

Spotlight On Recovery

Giving a Voice to the Therapeutic Community



The HAVES and HAVE NOTS

STORY

BY ANGEL RODRIGUEZ

A story is written,
the creator, the author,
the reader in a journey.

Part of the story,
a child discovering the world,
a teenager, hating it.
a man appreciating it.

The stories are different.
Will the story inspire?
or would it remain unread?

Will it be filled with good times?
or would it be sad?
Will it be moving
or remain the same?

Every life has a story,
sharing experiences, and adventures,
making moments.
Some shared vocally,
others in pictures, and papers.

Moments and times
to remember.
Stories that will live forever.
Biographies.
People who changed the world.
Those whose story
had to be told.

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LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

JUNE 2021

Dear Readers,

This topic is not about reaching the top, it's about reaching your purpose in life. Sure, we're encouraged to succeed. There are many paths to success and many different levels of success.

The bulk of your wealth is not in your wallet. It lies in your brains, your heart, your soul, and your character. The type of success most people strive for costs a lifetime. It can take a lifetime of education, a lifetime in a career or a lifetime in planning and producing. It depends on the journey one takes to gain success.

We see it every day, what success looks like, what it must feel like and we buy into it. We buy into the best things in life that are for sale. What we have to realize is that "The Best Things in Life Are Free." (Yes, an old cliché, but it rings true...)

What I asked my writers to discuss are the successes that we possessed before we became infatuated with the material things. We all came here, blessed by a higher power. We were given the greatest gift known to man: life.

Much success,
Robin Graham
Robin Graham
Founder/Publisher



RIGHT HERE

BY AMY NICHOLSON

Why is it so hard to believe that maybe we're right where we should be?

I'm watching the school bus ride by as I hang clothes on the line. It's a beautiful day, a good drying day with low humidity, and a stiff breeze blowing. My mind is a little troubled though. The kids are off to school. Should I be as well?

Last year, I was a substitute teacher. I subbed almost every day. Today, I am home hanging clothes on the line. Saving money but not making money. Should I be going to work today?

My guess is that many of us struggle with these kinds of "should I's." Perhaps we are doing something perfectly fine today, whether it's housework, or making a pizza or picking up trash, but then there's that little voice in our heads telling us we should be doing something else, something more, something better. Why? Maybe the job we are doing doesn't match the degree or diploma on the wall. Maybe we could be making more money doing something other than what we are doing. I suspect most of us are too hard on ourselves.

When I was in high school dating the guy I would eventually marry, I couldn't wait for the day "eventually" to arrive. We would finally get married, move into a house, and raise a family. After dating for seven years and graduating from high school and then college, we finally got married.

But I wonder if those seven years would have been different if I'd been more present. Being so fixated on the future, I think I might have missed a lot of good things in my life back then.

It seems to me that whenever I wonder if there's a better place for me, I'm taking energy away from all of my current blessings. To constantly be wondering; what if, is actually a way of being ungrateful for what I do have right now, which is so much.

I suspect we all have at least one thing in life that we take for granted. If it were taken away from us, we would grieve its absence. Instead of waiting until it's gone to recognize its value in our lives, it would do us a world of good to embrace the moment and be grateful.

If I changed my mind-set to enjoy the now rather than just get through it on the way to the next goal or destination, I might do things like focus on the gift of taking a breath of fresh air and feeling it fill my lungs. Knowing it will oxygenate my blood and enable me to move throughout my day. I would take in the miracle of love, the joy of watching my child smile.

They say hindsight is 20/20. It's easy to say if we knew then what we know now, we would have done things differently. But have I really learned all that much? Here I am married to that guy, living in that house, raising that family, but still wondering if I should be hanging the clothes on the line or doing something different.

The truth is, I am blessed. I work part-time, I care for my family and I enjoy what I do. So, whenever I have a nagging doubt in the back of my mind, perhaps the thing to do is to plant two feet on the ground and say:

"I am right where I should be."

WORTH THE WAIT

BY CHRISTIAN BLACK

Imagine, for a moment, children on Christmas day, opening up gifts they coveted for most of the year. They will jump up and down while shouting with great joy and run into the arms of their parents, parent, or provider expressing great gratitude. As the family goes to visit other family members, or other family members come to visit them, the children will gleefully flaunt their gifts. They won't allow them to be mishandled. They will treat their gifts with special care.

But as the days turn into weeks, and weeks turn into months, the joy the children once expressed for a gift begins to dwindle and another object becomes the focus of desire. The once-coveted gift becomes obsolete when the new and latest electronic gadget, toy, or fashion is released. It seems the children will disregard what they already possess because they always want what they don't have.

Once upon a time, I used to be one of those children on Christmas morning with great joy for receiving a coveted gift. But my joy waned in the following days as I turned my focus to what I didn't have because it was new. Sadly, sometimes I'm still that child: losing track of all the blessings and gifts God has given to me. And, in all honesty, I don't think I'm alone.

In America's capitalistic and fast-paced society, many people want the newest and latest gadgets and technological advancements. Mainstream society creates an image of how it looks to have money and tells us what to buy or possess. We're supposed to wear new, brand-named clothes and accessorize with the freshest and finest jewelry.

When people seek to obtain material wealth to pursue the image created by the media, sometimes they may find themselves in debt, with bad credit from years of unwise credit card use and loans. Then, as people choose to chase the material wealth they crave, they tend to disregard what they possess. They simply forget

the gifts and blessings that God has given them.

There is nothing wrong with accumulating material, but the desire to obtain material wealth should never be so strong that it clouds a person's logical and reasonable approach to life. In life, we are to become wise and mature, learning the values of people, places, things, and money. When a desire for wealth is strong enough to cloud a person's reasonable and logical approach to life, he will find himself disregarding the gifts he already possesses. When that happens, the growth process we must all endure in life is hindered and delayed.

The New Oxford dictionary defines gift in two contexts;
"A thing given willingly to someone without payment."
"A natural ability or talent."

All good things and perfect gifts come from the Father in Heaven, (James 1:17, NASB). Gifts come in various shapes, forms, or fashions. A gift can be a physical object, a monetary means, an opportunity, a relationship, or an innate ability to do something like write, compose music, draw, and speak well. People will experience the context of both definitions working individually and working together. And no matter what the gifts may be, they are meant to be cherished and valued.

In America, it is easy to get caught up in chasing after material wealth, disregarding the gifts we already possess. It seems every advertisement, television show, movie, or song promotes the need to accumulate more material wealth. The desire to obtain more is fueled by messages propagated by the media. These messages cloud our logic and distract us from our God-given gifts.

If we, as a people, become patient with our gifts, and focus on nurturing them and commit to overcoming

any obstacles that hinder their development, they will eventually lead us to the material wealth we desire.

Therefore, examine your life and see what gifts you have in your possession. Ask yourself what natural ability you have. Is it writing, drawing, composing music, or speaking? Is it styling clothes or hair? Is it athleticism or dancing? Develop it and utilize it. Build connections to people in those fields in order to create

opportunities that will not only benefit you, but everyone connected to you.

Remember, all gifts are meant to be cherished and valued. Their development is worth the wait.



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THE HAVES AND HAVE NOTS

BY COREY WILLIAMS

I've always wondered why we live in a world so corrupted by materialism and greed. I mean, why do we want to own all of these fancy things like cars, clothes, and jewelry? Do we feel like we are not important enough to the people in our lives? Is it our way of seeking their approval?

Instead, maybe we should be asking if we are important to ourselves.

I mean, really ask yourself if you would love yourself if you didn't have all these "things?" Love might seem like a small word, but it is the little love you show that makes you important in someone else's life as well as your own.

I encourage brothers, sisters, Black, Asian, Hispanic, Caucasian -- all Races, to never let anything material define who you are as a person. Also, be important to yourself first, never let your life revolve around others or the things you have or do not have.

You see, true love is made from the heart, not made from things you got.



THE HAVES AND HAVE NOTS

BY ALPHONSO TANNER

I'm remembering a time when I was about to get out of the Orange County Jail. I really wanted to reflect on the things I possess to keep out of jail. I had just spent 51 weeks in County Jail, and I was on probation for 18 months.

I realized after my release that I had to seek and rely on the gifts that I have. When I was approached by a couple of my friends who were hustling, and they asked me to join them, I declined. I also took notice of the shiny, possessions they now possessed since I've been gone.

I try to keep my eye on positive income. I had only worked on a farm packing carrots and corn for my mom and grandma. I did a few lawn service jobs, but I got them through my uncle who was now in prison. I had to find something I could work on that would sustain me for the next 18 months. In addition, my son was 7 months old and my mom was keeping him since his mother and I were both on probation. My son's mother used to sit and pray to God about how she wanted her kids back. I sat with her one Saturday morning after both of us had a three-day work ticket from a temporary agency. We both had made good money for those 3 days.

A friend I ran into asked me if I wanted to go to work with him on a construction site and since the job ticket expired, I accepted. He picked me up at 5:30 a.m. to take a drive to Central Florida. I began working, putting mud in barrels and wheeling them to the cement truck. Once I was finished, I noticed that everybody was gone except for me, my friend who'd invited me to the job site and the son of the boss. As we were driving back, the son received a call. His father wanted to see me.

His name is Steve. He said he saw potential in me. Then he asked if I wanted a permanent job. I told him, "sure." I was paid \$8.00 an hour. I worked hard to

learn my new job. Most of it was trial and error because I never did this type of work before, but I didn't give up.

I had another conversation a few weeks later with Steve. He took me out to dinner one day after work.

Steve asked me if I prayed for my food. I said, "Yes sir. I'm also giving God the praise for allowing me to have this job and I'm thanking him for bringing you into my life. I'm thanking him for showing me I have talent I didn't know I had." He said, "Well Al, once I saw how observant you were and how I pulled up to your place and you had a lunch box all ready for work, I saw that you have potential that other people don't have. Then I saw how you spent your own money on ice to put in the cooler when I'd said I'd cover it. I see that you're committed to the long haul. I see that it's not just the money you're in it for, you take time to go and help other people who are lacking in their area." Steve continued, "I see me in you. I see someone with a motive for success who is willing to learn more roles than the one you were hired for. I'm giving you a \$2.00 raise and making you a foreman. I'm proud to have you aboard. Congratulations!"

As I climbed out of his truck with the \$250.00 bonus, I hugged my son's mother and told her that God is always working on me and showing me that I have more potential than meets the eye. I completed my 18-month probation period on a high note.

This showed me that even though we have potential, we are able to find out the potential we didn't know we had if we have a good work ethic. People will see it in you, and they will also point it out to you.



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THE HAVE AND HAVE NOTS

BY DENNIS MINTUN

For years, I considered myself a “have not.” Not only was I put into prison for as long as sixty years for what most states would only consider a misdemeanor but most of my family disowned me, my wife divorced me, and my successful business was sold at auction for pennies on the dollar.

Then, before I went to prison, it was discovered that my wife was transgender, and that I was gay. As if that weren't enough, I also had Asperger's Syndrome and weighed well over 300 pounds. Because of that, I always had very few friends and after my conviction I had none.

I was at rock bottom and had lost everything. I truly felt like a “have not.”

Back then I had such a big chip on my shoulder that it would take me years to see the harm I'd done. I was angry at the courts, my family, the cops, and, perhaps most of all myself. Without a doubt, I had done something very stupid. Thinking of nothing but the almighty buck, I ran websites that were very close to being illegal. The Idaho courts sure thought so and decided a particular picture I took crossed the line.

Then, after a few years in prison, I had come to know a lot of different people. Many of them had lost a LOT more than I had. Some had lost arms, legs, or eyes. Some had fried their brains on drugs. Some had been

beaten, or even tortured by those who were supposed to care for them. Others were simply starved for attention.

I began to realize how much I had. So many had lost so much more and never had my advantages.

I may have done some stupid things in my life, but I had a brain that I could use to help others. I could write and let others know they weren't the only ones who made bad choices. If I could become a better person, ANYBODY could.

I was also given a healthy work ethic (some say I'm a workaholic). No matter how broke I've been at times, I've always been able to find a way to bring in the bucks by focusing on a larger goal and not giving up.

No matter how much you don't have, there are always those who have less. No matter what you do have, there are those who have more. I believe that our main purpose in life is to balance things out. If you are in need, don't be too proud to accept something from someone who can help. If you have more than others, do what you can to help.

I'm not just referring to money or physical things. I'm also referring to love and friendship. Anyone can give that.

And, when it comes to love, nobody has so much that they can't use a little more.

BEING “LWOP”

BY DOROTHY MARAGLINO

LWOP is such a small acronym for such an overwhelming reality. LWOP stands for Life Without the Possibility of Parole. This means I am expected to die in prison, but not too soon. The prison will do what they can to ensure it's a nice long, drawn out life.

Here are some of the daily realities of being a LWOP.

I get to watch people parole, return, parole, and return again without ever getting the opportunity to go. I get to have short-term inmates take away what little privileges I had because they abused those privileges. I get to know that even if I sleep in the same bed for 17 years, some new spoiled inmate with support can force me out and leave me to adjust to a new room.

I get to celebrate with people who get time-off slips under the door for a class we completed together. My slip says, “INELIGIBLE FOR TIME OFF.” I get to earn my college degree and look out for a familiar face, but my family is never there. (They are too old to

travel). But, I suppose I am lucky, many others don't have family at all.

I get to celebrate with others for new laws generating hope for freedom, while I swallow the urge to scream at the line...”EXCLUDING LWOPS.” I must not show my hurt, for fear of being labeled a “HATER.” I get to hear others talk about paying off their restitution with high paying jobs, while I am ineligible.

I get to wish for single cells and the solitude of the girls on the ROW, while I am forced to live with 7 other girls who have no idea about or empathy for an LWOP's situation. People who criticize me for being emotional, moody, and over-sensitive cannot tell me how to adjust to being a walking dead person.

I get to have a voice on paper knowing it is but a whisper that most in the world will never hear. Because mine is the voice of a desperate living dead person locked in the bowels of hell.

a simple
HELLO
could lead to
A MILLION
things

TOWEL

BY ANGEL RODRIGUEZ

Towel,
Though you're not always visible,
you won't hit the floor
without a fight.
You won't look the same
when you see me
take my last breath.
In you, they will see me,
the marks of sweat,
the stains of blood,
the dampness of tears.

Towel,
just when I felt
like throwing you in,
I gripped you stronger.
For I've come too far,
to give up now.

Looking ahead,
to better days.
My struggles, my hardships,
are marked in you.
A reminder
of the things I had to overcome,
to become the person
I am now.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

BY PHILLIP RODRIGUEZ

You want to know what's strange to me?
How someone can say this, but really be about that,
and have the nerve to speak on another's life,
like they know the facts,
like they've felt his struggle,
or that they know the real meaning of hustle.

In order to survive on these streets,
people are robbing stores or collecting cans for a meal
to eat.
Searching for a place to stay warm,
to rest your head in a moment of peace to catch some
sleep.
Times get lonely when you're alone in a storm,
really stuck, stranded, and abandoned to the street.

Nobody to turn to in your time of need,
and no business will hire you because your record's not
neat.
So can somebody tell me,
how one is supposed to make it
when society won't allow him to get on his feet,
to better his life and stay clean?

So really, if you've never lived a real struggle,
then you can't truly understand what I mean.
So let me ask those of you speaking on stuff,
saying how you would have done that.

Well,
What would you do?
If you had no green,
no job, real friends or even family?

Roaming the streets, sleeping with rats,
all behind poor situations,
which led you down a dead-end path.
Wearing your shame like a hat,
that everyone can see.
So, what would you do with yourself,
if you grew up like me?

Which path would you go?
Tell me it wouldn't be crazy if you chose the same road,
took the same route,
and live a real struggle discovering what this world is
about.

When you have no food to put in your mouth,
no roof over head, for you have no house,
your so called friends,
done gone and bailed out.

But It's nothing new to you now,
so think about that next time before you go running
your mouth.
If you grew up like them
and walked in their shoes for more than a mile or two,
what would you do?

P.S. "Don't ever judge a book by its cover, until you've
had the chance to really understand what lies under."



THE HAVE'S AND THE HAVE NOTS

BY DENZEL COUCH

My darkest moments taught me that I'm extremely strong. They showed me that a "have not" like myself, barely scraping by at times, didn't have to chase dreams.

Instead, I could work to make things happen.

My darkest moments exposed me to the fact that some people will like you, and some people will try to get rid of you. God showed me that he controls all my enemies. They are there to keep me on my toes.

Moments of witnessing "haves" or "have nots" made it transparent to me that nobody's going to be loyal to you like God. Nobody's going to love you like you love yourself, that is, until you meet your second self: one who endorses your Faith and is a life-giver.

Studying "haves" taught me to not forget the growing pains, the mind battles, and all the adversities that opened up my eyes. I learned to never forget where I came from -- because if I do then I'll never get to where I'm going.

It also taught me sacrifice, because man stands in need of making sacrifices for the good of his own soul. There is no advancement in this world without sacrifice.

I've been incarcerated for 12 years and everything that I loved was taken away from me except my integrity, character, spirit, soul, pride, genitals, words, and Faith. My Faith became the key to my freedom.

Through all the pain and sacrifice, ups, downs, "haves" and "have nots," I made it through solid.

My darkest moments taught me to shine. I stood ten toes down face-to-face with pressure, and never folded. There were fake handshakes from both the "haves" and "have nots." Standing eye-to-eye with those who hated me most, I remained courageous and confident while killing them with kindness.

And though the pain I feel can become overwhelming at times, I've learned that it's only a mind battle, and its battle I intend to win.

The more I mature and the more I open up my eyes, the more obvious it is to me that the pain is only temporary. It's a weakness that will leave the body as it heals.

This issue of Spotlight on Recovery has been designed by:



DON'T BE AFRAID

BY ANGEL RODRIGUEZ

Don't be afraid of the rain.
The seasons will change.
Rays of the sun, illuminating the path.
Clouds formed in the sky,
promises recorded years ago,
at the colors that decorate the sky
rainbow.

Don't be afraid.
Your response is everything.
We are all fighting battles.

Don't be a coward,
uplift your sisters and brothers.
Words of comfort
is fuel added to the low
in spirit.

Don't be afraid.
Seasons change.
Be the light,
that guides the lost.
Don't leave them alone
to carry that heavy cross.



THE HAVES AND HAVE NOTS

BY DAMONT EWELLS

What's good, Brothers and Sisters? Lend me your ear for this moment of expression. It's funny how you wake up from a deep sleep and you feel rejuvenated or revitalized. It's kind of like a new you. Sometimes you see certain things that remind you of how you slept. You may think back to a nightmare and remember how real it felt, thankful that you were only asleep. Well, that's how it is for those that have reached the age of resurrection. It's a self-realization. When you see life through a new set of eyes, your values change.

I look around at my people, all trying to win in a rat race, and I remember my time in that tomb. I can see how sick I was back then in the warped ambitions of others today. I'm reminded of the dreams I've abandoned and the nightmares I've survived. I had become an imperfect copy of my perfect self. I was the living dead. But, "My People Are Destroyed for Their Knowledge." When I say, 'my people,' it's not just about the same color skin. It's everyone who can relate to this poverty we're living in. It's time to wake up people. They want you asleep. It's bigger than you and me. It's bigger than Black and White, Red, or Blue. The scheme is green. The with, and with-outs. The haves and have nots. To win is the goal, or so it seems...

But there is no winner in a race to Hell. All for the bling? We might as well be chasing our own tails.

We're chasing the wrong things! We want glitter and gold or rims and clothes. We'll do anything to get the glow, unconsciously putting a price on our soul. We seek to feed our sicker self rather than be fed by our sacred self. It's a trick people, wake up!

For centuries, our spirits have been willed to sleep with self-gratification rather than self-edification. When we fight the sleep or begin to wake up, they throw us a pacifier (the illusion of a solution), to keep us distracted. They don't want us to "know" and when I say "they," I mean those who capitalize on of our lack of

knowledge. They want us thinking we're the consumer when we're the ones being consumed. We've been taught to work for the money and never taught how to make the money work for us.

However, who wants to work if they can hustle, right? Wrong! Men are being tricked into legal slavery for chasing the illusion of liberty and keeping up with the Joneses. Women are tricked into settling for less. Mothers, don't you know that you are our first teachers? Our lives are on cruise control. We've been chasing dreams for so long we forgot we were sleeping. They don't want us conscious because consciousness would mean awareness and awareness is to see what clearly is.

Like the fact that we are self-conscious, but not self-confident; self-centered but without self-control; self-deceived, with no self-discipline and we'll self-destruct before being self-developed. Or, the fact that we love to hate ourselves rather than have our self-respect.

We call it a "culture," but we're being led to an early grave. They don't want us to know that we come from a sovereign people... not creatures, but created to be procreators... Not worthless or inferior but intended to transcend the greatness of our forefathers. Wake up, people!

I was approached by this old head while I was still in my ignorance, cocky and arrogant. I had been finishing my studies, but I was still hustling. He said, "who are you, youngster? Do you know?"

In my arrogance, I answered hastily, "No. Who are you?" He asked me again. I didn't have an answer, but he had my attention.

"Youngster," he began, "What's more important to you, freeing yourself from prison or freeing yourself from poverty?" "Shh... from prison, because as long as

I'm free, I could get the paper," was my response. He looked at me as if to study my expression. "Well, if you know that youngster, why don't you care about your soul?" I just stared back.

"Free?" he asked and then walked away.

I can't lie. As someone who calls himself a scholar, I felt real simple. I meditated on his questions for days before I finally understood. My soul was in a prison.

The truth is, I still can't answer that first question, "who am I?" -- but I'm closer to the answer than I was back then. I didn't know who I was, where I was going, or what I wanted. If you'd have asked me what I wanted in life or the goals I aimed to achieve, my answer would have been "money, power and respect." As if money would be the answer to everything.

Money could help; but then what? Power and respect. I had to first learn how to respect myself. Not only was that an unrealistic goal but where could I go with no direction and no destination? It's like a child searching for a buried treasure without a map. For me to answer that first question, I had to get a map. It took years of growth and studying for me to find one. I wanted freedom but didn't know what that meant.

In my search for a map, I found a goal worth chasing. However, like I said, your values change. I realized material gain, will only last as long as it takes to get it. My salvation, on the other hand, is eternal. I learned the importance of mental and spiritual liberation.

My achievement would be my enlightenment. Knowledge of self will remove the veil of ignorance from my spiritual eye. Wake up, people!

This message is to my Brothers and Sisters that are caught up in the rat race of hustling, addiction, single parenting, or living check to check. You are powerful! Love yourself! Your salvation is your responsibility. Free your mind, feed your spirit and awaken to your authentic self.

Discipline is what frees the person from their human nature. Learning to exercise control over one's self, is transformative energy. The force that transforms a child to an adult is knowledge. Using logic expands consciousness.

So, wake up people and say hello to you. Peace.



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WHAT'S THAT YOU HAVE IN YOUR HAND?

By meta dunn

What's that you have in your hand?

This is a phrase that follows me. Everytime I think I don't have what I need to accomplish something - money, skills, strength, - I stop and ask myself, 'what's that you have in your hand?'

This was the phrase that God asked Moses when Moses was trying to get out of fulfilling the purpose God had called him to. He felt incapable and insignificant (quite different from 40 years earlier when he was so passionate about righting the injustices that the Israelites were facing). He had a stutter, he was a shepherd, and in exile because he had previously committed murder. Yet God asked him "What's that in your hand?" (Exodus 4:2), to which Moses replied, "A staff."

A staff -what's that supposed to do? A staff is meant for the fields and tending sheep, not convincing a powerful leader to free an oppressed people from slavery. It was the staff, though, that became a serpent, that brought about the plagues, parted the Red Sea and brought forth water from a rock (twice).

In those moments I feel less than adequate, I reflect on this analogy of Moses and his staff and tell myself - "I have everything I need."

It's not just wishful thinking, it's what true faith is about. To be honest with you, in this life, we'll always be lacking something as we walk out our purpose in life. Some seemingly lack more than others, but true lack is really a mindset more than a material condition.

Throughout my life when I look back at those times where I didn't feel I had enough, I realize my mindset was one that focused on the problem more than the solution and that saw me as insufficient, not good enough, or unloved (or all of the above). Life opened up when I made a choice to trust that I was more than enough. The things I needed to move forward were

already in front of me, even if they arrived in unexpected ways.

HAVES VERSUS HAVE-NOTS

WHICH DO YOU CHOOSE TO BE

 <p>Look at a negative situation as an opportunity for growth and learning</p>	 <p>Looks at a negative situation as 'proof' as to why they 'can't'</p>
<p>Steps back and looks within to discern the potential resources they have to help</p>	<p>Looks at current circumstances and stops if it seems impossible</p>
<p>Can take the ordinary and make it extraordinary</p>	<p>Takes things at face value without seeing untapped potential</p>
<p>Takes steps in faith and connects with others to make the impossible possible</p>	<p>Struggles to see hope for change and accepts 'what is'</p>

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What's more, this is a principle that I've seen not only in my life, but in the lives of many others. You can look at history and see countless examples of people rising up from horrendous situations, having been beaten down and told they were worthless. Many of them even go on to improve their communities and the lives of countless others.

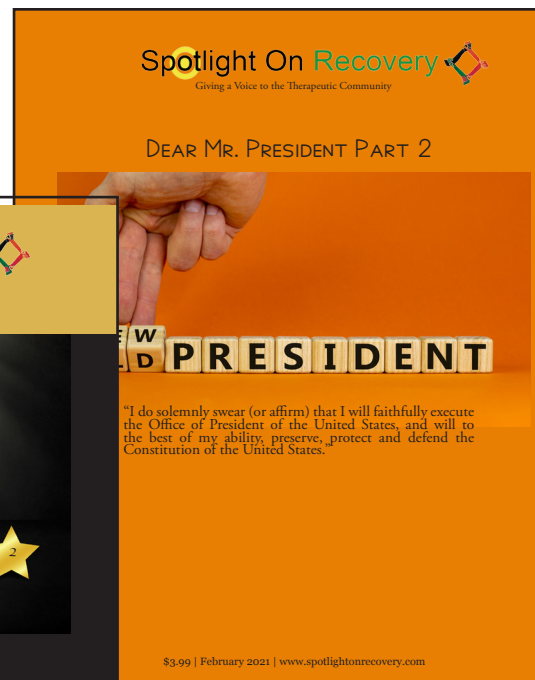
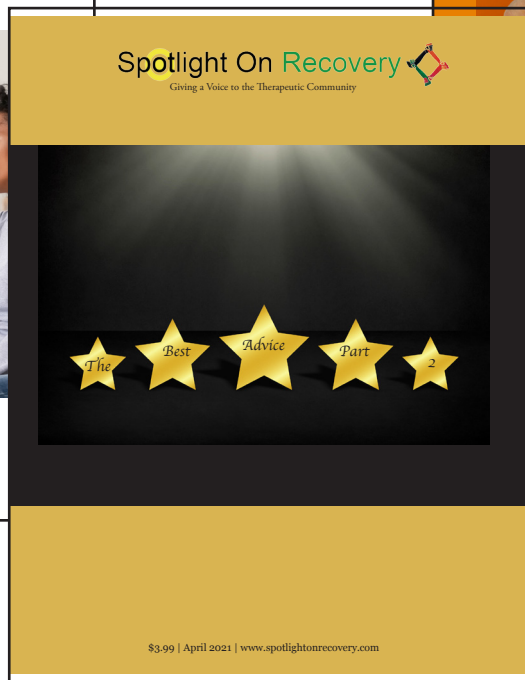
You can also look at others today - in your own communities and families - and see examples of this. It's not dependent on luck, race or socio-economic status, it's dependent on faith and action. It's not always easy,

especially when it appears that lack will always be in your life. However, if you can muster up a little bit of faith, your situation might change for the better.

So, I ask you - do you feel like you are in the camp of the "have nots?" If so, take a look at what you already have in your hand and trust that it will provide exactly what you need.

BACK ISSUES

To Order Back Issues, contact Robin Graham
at rgraham_100@msn.com



Behind the Words: by Miriam Biegelman

The message behind the words, is the voice of the heart.-Rami

Many of us have heard of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Fewer of us are familiar with Post Traumatic Growth, when a person, after having experienced a trauma goes through a transformation where he/ she lives a richer, happier life. Many of the writers in this month's publication speak of their realization that materialism is a trap. It saps us of our core identity and leads us on an empty road. We spend our lives on a hedonistic treadmill running after money and fame only to discover the illusion that they are. The more we chase physical aspirations the more our souls crave spiritual satisfaction. Money pales in contrast to affection, empathy, genuineness. It behooves us to focus on those goals that are eternal, that no one can touch like self-respect, and treating others like we would want to be treated. Material objects are alluring, adorned with gold and silver. They often draw us away from what is important in life like loyalty and integrity.

We need to look deep within ourselves and appreciate the Divine gifts that we have. Kindness, perseverance and bravery are a few examples of the strengths displayed by these writers. People looking at life's challenges in the eye and not cowering in fear, rather learning and growing from their struggles. They learned to be grateful for who they are, what they have and where they are in that moment. They learned not to tell themselves "I should..." rather to value their intrinsic worth and be satisfied with the work that they are doing.

Having a new mindset takes work. These writers learned that love in one's heart is more valuable than money in one's pocket. We each have our unique set of talents. Some people cook. Some people play sports. Other people are artists, writers and dancers. The important thing is to be true to oneself. Let us open our hands and appreciate the gifts that were always there. We can use what we have as well as what we have not to better ourselves and the world around us.



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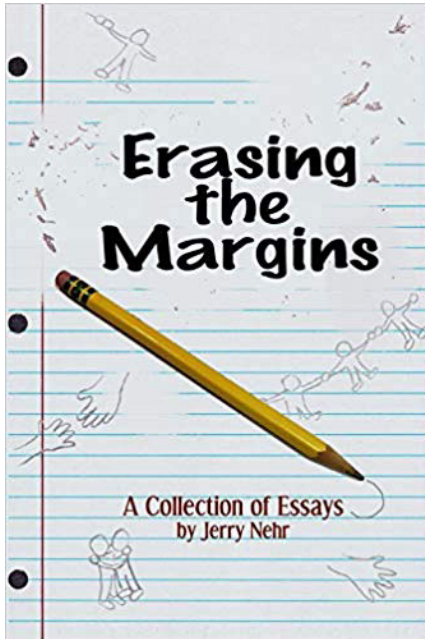
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SPOTLIGHT ON BOOKS

I recently read Jerry Nehr's book, *Erasing the Margins*.



Jerry's essays give you food for thought. Life experiences, no matter how long ago remain with us for years. There are many writers who keep journals, diaries and family heirlooms just for the memory they project. These life experiences gather in the corners of your mind and speak to you in a whisper when you come across a person, place or thing that unlocks their door.

When he speaks about loneliness that he has felt, I thought about how people can maneuver their lives to try and keep loneliness from coming into their lives. We all may experience loneliness. We may not even know it's in the room with us. Perhaps it's visiting a work-a-holic, a superstar performer, a priest, your son, a first responder, the entire planet. It is certainly near by.

Anyone can start today to "Erase the margins" between engaging with another human being or being alone. It only takes one word, hello.

About the Author: Jerry Nehr, is a writer, speaker, teacher and addiction's therapist, Jerry's work is aimed at helping individuals live genuinely, with hope and in service to others. His down to Earth, practical speaking style has brought him into boardrooms, classrooms, government agencies, non-profit organizations, and places of worship, to name a few.

Jerry is continually encouraging his audiences and readers to overcome their fears, let go of past hurts, trust in themselves and their own inner voice, have gratitude and dream!

Additionally, he designs and facilitates training programs in the following areas: Servant Leadership, Cultural Diversity, Addiction and Self-Destructive Behaviors, Anger Management and Self-Esteem.

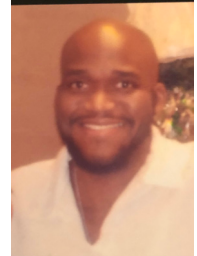
Jerry holds a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Wayne State University and a master's degree in Counseling and Addiction Studies from the University of Detroit Mercy.

For more information, you can visit his website at: www.jerrynehr.com

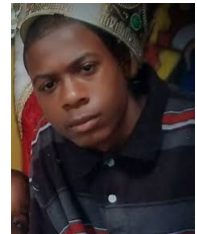


ABOUT THE AUTHORS

MIRIAM BIEGELMAN About the Author: Miriam Beigelman married her husband several months ago during the Corona pandemic, in a backyard wedding in NY. She is now adjusting to her new life down in Florida. As she is about to become a licensed clinical social worker, Miriam looks forward to having a private practice, where she hopes to counsel teens and young adults. Of course, Miriam enjoys sharing her life's journey through the written word.



CHRISTIAN BLACK About the author: Christian Black is 31-year-old inspirational writer, currently enrolled at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Christian is seeking to earn his first Bachelor's Degree. During his spare time, he likes to read books on history and self-help, and write poetry to express his thoughts about different issues on life.



DENZEL COUCH About the author: Denzel Couch was raised in Little Rock, Arkansas. He is currently in the Arkansas Department of Corrections. Denzel began writing so that the youth will learn that there's more to life than the streets. Denzel would enjoy corresponding with people. Send your letters to:

Denzel Couch #146767
P.O.Box 600
Grady, Ar 71644

meta dunn About the author: Meta Dunn is a single parent who put herself through undergrad and graduate school. She has a bachelor's degree in Social Work, Masters of Ministry, with a focus on Intercultural Studies, and Masters of Urban Planning and Policy, with a focus on International Development. She is also certified as a Wellness Coach and Group Fitness Instructor. Meta has over twenty years of community building, management, and leadership experiences in both the non-profit and corporate worlds.

Meta is passionate about health and wellness and enjoys facilitating community wellness programs domestically and internationally. In 2020, she founded WellSpring of Life International, to ensure all people have the resources and knowledge to take control of their health and well-being. Meta explains, "Our offerings are designed to inspire one into action, facilitate inner healing and bring about personal and community transformation...so that those who take the journey with us can continue to make a positive, lasting impact on the world."

DAMONT EWELLS About the author: While Damont Ewells is a man of many gifts it was his love for music and poetry that led him to pursue a career in writing. Tired of missing out on life, he decided to turn his life around while serving a sentence of 63 years for possession with intent to deliver marijuana and cocaine.

The now spiritual man intends to use his influence through writing to lead the younger reader away from a life behind bars. At 47 years old, the Compton, California bred writer has been affiliated with gangs and drugs for most of his life. With his life's experiences, he plans to teach moral lessons to appreciate life and enjoy love.



DOROTHY MARAGLINO About the Author: Dorothy Marglino is serving a life without parole sentence for felony murder and is being held at the Central California Women's Facility. She has been writing for most of her life as a way to document, process, record, and deal with life's challenges. Dorothy grew up overseas. As a foreigner in a new country, she had many experiences that influenced her personality and writing. When she returned to America, she went to boarding school and again used writing to cope with the strict judgmental world around her. She was introduced to BDSM (Bondage Domination Sadomasochism), just after high school. She was passed from first Master to the next and finally her third who killed a young woman he was trying to introduce to BDSM in 2012. The fact that Dorothy had communicated with both her Master and the victim before the crime, meant that she was liable for murder and was named a conspirator Under the old law, the penalty held a sentence of life without parole.

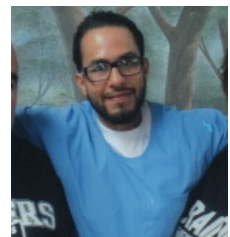
Writing remains Dorothy's main outlet to deal with the world around her. She published a novel titled "Grace in Captivity," combining parts of her BDSM and prison life into a fictional story with non-fictional elements thrown in. She awaits the new laws that have passed since her conviction, which say she is not guilty of murder, to reach her petition in court. She regularly writes articles about prison life which she has published along with her other works. She is currently working on completing additional books for publication including a sequel to her novel. She shares the world of prison and herself with the outside world through the words on a page. She seeks a way to find and manage her hope of the new laws freeing her from the jaws of the criminal justice system.

DENIS MINTUN About the Author: Dennis Mintun has been a regular contributor to Spotlight on Recovery Magazine since 2013, under the pen name of "Cougar Newquist." Because he uses the mistakes of his own past to help others overcome theirs – everyone knows who "Cougar" is. Dennis runs a thriving chapel group that focuses on personal empowerment. He has written articles, stories, and poems for various magazines, and has fiction and non-fiction books at PrisonsFoundation.org

AMY NICHOLSON About the author: Amy Nicholson hopes to encourage and inspire others through her writing. She has been published in Country Woman, The Old Schoolhouse, The Lookout, and other publications. When she's not writing, gardening, or hanging out with her family, Amy substitute teaches. Read a sampling of her musings at www.amynicholson14.wordpress.com.



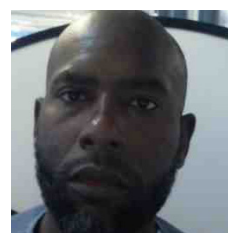
ANGEL RODRIGUEZ About the author: My name is Angel Rodriguez. I am 28 years old and I love art. I hope to someday share my music and poetry with everyone. I keep myself busy. I'm always striving to better myself. I send my love and blessings to everyone.



PHILLIP RODRIGUEZ Phillip Rodriguez has been a contributing writer for Spotlight on Recovery magazine since 2019.

ALPHONSO TANNER About the author: Alphonso has been a contributing writer for Spotlight on Recovery Magazine since 2017.

To correspond with Alphonso, please write to him at:
Alphonso Tanner #X05549



Blackwater River Correctional Institution
5914 Jeff Ates Road
Milton, FL 32583

COREY WILLIAMS About the author: My name is Corey Williams, Jr. I go by the name Lil Corey. I am 23 years old. As a member of the Black Disciple Nation, I'm focused on (Unity), wanting to bring everyone together as one united. All Races from the streets to prison. I try to guide all people that have been misled growing up, mostly the youth who are growing up like I did and show them there's a way out and this is not it. I encourage everyone to stand as one. One big leadership! Plenty much love to you all!



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JOBS!

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NO, I DON'T
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THE FATHER!

NO JUSTICE!
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NO, YOU CAN'T
GO OUT
TONIGHT!