I decided to let my heart decide. I decided I would pick the ones that moved and touched me the most. As you can imagine, this just opened up another dilemma all of the submissions touched me. I knew, however, I couldn’t include all of them so I just sat for a moment and the memories of some – who had bared their souls, had cried tears of joy and pain but had given back what they had gotten – came to my mind. The ones with unrelenting, unsolicited and numerous obstacles – who had decided to push forward in spite of – stuck out in mind. And then it became very clear that all I had to do was go through each issue and what was needed would be clear.

So strap yourselves in faithful readers, take a ride with me on this train of life, making all stops into the intimate lives of those who believe that we can. This trip is free; just turn the page and meet old and new inspiring and awesome friends on the pages of Expressions in Recovery’s “The Best of” issue.

GIL GADSON
Hello, my name is Sylvester Jackson, and I’d like to tell you a bit about myself and my recovery. I’ve been clean for 23 years. In 1986, after being clean and sober for 9 months I was diagnosed as someone with major depression and was put on medication which I still take today. I also have Hepatitis C, I have hypertension, and sleep apnea. I am bi-polar, manic-depressive with a schizoaffective disorder. It hasn’t been easy. Some days are worse than others. Through the grace of a power greater than myself, I’m blessed and I’m still here. There were bad days when I felt like I wanted to give up. I remember many days when I didn’t have the strength to wake up and face another day with the depression, mood swings, paranoia, racing thoughts, anxiety and panic attacks. I was incoherent, disoriented, hopeless and frustrated. There were suicidal and homicidal thoughts and despair.

The physical illnesses left me extremely tired and fatigued, and feeling like I could barely make it because of the physical pain, anxiety and confusion. I would lose weight, gain weight, eat too little, and eat too much. My nights were sleepless—tossing and turning. I was in and out of the hospital for medical and psychiatric reasons. The feelings of hopelessness and not wanting to live— but too afraid to die— plagued me. I longed for some emotional stability that I thought impossible. I had crying spells and feared I would totally lose my mind. I took many pills every single day. I had two nervous breakdowns.

And now there is today. Today, I’ve reached a point of emotional stability, acceptance and hope. There is joy and gratitude. It definitely hasn’t been peaches and cream, but my struggle has been worth it because I truly have a recovery story as well as a testimony. Faith, courage, willingness, hope and gratitude have come out of this. To say it has been miraculous is an understatement.

God works in mysterious ways. I got a new lease on life. He renewed my mind with insurmountable strength to carry on and sustain me through it all. I’m moving on to deeper depths and higher heights one day at a time through this spiritual journey of recovery. The sky’s the limit. In my fourth training class. I’ve taken Recovery Foundations Training, WRAP, Storytelling Class and WRAP Facilitator Training Class. I have extensive experience in the mental health field and human resources.

Who would have ever thought that this wretched soul, this old drunk, and dope fiend, would be able to make a difference in the lives of others. I am now able to offer hope, faith and gratitude, and ultimately freedom. But for the grace of God things can happen beyond your wildest dreams and imagination. My life is fulfilled today, and I am truly blessed.

If you ever notice, there is a dynamic amongst those who’ve served. For periods of time upon returning home, silence and isolation is forced upon us due to our experiences. We walk the streets, ride the buses and trains, and listen as people discuss lives that we once had that are so far removed now. We listen as people talk about trivial things and complain about politics, social ills, bills, their children, their mates, and money—all relevant issues. However, in our minds, most of these are trivial and petty because our daily experiences in service was pure survival. Imagine going through a day with your primary concern being not walking on a land mine and losing your legs—or life. Imagine acquiring a fear of friendship because that friend could possibly die at any moment while at the same time being responsible not only for your life but his life too.

I am now a Peer Services Coordinator and a Coordinator for Taking Recovery to the Streets for the Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services. I’ve met others who were in service and we always discussed the challenges of readjusting. We discussed how our worldview has changed and how we were in places where people were concerned with simply acquiring fresh water, simple shelter and a bite to eat. We would talk of how blessed we are in America, in spite of our view of current politics or lack of care and understanding. We spoke of how people called us heroes, and we would smile but beneath that smile we were remembering our true heroes, the ones who were maimed and disabled and the ones who gave the ultimate sacrifice—his or her life. To us, they are the true heroes.

My life these days revolve around helping others. In this, I have found purpose; I’ve found fulfillment. I can actually bring things to fruition and have a feeling of true accomplishment. And in doing this, I can still be a soldier. A soldier fighting the war against the personal ills that may plague each and every one of us...each and every day.
THE TURNING POINT

“WENDELL? YO! In 43 years, you have nothing, you’re doing nothing and you are going nowhere!”

These words rang in my head even as I went out and got high again; those words would not leave me alone. It started one day as I tried to call my dealer on my phone. The person I was trying to call to buy drugs had the same name as a person who was running an innovative program known for success. The Program Director answered the phone. He was the one who made the above statement. A statement that made me think; it made me examine my life and take that first step—my turning point.

WENDELL BATES, VOL. 5

MY SPIRIT was broken. I was suffering from depression, anxiety attacks, suicidal thoughts and hopelessness. Through the fog of hopelessness and a deteriorating mental state, I found some clarity. I fought and prayed until people who cared appeared and pointed me in the right direction. Peace has entered my life now as I remember my turning.

LUZ ROSADO, VOL. 5

MY MOMENT was laying in an institution. I had just heard a lecture given by one of the hospital staff. He spoke of letting the God of your understanding intervene on your behalf and in your affairs. What struck me was that his life story resembled my own. I experienced a flashback. My whole life played out in my mind. My self-destructive path was laid bare.

DARRYL SAVAGE, VOL. 5

The Turning Point

I remember my moment clearly. It began with self-loathing, embarrassment and shame for who I had become. I developed a profound ability to lie to myself and others.

The thing that fuels my memory now and renews my gratitude is the change. The feeling of waking up with a clear conscious, and going about my day focused and with purpose, clearly and honestly.

I wanted badly to be a man in the true sense of the word. I wanted to be able to tell the truth about who I am, where I’ve been, and where I hoped to go in this life. So many people have also spoken of the freedom after their turning point. There may have been tears – some joyous and some sad – but tears nonetheless, and as we reached these defining turning points and accepted that change was necessary. We were freed.

We were free to live, strive, plan, implement and dream dreams we previously never thought possible. For some of us, these moments of change were brutal. We may have not seen them as something we were particularly grateful for. But, we shudder to think how lost we might still be if these moments in our lives had not taken place.

For many, their moment has not come. For others, their moment may take them away. Many of us remain to strive, stay strong and live with the hope that our stories will strengthen others as we share.

STORM, VOL. 5
UNDERSTANDING

**ALL I USED TO FOCUS ON** and criticize were the so-called “bad people” in my neighborhood. I joined in with others thinking they were just predators, parasites and were less than others. It’s amazing how God always shows you what you need to know, and how he opens your heart. A young woman sat on my porch and just started crying in desperation. She made me cry because for once I understood and felt someone else’s pain. She had been hurt, molested, abandoned and betrayed. She was crying because she saw no way out; she was tired and had no hope of it ever getting better. I had to admit that if it was me, I would not have made it as far as she had come; she humbled me. She taught me and opened my heart. She is now my friend.

*ROBIN WILSON, VOL. 4*

**SHORT AND SWEET**

Although I have never been a substance abuser, and have no mental health issues, my youngest, most talented brother did. Many days and nights I wanted to do something, but didn’t know what to do. I wanted to say something, but didn’t know what to say. Knowing his abilities and what he had to offer, not only to himself and his family, made it more frustrating to say the very least. I felt sad, not only for myself for losing a brother, but also for my mother for losing a son, my niece for losing a dad, my daughters for losing an uncle, and my brothers for losing their brother. So many roles wrapped up in one person is a lot to ask, but I always thought we were supposed to ask what we know a person can and should give. We all have a responsibility to each other. I felt left out and let down. You noticed I said “felt.” All these negative feelings have been changed. Today, my brother is well, he is full of hope, he faced and chased his demons away, he is productive, and one of the most talented, lovable, sensitive guys I know. And, he is teaching me. I’m so glad to have you back my brother.

*BIG SIS, BRENDA FRANKLIN, VOL. 4*

**IMAGINE**

There are things in my head that won’t go away.
I’ve had therapy and medicine, each and every day.
I got memories of places that were not mine.
Hidden meanings and faces, that I can’t even find.
I got illusions and delusions of where I am now.
’cause everyone around me just don’t know how to listen and imagine where I’ve been.
They sit scared and confused, not knowing where to begin.
So listen...
imagine strange faces and places, in a land not your own.
Imagine walking for miles, but never headed home.

Imagine battling in a field of thousands...
but still feeling all alone.
Imagine music and rhythm without a tone.
Then imagine coming home and not knowing where you are, as people and places seem as distant as a star.
As sounds and smells take you to a hidden place, where only you can go and no one has a face.
These things are my day, more than they’re not – even though I’m learning to face them...
and appreciate what I’ve got.
I don’t need pity or charity from anyone at all.
I just wanna’ walk with dignity and stand real tall.
So... imagine.

*STORM, VOL. 10*
AND IF WE CARE

We all are guilty of having prejudices and pre-judging others. It is so easy to stick a label on someone or something without having all the facts.

If someone is homeless, it’s obviously their fault. If someone has an addiction, they are a weak person with no morals. They are probably a thief, a liar and not very smart as well. Right or wrong, we make these assumptions on a daily basis. None of us can afford to make such broad, sweeping statements because none of us are perfect. We all stumble and fall. There but for the grace of God are we. Just because someone made bad decisions in the past or succumbed to their environment does not preclude them from picking themselves up and turning their life around. We have no right to deny others their freedom of choice to change.

I fell in love with a person in recovery. He is intelligent, kind, caring and gets the greatest joy from helping others. Do I sit around scared he will relapse? Am I scared to trust him? No! Where he was is not where he is now. Once a person makes a conscious decision to change their reality, it is a beautiful thing to see. Nothing can deter them from this goal. As those who love them, it is a must for us to not only encourage them but to make sure we are not slipping back into the what-if scenario. What if it doesn’t work? What if they can’t make it? Negativity is our enemy; we have to stay positive and make sure we don’t enable them to go backwards. Yes, so many times in trying to help, we enable, which not only does not help, it keeps them in their bad space. Life is good: every day we are alive is a chance to change. We are not stuck where we are, no matter what our situation is, unless we choose to be. We can always turn things around: it’s hard work but totally doable. It is in all of our best interest to outgrow indifference to those who may be challenged in some way, choosing to instead nourish compassion for them and open our hearts and minds, remembering that all of us stumble and fall at one time or another, and we did not stay there, we fought back and forged on, to get us to the better place we are in today.

MICHELLE RAMOS, VOL. 4

LEARNING

I’m writing this because I believe I played a part in her not recovering sooner. I talked when I should have listened, I yelled when she may have just needed a hug. I attacked her, always hammering her with moral guilt and thinking that if I made her feel bad or guilty enough, then that would bring her around. I was so stupid. All I did was alienate her. I made her feel worse than what she did and increased my ignorance. The nights were the worse, never knowing if she was alive or dead, cold or warm, free or incarcerated, or institutionalized.

Desperation made me seek outside help from someone who was in recovery. They taught me how inner pain will cause a person to self-destruct, to lose self-esteem, to isolate and withdraw, and why some seek the oblivion of substance abuse. They showed me how criticism, negativity and lack of empathy only served to rub salt in an open wound.

Once I regained my daughter’s trust and she saw that I really, really wanted to listen, she opened up. There were things that I had done and things that were done to her that I had no awareness of. She never came to me in the past because of what she thought my reaction would be and what I would say. And she was right.

She cried, I cried, and then a door opened. I will never let that door close again. I would like to say to whoever reads this that the next time you see someone caught up in life’s difficulties, have a little more compassion, empathy and don’t judge.

We often have no idea what the next person is going through. I am a changed person because of this experience. I believe it has made me a better person because now I am blessed with the ability to truly listen and help others.

BETTY WASHINGTON, VOL. 4
TRUTH AND SUPPORT

LIFE AGAIN

I can hear what my children actually say, want and need. With sober, sane ears I can actually see the beauty all around me again. With clear eyes I can enjoy food with friends and family because I taste and appreciate again. I watch what I say and how I say it because I care, and I’m concerned with more than myself.

The God of my understanding talks to me because he knows I now listen and do his will. I’m blessed. I can see others who’ve found this path and showed me where to look, and what to do. I’m grateful. And then my heart swells because I know it’s only just begun... life again.

KAREN SIMMS, VOL. 5
My greatest reward comes in two forms. First, each and every three houses: its' main house, the work and transition house, and the path God has set me on. Hands Of Diversity now has mental health challenges. I am in love with this. I love what I do. These signs of encouragement and affirmation would be so the best of all, just to say "thank you" and tell me they loved me. I tell me how much clean time they had, how good they felt, and had found a job, asked to speak or lead a recovery affair, or to sign to keep pushing on. A member would call saying, he or she had me wondering where I would get the strength and money adversity, obstacles, human nature and life in general often born. There have been times I wanted to quit. Exhaustion, for everyone – no matter what race, creed or color. He was a Our name is central to our philosophy, our beliefs, and what have members with up to ten years clean, and others who are combined. Five other members of H.O.D. now work at Northeast Treatment Centers (the NET). The person who interviewed me for this article is an alumnus, and my spiritual brother. We currently, one member of Hands of Diversity (H.O.D.) works at the Mental Health Association and previously worked at Girard Medical Center as well as the NET for over three years combined. Five other members of H.O.D. now work at Northeast Treatment Centers (the NET). The person who interviewed me for this article is an alumnus, and my spiritual brother. We have members with up to ten years clean, and others who are quickly catching up. Our name is central to our philosophy, our beliefs, and what I've learned. My grandfather was not only wise but he was a hands-on person who had very crafty hands and a wise word for everyone – no matter what race, creed or color. He was a very diverse person. Thus, the name – Hands of Diversity – was born. There have been times I wanted to quit. Exhaustion, adversity, obstacles, human nature and life in general often had me wondering where I would get the strength and money to continue. Each and every time without fail, God would send me a clear sign to keep pushing on. A member would call saying, he or she had found a job, asked to speak or lead a recovery affair, or to tell me how much clean time they had, how good they felt, and the best of all, just to say “thank you” and tell me they loved me. These signs of encouragement and affirmation would be so clear. I’d bow my head, pray and thank God for helping me raise soldiers to fight in this battle against substance abuse and mental health challenges. I am in love with this. I love what I do and the path God has set me on. Hands Of Diversity now has three houses: its’ main house, the work and transition house, and the women’s house. We’ve earned numerous awards from the city and state, however, my greatest reward comes in two forms. First, each and every time an alumni walks through our doors to speak or give whatever he has of himself and his or her time. Second, when I can step back now sometimes as members are able to take the reins in our day-to-day affairs as I proudly watch. I love my wife and I love my children more than anything but God knows I am truly in love with this path God has set me on. NATHANIEL “NATE” GREEN, VOL. 7 A GIFT FROM GOD There are a number of things I'm in love with now, but one memory stays embedded in my mind. In 2010, after acquiring five months clean, I went to the Catskills in upstate New York to work at a camp doing whatever kind of work was needed. Each day was different. I was eager to wake up each and every morning. Each weekday, on my break, I’d take walks. I’m from Philly so I never got to see real nature up close. This place held me spellbound every day. The clear blue skies, all sorts of trees, the birds and sounds of nature captured my full attention. There was this beautiful trail that went up the side of a mountain. At the top, I’d look out over the most beautiful sights this ‘city boy’ had ever seen. I sat by streams listening to clear water flow. I chased wild turkeys, laughing all the way as deer watched this crazy, silly happy man. At night, in crystal clear skies, the stars would come out and put on a show. It almost felt like it was all done just for me—a gift. I’d sit and get in touch with God’s will and purpose for me, his mercy, blessings and my gratitude. The disease of insanity and addiction had blinded me. Recovery gave me back my sight, and allowed me to see and love life for what it truly is. I’m in love with being clean, sane, God and life. STEVEN WHITELEY, VOL. 7 I WATCH HIM WALK I never watched a man walk before, or I was too high to pay attention. Now every time he walks in the door it’s like an intervention. He grabbed my hand yesterday as we crossed the street, and I let him, as I walked like I had two left feet. It’s the little things he does that drive me wild. He rubs my head; I feel like a child. Just the innocence feels so good; I never felt this before, but I never understood. Here he comes again walking through the door. I’m a walk back so he can walk some more. They say that this is only the beginning and there’s more in store. This new life is what’s happenin’...now and forevermore. DESIREE, VOL. 7 I LOVE MY CHILD I remember when she was born; I held my baby in my arms, and it didn’t take long. My life set off alarms then fear took over because of how I lived; I didn’t know what to do. I didn’t know if I could give this little baby, that needed me. Scared me and dared me to try to change, I had to stop and rearrange—my life and become captain of my own ship. Time was not my friend so I cracked the whip. Now here I am at her bedroom door, watching her sleep, toys on the floor, and teddy bear in her arms. She calls me mom again; I’m as blessed as can be. I’m in love with my child. KAREN LASSITER, VOL. 7
LIFE, DIGNITY AND PURPOSE

I WAS A DRUG DEALER

I learned how to sell drugs at a very young age. I grew up in what we called the "Hood" which is short for neighborhood. My environment was violent, dirty, treacherous and seemingly hopeless. I thought the people who went to work every day were suckers. I saw them struggling to make ends meet every day, and thought that they were stupid for struggling so hard for so little money.

Truthfully, deep down, I envied them. There was a part of me that was always jealous of the looks in their faces, even as they struggled, because their struggle was honest. Their struggle was simple and free. I can remember block parties where I had a pocket full of drug money, expensive clothes on my back, people being kind but still feeling like I didn't belong. I couldn't join in on their conversations about work, school, children, bank accounts, insurance and all the other many things that people with a legal job, a normal life and families talked about.

I couldn't talk about a real future, and most of all, I couldn't talk about dignity and pride in a job well done. I couldn't talk about working alongside others that I could really trust and what we accomplished. In my life at that time, everything was a secret. And as I later learned, secrets keep you sick. Caught up in the madness and chaos of everything I was doing at the time didn't let me see that I was having anxiety attacks and was most likely clinically depressed. My last time in jail was the turning point. I met a man who had turned himself in on an old warrant. He spoke of how he used to sell drugs and was a hustler. He spoke of how he was tired of looking over his shoulder and being on the fringes of society. He spoke of not being able to ever be honest about what he did and how his conversations were always limited. He pointed out how no matter how much money he made, he could lose everything in a heartbeat with no warning. He also spoke of how he could trust no one and how his associations were not friendships, and treachery was always in the air waiting with death. What finally got through to me was when he spoke of honor, dignity, pride and the absence of these things – no matter how much money and material things he had. This man said he was tired of living and living a lie. He could not sit with his kids and be an example to follow. He could never get the full love and respect from his wife with her knowing any day everything could be taken away, including his life and freedom.

He said that now his wife was proud of what he did. He said that his children called him "Dad" and now he really felt like one. Now he said he could freely associate with others and have normal conversations. This man said he had a regular job with regular hours, and it felt good coming home every day. He admitted that it wasn't easy but it was worth it because he was free. He was free to talk about a job well done with his son and getting an education without feeling like a hypocrite. He was free to have real friends and be a real friend to others. And he also said that he discovered that now he could pray. He said he always wanted to talk before but never felt worthy to talk to God.

This man changed my life. He told me to look him up when I got out, and I did. He got me a job where he works. It's not easy but just like him...now, I'm free. I can breathe and the sky is the limit, and my life belongs to me...for once.

ORLANDO ORTIZ

21 YEARS

I was incarcerated for 21 years out of a 40 year sentence. In my first year locked up, I tried to commit suicide. I was 40 when I went in so I was sure I would die in jail. After the suicide attempt I started to pray, I saw no other way. I asked God to take over and do what He would with me. I was introduced to a program in jail that showed me what I had to offer, what I was worth, and another way of looking at things. Through this program, I found my self-worth through helping others as well as changing my outlook. This went on for the next 14 years, and with this and my faith, I became grounded. I ended up becoming a counselor to others in jail. My first two attempts at parole were refused. Two weeks later I was awakened and told to pack up. I was being released on a new pre-release program. In my mind, it was God who released me.

Culture shock can be paralyzing, scary, interesting and sometimes just plain funny. When I came back to society, not only did it seem like going from The Flintstones to The Jetsons, but there were people walking around doing what appeared to be talking to themselves. I saw a number of them doing this and thought maybe I was in The Twilight Zone or Outer Limits or something. Coincidentally, one or more of the people said my name in their conversations. My last name is Williams, which is very common, so I heard it more than once and thought they were talking to me which to my embarrassment, found out they weren't. I was out to dinner with my brother at a restaurant and saw this strange occurrence again. When my brother finally stopped laughing, he informed me that the people I thought were talking to themselves had Bluetooths and were actually talking to other people.

My next goal was to gain employment but the first great experience I had was simply acquiring and putting on a set of civilian clothes. Putting on those clothes brought a tear to my eye and totally affirmed and validated the fact that I was a free man now.

My next goal was to get a job. I had worked in 20, of my 21 years, in jail so I was used to having something definite to do every day. I went everywhere looking for employment. I got turned down a lot due to my age just as much as the criminal record I now had. It is a fact that I had to make money to live but what really kept me going was needing to feel like a productive member of society, and I also had a fierce independent streak in me that made it hard for me to accept help from family and friends. I kept knocking on doors and one man who had been in jail himself gave me a chance at a uniform company. The feeling of going to work every day free was a feeling very hard to explain. It was more than liberation. I wasn't at my job for a year and I got laid-off. There was so much gratitude in me for what had happened and was happening in my life that I had no room to feel bad or doubtful as to my future. And most of all my faith in God was complete. To me further proof came when my brother finally stopped laughing, he informed me that the people I thought were talking to themselves had Bluetooths and were actually talking to other people.

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Culture shock can be paralyzing, scary, interesting and sometimes just plain funny. When I came back to society, not only did it seem like going from The Flintstones to The Jetsons, but there were people walking around doing what appeared to be talking to themselves. I saw a number of them doing this and thought maybe I was in The Twilight Zone or Outer Limits or something. Coincidentally, one or more of the people said my name in their conversations. My last name is Williams, which is very common, so I heard it more than once and thought they were talking to me which to my embarrassment, found out they weren't. I was out to dinner with my brother at a restaurant and saw this strange occurrence again. When my brother finally stopped laughing, he informed me that the people I thought were talking to themselves had Bluetooths and were actually talking to other people.

My next goal was to gain employment but the first great experience I had was simply acquiring and putting on a set of civilian clothes. Putting on those clothes brought a tear to my eye and totally affirmed and validated the fact that I was a free man now.

My next goal was to get a job. I had worked in 20, of my 21 years, in jail so I was used to having something definite to do every day. I went everywhere looking for employment. I got turned down a lot due to my age just as much as the criminal record I now had. It is a fact that I had to make money to live but what really kept me going was needing to feel like a productive member of society, and I also had a fierce independent streak in me that made it hard for me to accept help from family and friends. I kept knocking on doors and one man who had been in jail himself gave me a chance at a uniform company. The feeling of going to work every day free was a feeling very hard to explain. It was more than liberation. I wasn't at my job for a year and I got laid-off. There was so much gratitude in me for what had happened and was happening in my life that I had no room to feel bad or doubtful as to my future. And most of all my faith in God was complete. To me further proof came when my brother finally stopped laughing, he informed me that the people I thought were talking to themselves had Bluetooths and were actually talking to other people.

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CLYDE J. WILLIAMS

10
FROM ME TO YOU. 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, it would be pure paradise.

JUNIE. VOL. 13

SUIT AND TIE

Smiling in the shower as the water cascades down. Waiting for the hour when I leave and hit the town. Passing by reflective windows and feeling a different high. Knowing how sharp I am and... so clean in my suit and tie. Arriving where I work, nodding hello and feeling a part. Dignity is my perk and purpose is in my heart. I push up to the desk, push one key and start my day. I’m feeling good about myself, knowing I’m on my way. Too soon the day ends, I pack up with a smile – thinking today about what I’ve done, and knowing I’ll be back in a little while. I take my time walking... there’s a twinkle in my eye. I stand taller now when I’m talking, man! I love this suit and tie. I hang it in the closet when I finally arrive home. It may be my first one but real soon it won’t be alone. I like the feeling of walking, but feeling like I can fly. I feel that way each and every time I put on my suit and tie.

STORM. VOL. 11

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 you.

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STORM. VOL. 13
Finishing this issue was like that cute girl next door who just told you she liked you, then moving away the next day—waving goodbye from the back window of her parent’s car. It was like that last bite of an ice cream-filled cone on a hot summer’s day. It was like the last day of summer vacation, feeling, knowing and wishing that there was more but still excited knowing that the future days ahead will still be exciting with the things that are still to come and yet unseen.

Going back finding the submissions for this issue was like visiting dear and old friends. I have always known and appreciated the unique position that I am in. The greatest honor we can receive as human beings is the trust, love and confidence from others.

So many trusted me with their innermost feelings, experiences and aspirations. They honored me as I vicariously travelled with them as they often painfully relived and retraced their journeys. They cried unashamedly, trusting me with their bared souls and most vulnerable moments. Reliving the moments when I interviewed those who gave submissions clearly lets me see the unbelievable gift that I’ve been given and what we’ve all shared.

Through Expressions in Recovery we have taught, we have preached, we have loved, we have shared, and most of all, we have bonded. We are now one in this mission of discovery, recovery, possibilities, affirmations, love and so much more.

This was only some of “The Best of.” There is still so much more that we already have, and so much more to discover. I thank you, faithful readers, for all you’ve done thus far and I thank you for the unshakable affirmation that you gave me that this will never end and we do recover…Peace.

GIL GADSON, EDITOR

EXPRESSIONS IN RECOVERY

2005 - 2015
TRANSFORMATION DECADE

DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

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