

Editorial Style Writer's Group exercise [off the cuff]

20080130

searching for a topic for longer than the time i would have to write...

[other ideas to develop:

Going back to the homeless community after getting a place]

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The Great White Funder

Over a decade ago, I was homeless and lost track of people after going into treatment and getting a place while rebuilding my life, finishing a college degree and trying to improve the system. I met and introduced a friend to people interested in creating consumer run mental health drop in centers, advocacy and homeless. This friend became a board president and very committed to the center which included services for homeless.

He passed away last summer after the non profit didn't get a grant application in time for funding. He may have felt responsible for that, though I'm sure many contributed to that incident. One of the things I remember fondly about him was his willingness to talk to homeless people while I would shy away. With this memory of my friend, my continued feeling of disconnectedness with my past, not feeling I was doing enough for homeless by attending on one Help The Homeless Walk A Thon per year, buying an wearing the T shirt and facing only some of the discrimination experienced, but as a person with a place I can take the emotional hits a little better, and have more time when not struggling as much to survive, as well as a need to improve my web content skills, so I started getting involved in Street Sense.

After maybe a year of catch as catch can finding vendors while downtown until this last summer, I talked to vendors more and was directed to the office.

I've [joined?/been the inspiration for?] the writers group as it was forming and recently gotten something published, Ode to a Farmers Market, [significantly edited or rewritten by a senior volunteer, perhaps as an Christmas present, but previously quoted as being a heathen, thereby restricting any support I might get to create something from the faith community?]

This process has not been easy, so difficult to concentrate when derailed or side tracked into other people's issues, popping rapid fire, out of the blue questions like it was an intentional interruption to get something and not allowed to complete a thought, while not getting my own ideas down on paper to publish.

Though perhaps the expeirence is learning the life challenges of a [non profit] editor in a one room office shared by up to 8 noisy

homeless people?

Some of the difficulties [/challenges have] include transportation, the long commute into town and juggling other commitments but it has given me an experience with working with other people to get something out, some story development experience (it turns out editing is not that different from counseling, both showing someone the blind sides of their consciousness/ argument), what the editor writer relationship/ drama is, and some print issues like limited space versus web readability as it trails off into it's 6th page of ranting...

While the vendor community was largely welcoming at the direction of Jesse Smith, the [former] vendor manager, calling it a family, he stopped working at Street Sense before Christmas (see Intern Insight articles on some other experiences with him)

As it got colder outside, the community began to have more issues, or i noticed them more, also without Jesse, the vendor manager gone, some people were going more unstable, some wanted his job and even quickly sat in Jesse's seat as if it were their own, while the two full time staff's seats were off limits, Jesse shared, as he wasn't better than the Vendors he was one of us, understanding and fighting the battle every day, in the trenches, to quote the enlisted military saying, he's not an officer, he worked for a living...

Too many interpersonal issues with Street Sense officers, editor and even young interns at the end...

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SEE CAN I GRADUATE / GET PUBLISHED/ END HOMELESSNESS, INSTEAD OF IDEAS/PHRASES/ETC BELOW, unless need other ideas to fill or spin

[Justin said it needs an ending]
[Justin suggests: through the org
what benefit out of it?
oversight, knowledge skill?]

[needed to work on a proposal, but not what they wanted, not what they do, and portrayed as something else (just a vendor) when walked into the Street Sense on of the first times saying 'I might as well start out at the bottom', like many oppressive and social service organizations the help never really arrives, just wait more, write more, apply more, answer more questions, get the run around more, etc..

Unlike the multitude of interns coming into the office but I'm still around 8 months later and forgot that most important lesson that I was having difficulty with decades ago when I had interns, one of futility.

As they say 'Experience is knowing what you Don't want to do.'

Attended the gala - fundraising event
in the fall. Met some more people
from the organization, bought some stuff
for Xmas gifts, and observed more of an operating non
profit, saw another side of the city, and in interesting
historic house in the Meridian park area where the Gala event
occured.

Several print news reporters coming into the SS
office and writers group to write heart warming holiday
peices we've not yet gotten copies of...

Friendships lost, people possibly seeing me
as the Great White Hope? One of the few
white people at Street Sense, the last vendor
survey doesn't ask for race or ethnicity, iirc,
just college education, who much time spent
and earned by selling?

Through the homeless season, a
holiday party, not that unlike other service
programs, somewhat depressing knowing your
live has come to this, but still having a life,
when it wasn't that certain you would make
it another year, to the party or a request,
got Jesse back for a brief visit,
Street Sense gave gifts to vendors and even
had a new recruit/'fresh meat?' show up,
but leave with someone else,
another virtual slap in the face,
in an already oppressive and depressive
season... But that isn't my role. I've been
a provider and know that boundary too well.
You are part of someone's life, but not really.
You can't experience everything they have,
you may not have gone down as far as they
have, only in shelters a year? This guy has
been living on the streets/unsheltered for 40 years, or
another vendor in and out of shelters now for 4?

Am I training them on how to be white?
or how to write? Or just giving
another perspective?
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[personal narrative]

story ideas stolen

weekly helping develop other people's stories

outside talking to vendors who haven't been in to join the writer's group

providing peer advice

buying stuff/ food for the group

giving some stuff away (flash light, gloves, pens, etc)

buying a couple of meals, one a birthday, another a McDonalds, someplace I don't normally eat, and finally being hit up for money/ cash.

to sum it up maybe it's that being used feeling?

all the while giving papers to people in Northern Virginia who haven't heard of it and a few others who have. usually as a thank you for a kindness or a brief social encounter while traveling...

largely rejected trying to sell in the NOVA area where the social mores, are 'live in quiet desperation', 'don't ask for anything', it's not right, and 'only supporting someone's supposed drug or alcohol habit?' I guess I'm a little different, it's not income, but a reason to live...

Like the police citizens association article, while urging tolerance, saying homeless people are Pavlovian, and don't give money, give to social agencies instead?

Like one of the first times trying to sell papers, an off duty police officer at Courthouse Metro, peaching that in some countries, for homeless that part of ground is home while dehumanizing at the same time...

luckily had the safety of local observers/monitors in case needing someone to provide bail?

Later that day, a crowd of police and vehicles near Clarendon MetroRail wondering if there was going to be a problem? An arrest? Make it clear to him that we don't want any of that around here? Like Rodney King?

Another trip, donating copies of SS to people standing in line waiting for entry to the Arlington's ASPAN hypothermia shelter, someone bold enough to ask if i know of any housing, but having to say no, there isn't any...

In DC, after one writer's group, visiting McKenna's wagon/

van feeding people on the street, wondering about safety going into and out of the area with liquor stores, people in cars, etc which felt like going into an alley, but finally discovered next to a police station. Wondering how far to the CCONV shelter?

One kind volunteer photographer and Cliff the unofficial staff photographer, I was being taught about photography when convenient only to have them try to get me to replace a friend? instead of working with him and others?

Finally, serendipitously going to homeless places like The Lamb Center, as another vendor points out, 'all the while going back to a place each night while others are not.'

I'm not able to invite people to my home, as not raised that way, no space and against house rules. [Ironically, it might be the extra papers seen as further clutter that finally gets me evicted?]

Attended multiple vendor's meetings and the last one I attended with Jesse, claiming my territory is VA, saying I will get killed, but don't worry, I share and have been trying to get people to sell in VA.

One vendor mentioned that we might get arrested, but noting that I'm white, so might be ok, and with another white vendor, I made it clear that I share and want more vendors in NoVA.

Witnessed several disputes among vendors, vendors to staff and office volunteers and saw the damage, likely from that twisted interaction between paid staff and vendors, yanking some rule, twisting some sore point, until finally exploding and seeing broken furniture and a coat hanger possibly pulled off the wall?