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## Streets Are for Nobody: Pat Gomes

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## Streets Are for Nobody: Pat Gomes

*Twenty-five; two children. Has apartment; worked part time for Salvation Army Daycare Center, a facility for the children of homeless women. On welfare. Currently in Career Development Training Program.*

I've been out of my mother's house since I was fifteen — and I've been on my own more or less. Then I got pregnant with my daughter and I moved back to my mother's house because where I was living was like a drug-infested area and I didn't want my child to grow up in that type of atmosphere. So I moved back with my mother. Me and my mother never got along to begin with, you know.

I went to Welfare and they put me in a shelter. And I enjoyed that because there was people there for me, you know what I mean? Anything I needed, I could get. I'm not sayin' that everybody should become homeless, you know, but there's people there for you, so you shouldn't feel too bad bein' homeless.

That's one thing I liked about bein' homeless, you know? If you need food, there's food pantries open to feed you. There's shelters that give you hot and cold things. When you need clothes, there's a clothing bank. There's furniture banks, you know. The thing that hurts the most is when you first get your place they cut you off all that.

So now it's like, I don't have nobody there to tell me, "Well, this is how you gotta budget your money, you can only spend so much, you know." I never had to cook for me and my daughter or go food shoppin'. I go food shoppin' and it's like I buy everything I want and I can't afford everything I want, you know what I mean? See, I'm not into this — this is my first time having my own spot, you know what I mean? So, it kinda messed — financially, I can't say I'm set, you know, but, look, I'm trying. You know, I'm working. I'm not just waitin' for the welfare check. I'm workin'.

When I was in business, it was borin'. I got tireda sittin' at a desk all day. You know, here I get to meet new people, you know, I get to help children. I have fun. And my kids love it here, you know, but they don't pay me enough to . . . to like live off of it. I wish I could have this job forever. If they was payin' me for full-time pay, you know, I wouldn't quit the job. I'd tell Welfare, hey, they can take their checks and stick 'em, you know. But I need them now and I'm gonna stay here for my children.

I'm gonna go back to school for child development, I think. I can be a teacher and make good money. Good money. But I would always want to work in a day care.

I wanna be able to take my kids to the aquarium and places like that. That's the only reason why I like this job, you know, because they get to go out places, and the

*Interviewed by Melissa Shook, July 2, 1990, Cambridge. Reprinted, with permission, from "Streets Are for Nobody: Homeless Women Speak," Boston Center for the Arts, 1991.*

homeless children as well as my own, they get to experience new things. They don't have to just stay in the park or stay in the shelter. They get to see things that they haven't seen. Go to circus, learn about animals, things like that, you know that? Like TeeTee, she went to the aquarium. She came home — "Mommy, I seen the turtles, and Mommy, they were swimmin' an' —" She just kept goin' on and on, and you could just see her face was so lit up, you know, it was wonderful. And even the kids here, you know, "Oh, wow, the bird, the tree," you know. "Look at the bubbles!" They get excited off that stuff.

That makes me feel good to see that a child is enjoyin' herself and because I'm a part of that, you know, that makes me feel good. So, now, I try to get TeeTee to the circus, the library, anywhere, just — you know — so she can get that little spark in her eyes, you know, and I be happy. I'm happy when she gets that spark in her eyes, you know, and I never got to do them things when I was a kid, but my kids aren't gonna live the life I lived. They gonna enjoy life, if I can help it. My life sucked. Sorry. It sucked. I been drugged, deprived, and it hurts, you know. I'm happy because I have kids, and my kids make me happy. 🐼