

Transcription - Stories from the Unhoused

I. Introduction

I am...

My name is...

Well, my name is...

My name is...

So, my name is...

My name is...

My name is...

I'm...

My name is...

My name is...

My name's...

My name is...

My name's...

My name is...

My name is...

Hello, my name is...

I am Amber. I've been in Eugene since 2000. I grew up in Hollywood, California. I love the drastic difference between Hollywood and Eugene.

My name is Bo.

My name is Bryan.

My name is Charliene Toler.

My name is Gary Turner Miller, the second.

And Walcera Blue Miller, the first.

My name is Eduardo, and in español, mi nombre es Luis Javier Gonzalez-Ramirez, y puedo decirles que he estado en Eugene 30 años de homeless. Por eso me gustaría participar en el proyecto.

I'm Jamie Delaney. I'm a firefighter.

Hello, my name is Jeffry Hensen. I was born in Seattle, Washington Kingston.

My name is John.

I'm Justin Wagner. I'm homeless, Native American-Irish and Dutch on my mom's side.

My name is Mark Harrison.

...My name is Matthew Fernandez. I'm 36 years old... I like to draw portraits mainly. Portraits, Disney, characters, anything really... I like to play mainly blues and rock and roll.

Well, I mean, I've been around here a while. I mean, Nicholas Well and I've also been... but I had a bank account down here for a while, and then I had bank issues and I kinda got kinda caught up running around and things... Just had bank issues and financial issues.

Well, my name's Nick, and... I just recently had a time where I died or whatever, and I figured out that, you know, as long as you're doing everything for the right intent, everything will be alright.

Okay, so my name is Oliver. I am in recovery though I still struggle with addiction, although I think one of the things I struggle the most with is... selfish behavior, like thinking about myself, which just really circles around the life that I've led for the last twenty years. But I am trying to think about other people and how my actions affect them.

My name is Tina and I sit in the sun.

So, my name is Stacey Clements. I'm gonna be 48 years old in a week.

Hey, I'm Jake H. and I'm an urban survivalist expert.

I'm Tao, and I do lots of chemical research and analysis for undisclosed entities. [maniacal laughing] I love it!

Hey, I'm Moondancer. I moved to Eugene July 2, 2017. It's been a journey, and one hell of a ride, and there were times where I didn't think I could make it, but I made it. I'm housed, and it took a while to get me there, and these guys got questions about how I succeeded. I wanted to open up.

My name is Ten, and I am looking for anything and everything that can get my foot in the door. I'm outgoing, I'm an easy listener, and I try to give back to the community.

Hi, I'm gonna cry [laughing]... Hi, I'm Grandma Ruby, and I just wanted to make a note because I'm out here supporting all the homeless people in any way I can. I am back from North Carolina... and I love Eugene!

I am Amber.

My name is Bo.

Well, my name is Bryan.

My name is Charlene Toler.

My name is Gary Turner Miller, the second.

Walcera Blue Miller, the first.

My name is Eduardo.

I'm Jamie Delaney.

Hello my name is Jeffrey Hensen.

Hi, I'm Grandma Ruby!

Justin Wagner.

My name is Mark Harrison.

My name is Matthew Fernandez.

Nicholas Well.

My name is Oliver.

Hey, I'm Jake.

My name is Tao.

Hey I'm Moondancer.

My name is Ten.

II. Travel/Personal History

I'm from Oliver, Washington.

Yeah, and I stop here, and I like here, and the first time I stop here, it was back in the 90s, and I went to Canada [to] live in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Went on this really crazy trip for music and art, because I was adopted by the Ken Keseys, pretty much.

Wherever I go, I go to places where it's like Eugene, like Port Angeles, Port Townsend, Seattle, Corvallis.

Off and on since 1997, but I have actually been here permanently since 2011.

Every few months, every six months, every year, we were just here, there, there, here. I mean hell I been to Georgia, fuckin' Missouri, Kentucky, Florida, Hawaii, Iraq, Afghanistan, Japan. I've been all over the damn world.

Been a lot around in Arizona on foot, but I sleep on the front of these stairs a couple years ago.

For years, I mean I been down here for a while down here and everything. (Are you originally from here then?) No, I'm originally from Lake near Portland. I was in Portland, Beaverton, all over.

Yes, I work in the Kaufmann stadium in Kansas City. After math, it was my labor.

Been to Texas, Oklahoma. Originally from Wyoming. I hate that state [laughs]. There's nothing there. Spent some time in Utah, Montana, California, Oregon.

I've been all over the United States. I lived all over the United States. Traveled from Passaic, New Jersey in 1977. Landed in California. In Oregon in 2-17, I landed here.

Moved to Eugene in 1972 when I was 12. Loved it right away. Loved the outdoors. The most beautiful place I've ever been.

When I was a little girl, I always wanted to live in Oregon. I didn't know where, but I knew Oregon. So when I was 22-23 I moved up here and have been in the Eugene area since then, and I love it, and I'm happy to be raising my kids up here in this town.

I lived in Glendale (oh nice!). Yeah, Tempe, Glendale, Mesa, yeah. I'm from here. I was from here, but I was raised in Florida for a long time. And then— but I moved to AZ and then Washington.

I grew up in Alaska. I came down to Eugene in the middle of November to be with my kids and my grandkid. And slowly but surely, things just have not worked out.

Like I said, I'm 47 years old. I've got many years experience in all front-of-house restaurants, y'know, from cashier, hostess, busser, server, bartender, y'know, barista, floral design, retail, and I fully did not expect it to be so difficult to get employed here.

I'm used to being out in the woods. Been homeless since the age of 13, pretty much. Even when I was livin' with my dad, I wouldn't live with him. I would just like, be on my own most of the time. But I went from sleeping in people's front yards in their sawdust, burying myself with sawdust, and making a pillow out of the sawdust.

My husband is a strong, sweet man with a good heart—a good father, and a good husband...and a convict too (yeah). But he was using for most of his life because he was hurt as a child, and sad, and it's not good to be sad when you're a big strong man. Sit here and do drugs and be mad.

I'm homeless right now. I been drinking too much, and I lose a lot of gals for the drinking. But I stop drinking. I've been sober for six months right now. I try the best I can in my health because I like to believe it.

AZ is so weird [laughter]. The people are just insane. [Inaudible comment from interviewer]. I think it's from the heat [laughter], and I thought everybody, y'know [breaks into laughter].

I was the, like, dramatic literature—dramatic teacher, but in a another country, in Mexico.

I love spreading goodness, hopefully, and light.

I think people already know that I'm a great mom and a great friend and a great caregiver.

I don't really own anything that's important. I have a nice pair of boots. Yeah, yep, yep, I have a nice pair of boots I really like, and they're really nice. I got 'em for—I paid less than \$100 for 'em when I first started this journey—Sportsman's Warehouse—and they've been good. I used to make teeth for five years, but I wanted to get outside. I wanted to explore. I wanted to be able to move around. I wanted to be able to visit new cities.

I actually managed to make it off the streets like two weeks ago (oh wow!), without by any means being anything but myself. Couldn't go to a shelter because I have animals and a wife that's really, like, picky about everything, how she sleeps. She has a lot of PTSD and shit like that. But I made it off the streets, man, and—by the grace of...y'know?

Cahoots [pulled] up, and I took—pulled up my phone. Right behind Cahoots was a rainbow. And I took their picture—the Cahoots van helping out on the streets in crisis. And right behind that van, this huge rainbow—gonna like—and I got that picture.

III. Daily Routine

Ok, my daily routine...

Um, my daily routine is...

So my routine is, you know...

I mean it varies day to day, there's lots of variables that come up in being homeless.

I just keep focused on my day, I just go to meetings, and I help people that need help, and I do my house chores, and I'm looking for work.

Daily routine is I wake up in the mornings to give my clients their medications, to make breakfast, to housecleaning, to maybe making phone calls to the doctors if they need it, just, you know, just daily routines as a normal person. It feels good to be able to do that, to have responsibilities to wake up to every day.

Ok, my daily routine is way different every day now. I am pretty good at showering. You know, I'd say every two or three days is efficient for me. Sometimes it's full, or sometimes you're somewhere there isn't one. So I do that, and I brush my teeth. Probably I should do it more for sure. I do it like every other day, not every day. And then I go out if I don't work that day. Like I said, I work two days out of the week. I usually just go to the populated places and talk with people.

My routine is mostly I try to go to AA or NA, one or the other. I just try to be more outgoing, positive.

So my routine is, you know, eat in the morning, take a shower, come to the library, you know, drawing something in the library there. Sometimes I go to the mall, just killing time, waiting to get back to the place at night.

And then I do a part-time caregiving job to pay the bills. I'm a home-care worker.

That's pretty much what I try to do every day, is fill a little bit of, a little bit of fulfillment for myself and for my friends, and in all honesty I'm a healer and a lover and a friend and a Jedi fucking master when it comes to protecting my friends and the things I believe in and love.

Propane on, coffee going, and then try to provide breakfast for my two little—for my two girls, for my cats and my wife. And after that, then the paper chase begins, you know.

I go and do whatever, whatever comes to mind. I don't really plan anything out, you know. Just play it minute by minute.

Housing, I'm not out here having to be in a camp no more, trying to figure out, ok, now I have my stuff here. Tomorrow am I gonna have my stuff there? Am I gonna lose it?

Kind of walking around. I don't know what to do at this point. I'm just kinda stranded.

It's hard to keep up with the small things, you know, like personal hygiene, staying fed—people take for granted. Electricity even, or running water. So, like, even just, like, making sure that I have water to drink during the day requires some sort of source, and that requires decisions, you know? Do I take water from someone's hose outside their house without their permission? Or do I ask them in the store?

I'd wake up in the morning and it'd be just ice cold outside and I'm like, oh my! First thing I'd think about was him, like, sleeping in his sleeping bag on the concrete. I just don't know how people could do that.

The daily routine as homeless—it was very hard. Usually, I'm looking for a place to eat, for a place to stay. For instance in the city of Eugene, we can find the Eugene Public Library to spend the day, to stand the cold weather. But in the night it is very hard. Try to survive.

Basically, I wake up and it's survival mode. At the end of the day, yeah, I'm living comfortably, I guess you could say. Comfortable enough to fuckin' sustain, you know, a good attitude and everything. I'm still in survival mode at the end of the day, and I'm not really able to get anywhere.

IV. Hardship

And then those people showed up and he let 'em in. And he said, "I watched and I felt 'em...not being who they said they were, y'know?" They were gonna hurt us and hurt him.

I was sleeping in my car.

I lost my car a couple weeks ago.

Here I am on the streets sleeping literally where the bus transit is.

It was actually congestive heart failure that took his life.

There's times I get so weak I can't even lift a fuckin' pen.

The community around me's gettin' tore up by the fentanyl.

It's kind of tiring having to worry about where you're gonna be—if you're gonna be safe or if someone's gonna do this to you or if someone's gonna do that to you.

I've been so far down I didn't even know if I was gonna even make it through another day.

I was sick, and I said, "Honey, something's wrong with me, huh?"

I get weak easy.

It left a hole in his leg where it went clear down to the leg bone.

I've done a lot of things that I wish I could do differently.

We were sold for a couple months into sexual slavery.

I was raped as a child. I was beaten as a child.

My dad's crack addiction and homelessness...

I grew up in a dysfunctional family.

I've known failure for a long time.

It sounds like my family's screaming for help all the time—my little sister 'n' shit.

I'm bleeding bad, and it didn't hurt because I was worried that he was gonna get in trouble, and he told me, "Get rid of this gun now and don't call an ambulance."

I don't ever feel good about that anymore, y'know? If I go into the store, I'm like, yeah, I'm buying this. I'm not gonna go into the store with money in my pocket and steal something. I just, it doesn't...I don't feel good on the inside by doing that.

I don't see very well and I have troubles with movement.

You gotta be a certain person to live out here on the street and fight for other people and not get sick.

Sometimes it feels like I'm in a never-ending movie where I don't even know what my role is and there's a whole lot of bad actors.

They set the man on fire over here, like, eight years ago. A homeless man was sleeping. And kids—someone came up and doused him in chemicals or gas or something like that and lit him on fire.

They took everything. We have twenty years—twenty years-worth of the kids' stuff, our grandma's stuff. Things. Our new things. Our special, special old things. The cars, the Harley, the motor home, the windows, the doors, the electricity. They took it all. It's all gone and it's my fault. It's my fault because I wasn't strong.

And I spent the night in jail the night before last over a trespass and...I mean a disorderly, because... I was just like...I was like, why do you need to see my ID? I'm gonna leave the property, but because I didn't leave immediately... It was just like.... And so now, I find myself having spent a night in jail and having court. And I'm just, like, how is this my life? Like, how did this even happen to me? I just cannot comprehend it. Like it's, like I said, it's like a bad story and I didn't write it.

It's bad. It's real bad. Every day I'm there. I really don't know if I'm gonna make it out of there without being robbed. That's why I stay away from people. I don't...I don't give 'em a chance to rip me off or rob me. I just stay away from 'em.

She just died. They're all dying, man! It's what happens to all of us. It'll happen to you pretty soon too. It sucks, but... Yeah, everyone starts dying off, y'know? And before you know it, it's all gone and you prob'ly should've enjoyed some more of [your] time.

I took care of him until he passed away, and he wanted to pass away at home. So did Mom. They both wanted to pass away at home. They wanted to pass away in their

beds, in their house. And by all means, I gave both of them their wishes. I wasn't gonna put either one of them in a home, either one of them in a hospital. You wanna die at home? You get your wish. I'll take care of you until the last day if I can't do it anymore. My mom passed away on Mother's Day last year. That was the hardest thing ever for me. I saw her pass away in my arms on Mother's Day morning. That was like, that was like, really just *phew*.

He just passed away so...been pretty tough. A lot of times I hear him.

He's right now in prison because of some things that happened with one of his own daughters.

Every day, I was just losing my stuff every day from the city. They'd come take my stuff, throw it in the dump.

Things have just crumbled and it's just been so, like, devastating. It's devastating and, like, I just—it's so frustrating, y'know? And it's like, why did I come here?

I don't wanna be looked at like a piece of sh—a piece of crap. I don't wanna be looked at, like, that you can't trust him. I don't wanna be looked, y'know—but I don't care what you think, you know what I'm saying? I just don't wanna be looked at a certain way, and, y'know, everyone does when you're homeless.

V. Community

The people that I'm in community with is people that are less fortunate, that don't have resources and stuff like that.

I find a sense of community...I don't know, usually at church, I guess.

My community here in Eugene are probably the bunch of deadheads... There's actually a community. Everyone knows each other. It's a big group of friends.

It was a great family to be known in, because if you were down and out, everyone in the Grateful Dead family were there for each other. We pick each other up. We help each other out.

...with the friends I've made in the past couple months I've been out here. I have found great friendship. We all struggle with certain things, so we help each other. I like to be there for somebody and help them make a better decision, and I ask them to help me make a better decision, and we're doing that.

Church, for one, is one of the communities I find good relationship.

The church right here—this is family, this is friends right here. I've got everybody in this church has been highly supportive of me. And if it wasn't for the past year, who knows where I'd be at right now. So I owe a lot of my thanks—I owe a lot of that to them because they've been my rock, right by my side.

There's so many good people out there, I have a shit-ton of friends with houses, and like, stuff, and things going on. But there's like—I don't know. I identify with the good people.

I usually find, like, people that are out here trying to help, you know what I mean?

I don't know, whenever someone's nice to me and I become friends with them, that's a new relationship and that's where I'm at right now, is trusting who might not want to hurt me.

Oh, the community's good. Yeah, like I said, they're friendly. I mean, to me, I've been having friendly people, no matter what I'm homeless.

My daughter's changed my life. I love her with all my heart and soul, and my grandkids are amazing. My grandson's sixteen, Brooklyn just turned thirteen, and Madison is nine and she's the karate queen.

I'm really lucky to have a lot of support, from not only, like, the people around me like my girlfriend, her mom, and my family, but also the community at large has helped me more than I can even say, and I really would like to thank them all.

I stick to a certain people, but the people I do know out here, that I care about and do whatever with, they're the same way with me. I don't ask for much, but when I do need it, they got me, they watch my back. And if I do sleep outside, they stay with me. I'm not by myself.

This is our community right here. Neither one of us want to be around people right now, you know, for the most part.

I relate more, and I get along with more, with people that are homeless or drug addicts, or recovering drug addicts, or recovering homeless.

I'm really on the outs with all of them, like I haven't—like two years ago I got out of prison, and I stayed away from everybody so I could make it through parole.

And I have kids whose parents are on drugs, and they need a safe place. Women that are being hurt, they need a safe place.

Way out in the country, far far away from people. Way up in Winberry Creek, up Fall Creek. Up there, just walking around in the woods by myself. Quiet, nothing but animals.

I don't mess with my family at all, because of my choice. My mama and my little brother—same mom, same dad, little brother—those are the only two I talk to.

My family was living in Chicago, but they changed their address and I don't know where did they go.

My mom and my three brothers are the only ones I have left, and they are all pretty much heroin addicts. Putting myself in that environment, or that close to an environment like that, it's not healthy. I'd rather be in a shelter doing what I gotta do.

One day, people are cool with me, and the next day people are like 'I don't know you'—what the fuck? To me that don't make sense.

So I don't have to worry about anybody. I don't have any—I have brothers that I don't speak to. I didn't even speak to my family for forty years before they passed away. I'm kind of like one of those kids that wasn't wanted.

The people I used to hang around were pretending to be my friends, they were pretending to care about me, and it took me a really long time to realize that they weren't there for me. They weren't real friends.

But I've also met quite a few people who are very actually helpful and friendly and assisting in finding resources and finding, you know, help. And as far as the community goes, I love the way that the diner, this place, treats people.

I've got my family, but my family's in LA. I haven't seen them for five years already, but one day I will be there. I don't know when, but I will.

Even though we didn't get along too well when we were kids. We fought like cats and dogs. We still don't get along too well even now, but it's still good to get together, even once in a while, to catch up on old things and figure out how's things going with her.

Families are crazy, you know, but you can't pick them, so just enjoy it while you can, because you never know.

This is where I found my family, out here.

VI. Music

In these streets and I'm praying to god for better days,
My heart hurts that's why I'm taking all these drugs I'm trying to take the pain away,
The weight of the world is on my shoulders that's why I'm having the feeling that I
might just cave.

I don't know what to do,
It's hard to maintain out here in this Oregon game
It's hard to maintain in this Oregon rain.
Smokin' blunts just to stay sane.
Tired of losses I'm just tryin' to gain,
Baby girl you look like you could use some knowledge,
so come here and let me put you on game.
I'm a real OG,
my anger I'm trying to tame,
(Fuck, uh) Screw all these lames! (yeah, yeah)

In the game,
'Bout the gain,
Crowded lanes,
Can't be dumb,
Gotta go out and use my brain.

VII. Hope

There's always been something inside of me that knows that, like, even though things can suck in the present, like, at some point in the future, things will come into focus.

I just wanna see a change. This town is so beautiful.

My heart is open. My heart is open for prayer and talkin' to from anybody out here on the streets who needs it.

What keeps me hopeful? The beautiful moments, man, and that just usually brings me back to hope in humanity.

I can help at least somebody to realize that they have more perception than what they think.

My hope was to [come] here to America to realize, not the dreams, but the realities that we are living today.

My goal is to work for Shelter Care. Give back what was given to me.

I wanna get away from Highway 99. I'm really excited about—my apartment's gonna be mine.

I am very thankful that I am into permanent housing. I'm on disability.

So when I see something good and beautiful, it makes me feel much, much better.

I just give. I give more than I have to give.

I really believe that words, spoken words and thoughts, when they're positive, really pushes you to a better place.

I find my strength in, like, my dad.

Long term goals would be to get off the street eventually, become stable, find a place where I'm happy.

I am seeing people being able to still maintain a relationship with another person even if they have conflicting points of view.

We're human beings. We all make mistakes. We all have the serenity of what [we] want, and it's okay to have your own serenities, man. It's okay to have your own little worlds, and—because we all cross paths one way or another.

Brings me joy in my heart to help people.

I know that I'm a good person. I help 'em up if I believe I can.

And that fear is gone, and I can walk strong.

Feeling the sun on yourself, you can actually get up and then go!

I try to show them that there is light.

Without faith, I prob'ly wouldn't be here today.

I pray that [God] guide me in a good direction, y'know?

We have our own little room and (yeah it's gonna be so nice) we can do what we want (that's what I keep thinking we should do!). That's what keeps me going, y'know, is that thought. (We can just be together!)

That keeps me hopeful, yes! Common unity!

I'll be able to get my driver's license and maybe get a motorcycle.

I'm done with prison.

Thought about maybe growin' up a little bit and gettin' a job. *Ha!* And becoming stable.

I'm gonna try to get my disability so that I can get into housing.

I had a dream that he came and was just, like, he told me that I was meant for something better than this, so I really took it to heart.

What keeps me hopeful? That we're gonna get to go home (kids, grandkids), and be with our family. I miss our family.

Yeah, well, everyone wants to be somebody, y'know, wants to do something.

Now I wake up to life. I wake up to church. I wake, y'know, to some family.

Try to keep going because that's how my dad was.

I have to hold onto that!

I'm not spiritually broke, and I don't think I'm gonna be broke very much longer.

Now I'm getting a home.

Really glad that I don't have to worry about being homeless anymore.

As long as I'm alive, it's not over, right? There's always hope for a better day tomorrow.

I have hope and I have faith. That's not—that's unshakeable now.

Long as you're still alive, and ya—you still gotta a chance to make it, so...

One of the greatest things that we have is the life. No material things, but the life.

Don't give up.

I don't wanna give up.

Still get all the politics and all the nonsense, and can't we just get something where people are really honestly true to their—in their heart of hearts that they wanna take care of people and help them?