



## THE SEA OF BLAME

She is a sixty year-old woman. She is black. She is handicapped. She lives in a roach-infested apartment on Gottingen Street.

A young man leans against a wall on crack corner. His crazed-looking eyes, wide with adrenalin, scan the area for potential buyers and fellow addicts.

She is a Chinese woman. She speaks no English. She has lived above a run-down laundromat for twenty years.

He is a crippled old man with yellow eyes. He is homeless. He searches in the garbage for bottles and cigarette butts.

These are the people in my neighbourhood.

When I first moved to this area, I would place my bag of recyclables on the sidewalk and then quickly glance down the street in hopes of spotting other blue bags. But, to no avail, and soon I stopped looking.

Due to a lifetime of conditioning by those with the power to do so, I felt some anger towards my neighbours. "DON'T THEY CARE?" And yes, sometimes my feet would slip right off the rock of reality and I would plunge into the Sea of Blame, the sea that includes adjectives such as LAZY or STUPID. These words seem to be favourites of the rich and powerful Ruler of the Sea of Blame - Big Corporation Joe.

As I strengthened my own value system by reading (alternative literature, listening to those around me, watching the real world (as opposed to the one that people with power portray on television), I managed to keep my foot fixed to the rock of reality more often than not. Consequently, Mr. Big Corporation Joe had a more difficult time introjecting his selfish values into my values.

And I began to think about Priorities.

The Priority of a Single Woman receiving welfare may be to feed her children and make sure the heat bill isn't past due.

The Priority of the Wealthy is to create more wealth, and to keep their power, even if that is at the expense of others.

My priority is to assist with cleaning up the environment - cleaning up the mess that has been created.

I watch a woman in a wheelchair arrange the MET packages on her lap. THE MET (aka The disposable Store) is one of the few remaining stores on this street. This company must think they have hit a goldmine. Welfare recipients, physically and mentally-handicapped people, drug addicts, illiterates: an area that includes so many groups that have been smashed down by the system-people who can't afford quality. Besides buying the pair of shoes that's going to fall apart in a few months, low-income families are tempted by brilliant advertisers to buy goods they don't need. Advertisers continue to sell a Lifestyle.

## YOU WILL BE SOMEBODY IF YOU BUY ONE OF THESE

Tell that to a person with low self-esteem and you have a sale.

Tuesday morning arrives and I take my bag of cans and milk cartons out to the street. I place it beside a cheap-looking, now broken-down electric heater. Beside the heater is a bag containing a few cracked plastic cups, an empty box of hamburger helper, light bulbs, and a few styrofoam meat trays. As usual, no blue bags in the vicinity. I hear the Ruler of the Sea of Blame, "Those lazy, stupid people," he says. But that's Okay, I also hear him saying, "While you're spending your energy blaming the poor, I'll take the opportunity to destroy our planet."

Those are fighting words.

~ Janis D. Weston

My Mother  
She holds me  
as tight as I  
hold Her future.  
A picture perfect web  
of Honesty  
Surrounds me and my  
destructive habits  
Unconditional  
Love

My Mother  
She shares with me  
Wisdom  
Secrets  
Inspiration  
And I Take  
I Take until She  
is a broken Spirit  
An abused Woman  
Plump with Knowledge  
but too Weak to Speak.

~Janis D. Weston

## The Morning

This morning I walked  
with bare feet,  
the kitten in my arms,  
to see new plants  
break the earth  
in my garden.

I had shunned  
the outdoors today  
because of fog, of rain.

But I remembered a time I enjoyed the rain.  
This morning I felt dew drops  
on my toenails, and heard the song  
of birds in my heart.

Today  
is also paradise.  
Even more so.  
I will walk in the garden again,  
before tomorrow comes.

~D. Spencer

## Love it not

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healthier world, not only for themselves, but for their own children. Therefore they enthusiastically embrace an environmental perspective on tomorrow and the next day, and they will make the changes now. Environmental education is filtering into our society in school systems, universities and other institutions. Perhaps this education and awareness will close the gap between the generations. Young people can become environmental teachers who change the attitudes of the past and influence the future.

