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Streets Are for Nobody: Marybeth

Melissa Shook

University of Massachusetts Boston

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Streets Are for Nobody: Marybeth

Twenty-one; "black sheep"; beaten by mother, later by boyfriend. Arrested for dealing drugs; in alcohol treatment program.

I was doing a lot of drugs. I was screwed up and I started drinking, and when I did, I had a blackout. I never had a blackout before. The last thing I remembered was I was in the park with my friends and we had just gotten high and I had drunk some Peach Schnapps and the next thing I remembered I was looking over a bridge down at some rocks. I have no idea how I got to the bridge, but I assumed I was going to kill myself. Solomon [Carter] Mental Health was around the corner. And I was so scared that I walked to Solomon's because I really thought I was going to kill myself and wouldn't of even known I was killing myself.

They told me that I wasn't crazy and I wasn't suicidal, but I had a bad problem with drugs and alcohol and that it was making me suicidal so that I needed some help.

My problems I thought started when I was drinkin' in the park, but they didn't. Started when I was real young and I didn't even realize it. My mother's alcoholic. My father's an alcoholic. I was, um, ah . . . an unwanted child. I was a mistake. My father hated to look at me 'cause every time he looked at me just reminded him of what my mother had done to him. My mother hated me because of every time my father would look at me, he'd hate her more. I always felt that growin' up. Then, when I found out that my father really wasn't my father, it all fit together for me. I understood everything then.

My sister and my brothers will be talkin' about, "Do you remember this, do you remember that?" and I honestly don't remember it. I seen a psychiatrist and he said that — I just blocked it out. But, um, when I was younger, I can remember times when my mother would just snap, and she'd grab me by the hair and she'd just start beatin' on me and beatin' on me and my older sister would just literally throw her body on top of me and let my mother beat on her because — I just couldn't take no more.

And, um, another time was in the tub. I didn't want to wash my hair — I used to hate to have my hair washed — and they got me the goggles that you wear in the water and all kinds of things, but I didn't want to, and my mother snapped and tried to drown me. I was blue. If my father didn't come in, I woulda been dead.

Interviewed by Melissa Shook, November 1988, Long Island Shelter. (No contact with Marybeth after she left the shelter.) Reprinted, with permission, from "Streets Are for Nobody: Homeless Women Speak," Boston Center for the Arts, 1991.

And, then, I got into a relationship with a real winner. And he used to beat the daylight outta me. For about a year, I didn't even know what my face looked like anymore, because I always had a fat lip or a black eye or a broken nose and two black eyes. I put up with that and I thought it was 'cause he loved me that he did these things and that he was sick and that I could help him.

I couldn't even go in the doctor's office without him there. He sat right there, and he told me that he would kill me — and I believed him — if I said anything. Um, he was violent sexually and I took that kind of abuse. I was petrified to go near him. And then he got arrested. He went to jail and I left him. I never wrote or talked to him again.

And then about five months ago he escaped from Bridgewater [prison] and came looking for me with a gun and I was still into my drugs. This was right before I went to jail. And I was so scared that I stood in the parking lot where he saw me and I threw up because I seen the gun pointed at me and I knew he was crazy enough to kill me. Somethin' made him not kill me. I don't know what it was.

I had isolated myself so much from my family. I had, um, pushed everybody away because of him. I was afraid that they'd see what he was doin' to me and it would hurt them, and I didn't want to hurt them. So I would stay away.

I was ashamed of what I was goin' through because I was always raised to be strong and you take care of yourself and, you know, anything happens to you, it's 'cause you allow it to. And I was afraid that my family would see that I was weak. And I don't want them to ever see that. And I have a strong backbone and I can take on my own responsibilities and I know I am responsible for my own life and what happens to it.

[Recalling life as a drug dealer:]

I was always put on a pedestal because I was dealin' drugs b—ig time. I had my apartment, I had, you know, food in my house, I had a car. I had everything that showed off. I had the gold. I had the diamonds until the police broke in house and took everything from me and I found that I was just another person when I was layin' out there on the sidewalk in a towel with a cop's foot on the back of my neck. I realized right then that I was scared for the first time in my life.

I hate bein' in this place. I hate the fact that I'm down this low that I have to be here. I'm proud that I'm goin' to a halfway house Monday, but I'm scared to death too because I have to face . . . that — I am part of society and I do have to live right or I'm just gonna die. I don't wanna die — twenty-one years old. ♪