



It hurt in the very center of my being.

That was the hardest part.

I knew my experience with homelessness was going to end. I knew that I had a finish line- a house, a community, and a rigorous higher education course load to return home to. The pain, the fear, the invisibility would expire after 48-hours and I would regain my power and privilege in this world simply by taking a shower, turning on my cell phone, and no longer carrying my "house" on my back, but just my wallet- a wallet with a license, gift cards from loved ones, a few dollars in cash, and a debit card that was attached to a bank I belong to. If I could just take the image, the mask away then I could regain my right, and further my agency to be a part of society. The power of one simple element such as water washed away the dirt and grease that covered my body while simultaneously washing away the injustice and inequality I was facing as a human being experiencing homelessness. One simple element was all it took.

48 HOURS ON 48 CENTS

WRITING AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY TAYLORAE DEWITT

Additional interview excerpts from the intellectual mind of Marc Fortney

It all began with my journey to Colorado State University. Service and leadership, two buzz words I continue to redefine every day, lead me to a program and a perspective on life that I have been most passionate about since getting involved four years ago. The Alternative Break program at Colorado State is an "immersion experience into different cultural, environmental and socioeconomic communities across the nation. Students provide service in exchange for education about current social and cultural issues facing the host communities". As a self-proclaimed advocate for social change in my world, I am eager to ask the most difficult questions knowing that I will only receive more difficult answers. Surprisingly, it is in this difficulty that I feel most alive.

Service learning, and this program, fuels my spirit and gives me hope to sustainably mend the injustices in the world that truly break my heart. I remember clearly the process of applying for my second

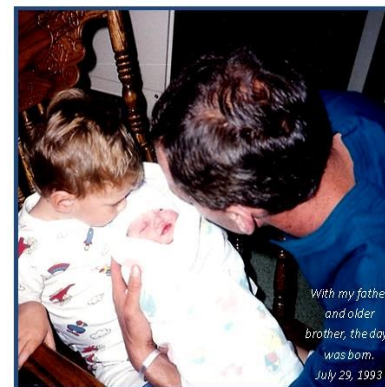
alternative break experience with this fire as my foundation. The fear was persistent shaking my hand as I circled the trip I knew I needed to go on, yet felt most afraid of doing so. The anxiety grew with each pre-trip meeting I went to. While the purpose of these meetings was to dive a bit deeper into the social issue at play, I found myself more cautious and timid as the anticipation grew. For my alternative spring break experience the community of Washington D.C. hosted me as a student on their streets to learn about the multi-faceted issue of homelessness. It was the bitter month of March; the year, 2013; the weather, cloudy, overcast, rain and flurries. I traveled to Washington D.C. from my home of Fort Collins, CO with a group of eleven fellow college students and a community member, a brother of the streets, a great friend named Marc Fortney.

Marc reminded me very much of my father. It may have been because he identifies as a white male and an awe-inspiring father to two beautiful boys, could have been his rough, unshaven, weathered face, or maybe it was the events that lead him to the streets for many years of his adolescent life. Seeking his youth identity, Marc was homeless beginning at the age of 13- family

dysfunction, perplexing a non-violent world, lack of spiritual intelligence, feeling uninhibited and free, and a girlfriend that saw something greater in him. A brilliant, abstract student allowed to *run, to paint*. It was all a part of his story. It all equated to a life on the streets that would *work out better*.

Growing up in white suburbia, my life was perfect. Of course, perfect and easy are two very different things. A theme of loss and love flowed through my family. A mom, a dad, a brother, a sister, a dog, a roof over my head, a room that was all my own, a water bed, dance lessons, ice skating and soccer, summer camps and girl scouts, big dinners that often happened in the car on our way from one place to the next; I felt as though I had it all, life was perfect by my definition. We were human beings that held the world in our hands until life became a little less perfect and the world seemed to have flipped on its' axis. My father divorced my mother, our family, and the stability and health that a roof over his head provided and took to the streets and to a way of life not even he could have predicted. His life was spiraling downward fast, and it was my mother's optimistic belief that he took himself out of our lives before his decisions carried on their malicious path to change the "daddy" I once spoke to everyday in our special voice.

Nearly four years later, I can no longer hear that voice. It's become muted alongside the hurt and the pain I feel every day because of the decisions he made that broke my family and my heart simultaneously. In the voice we spoke to each other, I felt that I knew my father better than anyone else. Recently, I've never felt more distant. The times we speak are rare as I see him, but twice a year at most. His life has grown distant and has nearly eliminated any relationship with me. Little did I know, D.C. would change that distance for me. D.C. would



bring me closer than ever to my father, to his lifestyle, to his struggle, to his pain, and to a multi-faceted issue that I know I will dedicate my life to.

Sunday morning, we arrived at the front steps of the National Coalition for the Homeless in Washington D.C. dressed the part and eager to learn. Failing to grasp the life of homelessness my father leads, I was yearning for perspective. I was yearning to understand a population heavily ridiculed, discriminated against, and silenced. I was ready to begin the 48-Hour Homeless Challenge hoping to be taught this raw life from the streets that houses the largest homeless population in the United States.

The first three hours I was silent. The thoughts in my head were estranged and

not making sense. The questions I had before wasting all of the jet fuel to get there remained unanswered — I questioned everything. We began the challenge at 9am. By noon I had not said a word. I was embarrassed with what I was wearing. I had not showered in over a week as a challenge to myself to be fully invested in the experience. I knew the number of times I had been pushed and shoved as though I did not exist,

though I was quickly losing track. Another female participant and I sat against a red brick wall outside of a Starbucks Coffee shop. We watched business men hurriedly checking their watches and assuring their file folders were in order- not one wrinkle in their perfectly tailored suits. We watched

found myself looking at it a little differently squatting against a wall hoping that the next to walk in or out would exhibit compassion, humility, generosity, anything. I wondered how much time you would have to spend out on those streets to completely zap any positive thinking that remained. The smell of the dark roast and last night's rain storm played tricks on my mind.

It then occurred to me, how did I know that four hours had passed? I had just assumed that the intense pain in my back from walking to this location and the discomfort in my rear end from sitting on cement for so long equated to four hours. Not only was I stripped of my own hygiene, my sanity, a roof over my head and a warm meal to eat, I knew I was less than because I could not even tell you what time it was. The time was going to pass whether on this street corner or the

other, so why did it matter that I knew? My father, Marc, the various individuals I met on the streets didn't know if it was Thursday or September, so why did I need to know? I had nowhere to be.

It took three groups of human beings to walk past me before one comprehended the words I was

speaking to understand that I was not asking for money, just simply the time. It was 10:44am. I remember that time clearly. I remembered how little time had actually passed. I remember how angry I was with the other beings that belonged



mothers and daughters, all dolled up for a large dance convention in town, walk in and out of the shiny, gold trimmed glass doors laughing and reminiscing. I'm not sure I've ever looked so closely at the very door of any Starbucks Coffee shop. I



Marc Fortney

Eclectic Master Social Worker

Macro, Regional Specialist of McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act & Migrant Education Program (Federal Education Laws)

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Centennial Board of Cooperative Educational Services

www.cboces.org — Federal Programs

to my race- the human race. Through joining the ranks of the homeless, I tried so hard to remain far from hopeless, but it was hard. The streets attempted to destroy my hope, my joy, my motivation. The sounds of the cars beeping in high D.C. traffic rang in my ears as I heard only silence since the challenge began.

My body knew that lunchtime was approaching and yet my heart knew that I wouldn't eat- no money and no food. We walked away from that street corner leaving nothing more than our dignity. As we approached the National Mall, I knew we would encounter tourists and their privilege that I had been stripped of for the time being. The first museum was of American History- of the triumphs, trials, and truth of our great nation.

Beep. Beep. Beep. The loud ringing in my ear brought me back to reality.

I was in a daze and completely unaware that I had unconsciously walked straight through a metal detector. I was asked to step aside. With the amount of large layers that attempted to warm my body

teeth. My true identity and life lay before me and the guests inside the museum raw and uncovered.

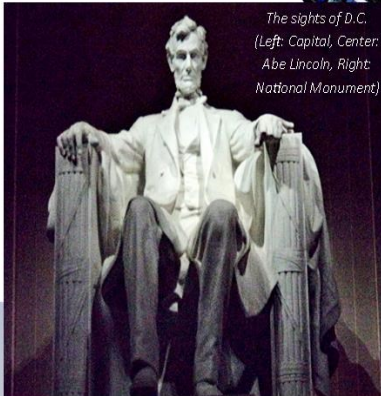
Anyone could have called me on it- called me out as a "pretender", a "fake", a "lazy". But they didn't. They noticed that I had not showered, and they noticed that I had tears running down my face, and they understood that I was in extreme agony. Regardless of the contents, I was carrying my house on my back and I looked "the part".

Attempting to blend in, my fixation on the revolving dish return in the food court only subtracted from my effort. Plate after plate, clinking of

on the streets. The stares and the whispers reminded me how much I did not belong indoors with other human beings. I walked back outside in search of refuge that would accommodate the frustrating headspace I was in.



The sights of D.C.
(Left: Capitol, Center:
Abe Lincoln, Right:
National Monument)



Sitting in the grass was the most comfort I had felt in the hours that had passed since 9am. My mind knew where I belonged and for the first time I sighed a breath of relief. The tears flowed while my heart broke and the pain in my back grew unbearable, at least to my level of

tolerance. I was driving my own life again- in this space I had freedom and control and for the briefest of moments, I felt empowered. The trees and the soil of the earth, and even the park bench nearby accepted me for everything that I was, and protected me from everything I was not.

As I sat, I thought about the man Steve we had passed some time ago. Sometime when we walked, and walked, and walked. I had lost all concept of time. I had lost all concept of distance. My recall of the story remains as jumbled in my mind as my thoughts were in that moment. What I do remember is this man's influence. He sat on a street corner

the silverware, the sound of milks and juices being poured down the drain made me cringe and my ears ring. *Wasteful, wasteful, wasteful- it was just so wasteful.* I could bier it no longer. When I got up to leave, I grabbed the

half-eaten croissant sandwich that was seconds from the compost. I indulged as if a decadent steak dinner was placed in front of me. *One man's trash is another man's treasure, right?* I knew if I was going to "blend" in anywhere, it was not in this museum. I knew I belonged outside

and the backpack that looked as if it belonged in the museum, I was searched. The contents of my backpack, and of my true identity, spilled to the floor. Nike running shoes. A Colorado hoodie. A couple pairs of socks. Jeans that fit my body, and a toothbrush that cleansed my



with a sign that was barely holding together through the rainstorm. No one would have guessed how much education flowed through his mind. While the diploma was long gone, the doctorate level of education would always be the treasure that no one could strip from him. Steve deserved to be called "Doctor"- not a bum, hobo, drunk. And yet he still was, every day.

My father just barely began working toward his bachelor's degree at the ripe age of 18- I knew people who would meet him and knew this would look down on him. He chose to start a life and a family for himself never imagining he would take to a life on the streets twenty-some years later wishing he had finished school first. And yet, the man with his doctorate was looked down on all the same. The stereotypes I had consumed from society for the last twenty years of life were completely disbanded in this moment. Homelessness can happen to anyone at any moment. You can take all the "right steps" yet still fall short.

Another woman Linda told me she attended the "Life Academy". This *alternative* form of education made all the sense in the world- she's learned more from the streets themselves as teachers in "Life Academy" than I've learned with three years of college under my belt. It couldn't be further from the truth how little education had to do with homelessness. "Pull yourself up by your bootstraps", they tell you. "Stop being

lazy, go to school, and get a job", they tell you. This community proved to me that it is not simply that easy, or sometimes, not even that necessary. "The most fascinating, intellectual, creative people live outside" Marc echoed. My question of the stereotypes of homelessness, laziness, and education was **ANSWERED**.

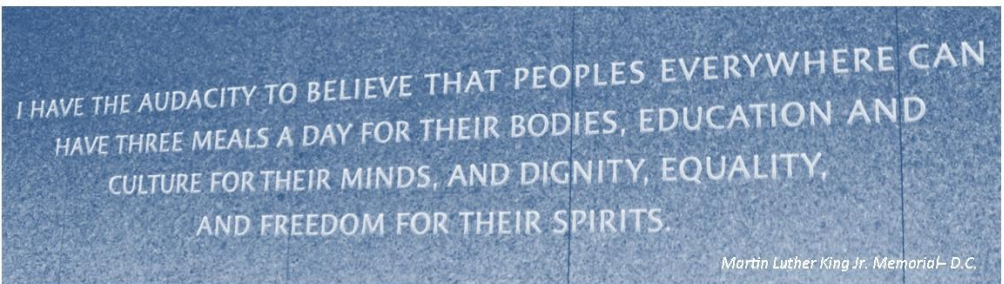
I took a deep breathe, looked at my partner, and knew in her eyes that we needed to find something to nourish our agonized bodies. By hour nine on the streets, and hour eighteen without food, my entire body was feeling it.

It is frustrating to think that there is enough food on this planet to feed every single human being and yet millions continue to go hungry every single day. As I sit among the student body on the Colorado State University campus writing this piece, I look around at all of the buildings that by 9pm are locked and empty and yet thousands are still without a roof over their head every single night. This country is laced in greed and consumption and taking more than we need.

In this moment, I was consumed by the hunger. Food insecurity is the most broadly-used measure of food deprivation in the United States. The USDA defines food insecurity as "*consistent* access to *adequate* food is limited by a lack of money and other resources at times during the year." For many living on the streets, that limit extends itself for years and years. It consumes the minds of those

who deal with it on a daily basis- it also consumes their bodies, their souls, their hearts, and every piece of their being. Without proper nourishment you cannot expect your body to perform or even function as normal let alone to maximum capacity. Affordable food, of the processed type, only adds to the health food inequalities and medical needs of both the mind and body. How phenomenal would it be if a doctor could actually prescribe healthy food and a home as a solution for the many health problems faced on the streets? Instead, doctors choose to prescribe medications that read "take with food" on the label completely insensitive to the food insecurity their patients are experiencing.

By hour eleven, we found the audacity to begin the walk, nothing in our stomachs, and too many questions to make sense of in our heads. After a brief period of unsuccessful panhandling, just forty-eight cents to our name, we saw a Subway in the distance. The dimming of the sky and the hopeful beauty of the setting sun indicated that it was about closing time. The increasing decibel of growling coming from my stomach directed my feet in the door. My partner and I approached the woman at the counter as sisters and questioned their plans for the bread that remained at the end of the day- as we knew from our time spent dumpster diving, it would be thrown away all the same. I knew this process all too well. My mind traveled back to the U.S. American History museum food court and the shiny



Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial- D.C.

silver revolving dish return. I could hear the clanking of the plates and silverware.

She looked at us with concerned eyes and a heavy heart. She asked us how long we had been on the streets. We spoke the story of a woman we had met earlier that day who was forced out of her house due to teen pregnancy and abuse. While it was not our truth, it was the truth of someone that was presently experiencing homelessness. We believed it mattered all the same.

A quick break from toasting bread and folding cheeses, and the belief that our voices, and the story of the woman we met deserved to be heard, lead to something truly beautiful. In this moment, with nothing more than a serving counter

still in my heart, another question of mine was **ANSWERED**.

It was 4am. I remember it so clearly. A knocking at my feet startled me from my ten minutes of restless sleep. A Washington, D.C. police officer was kicking his black combat boot incessantly until my face and the faces of my partners became visible- he kept kicking and kicking and kicking until my community and our obvious pain and suffering became illuminated under his flashlight. For the briefest of moments my eyes caught the beam of the flashlight and the thoughts of my privileges I had as a child, particularly on center stage as a dancer, poured into my mind.

When I was younger, I thirst for the

Office right off the National Mall on nothing more than a couple layers of cardboard and an old wool blanket a moving company previously trashed. I was surrounded by Andre, our guide, and a group of three students that was learning alongside me. I was breathing the same air as the President of the United States just under a mile away from the White House in which he and his family would lay their heads down on a king size bed, and mine on wet, hard cement. There was so much racing through my mind, and yet there was nothing at all as though my thoughts, just as my voice, had been silenced.

I can remember feeling intensely the life of my father as I stood under the short awning staring across to the fancy restaurants, convenient stores, and the

experiencing homelessness.

This thought frustrated me to a nauseating degree. It broke my heart and tore me to pieces on the steps of the old Post Office building.

The morning I was awoken by the police made me angry- I was almost ticketed by a police officer for sleeping on the steps of the United States Post Office in my nation's capital because I had nowhere else to be. Feeling too scared and exposed to speak aloud, I remember saying *I have to be somewhere* in my head over again like an infuriated broken record. A nation founded on the ideals of democracy, opportunity, equality, liberty, and rights. Rights that allow human beings certain privileges, both civil and legal, and yet do not allow these same persons the right to call a street corner home? How can the injustices and inequities that surround being "less of a home" be deemed illegal? I believed Marc was correct when he said "I have the right, this is Earth".

The many measures in place that criminalize the homeless make little sense from a policy standpoint, and absolutely no sense from a humanity standpoint. Whether policy or humanity, laws such as anti-panhandling and anti-camping make it difficult for house-less individuals to stay in a safe, police-patrolled downtown area. Their actions will inevitably be deemed illegal and added to their criminal record making it increasingly more difficult to obtain employment or housing in the future. Ticketing forces those who are homeless away from crucial services, community, and outreach that have the potential to save their life. But perhaps the benefits outweigh the costs. Going to jail gives you a roof over your head and a warm place to sleep, if even for one night. For this reason, we see a rise in illegal offenses in the month of October with winter on the horizon.

I just can't find the mental capacity to

encapsulate all of this. Our nation's largest cities do not have enough shelter space *not* because of funding, which goes first to jails, but because these cities are not dedicating enough resources to give homeless persons access to housing or shelters- it's a choice. My question of criminalization and housing the homeless was **ANSWERED**.

The second day was a blur. The ignorance of the citizens of Washington D.C. far outweighed the compassion and I,

a working class, white, U.S. American nineteen year old woman, was starting to believe that I too was invisible. Our day began at 4am. For the four hours following we rode the metro. Lost bus passes on a street corner became our invitation to a warm place to sleep. I crashed. My eyes were throbbing from the tears, and my body was fatigued. I thought to myself, *I don't have the mental strength to live this life*.

Waiting for the nine o'clock hour to approach, I walked in a nearby church and sat in silence. I remembered feeling at peace even though my connection with God had been challenging since the divorce. Mass was in session when I walked into the back, many rows away from the pews lined with devoted



A bed for four at the United States Post Office; the first night of the Challenge.

and a cash register that separated us, I believe we all subtly realized that there was an even slimmer separation between our life stories. In her eyes, I believed that she had been there- she had faced adversity like we were presently facing. A few more words of conversation were shared while the woman made turkey sandwiches caring enough to ask our preference of cheese. In just a few simple moments this woman redefined grace and instilled in me a brief faith in humanity and the genuine care and compassion human beings can have for one another. As the night fell over the city, darkness

spotlight. It felt as though that one single beam of light empowered me to believe that I was good *enough* and important *enough* and that I truly mattered *enough* to be showcased for others to watch. All I knew now was that the kicking I had woken up to, that incessant kicking and pestering and annoyance, I had had *enough*. I was trying my absolute hardest to be presently acquainted with a life of poverty, and yet my mind was back on stage.

I shook and I shivered and I sobbed more than ever imagined on this first night. I laid on the stairs of the United States Post

Capital Building through the ice-cold rain that poured down onto the streets. I thought back to the story my dad told me at Thanksgiving the year prior. *The streets of Denver had turned viciously cold in winter. The only way to stay alive through the night was to walk, street after street.* I understood why. Every fiber of my body was shaking, and wondering, and imagining, and cringing at the life I had lived for the previous sixteen hours knowing that this vicious cycle repeats itself every day for my father, his community, and for the 11,988 identified human beings in the D.C. area alone



Riding the metro; 4am morning of day two.

Catholics, dressed in their Sunday best. My tired eyes looked up to recognize the stunning beauty of the arches and stained glass of the cathedral ceilings. Thinking to the day prior, I asked a group of men I'd sat next to under an awning "what keeps you going out here?"; their answer—God. For Marc, the many conversations we've had too surround the Creator, the only reason he is here. *You can have wealth, but you can be so alone without your Creator.* With spiritual intelligence I realized another of my questions, of the relationship with something greater than yourself, was **ANSWERED**.

The signaling that ended mass also began breakfast. The volunteers at the church, clearly attempting to mask their discomfort, smiled and served a hot breakfast and packed lunches for later in the day. Trying to refrain from conversation, one of the volunteers handed me a banana and a slew of words I will never forget. She said that I wasn't supposed to be out there, as the eyes of every passing white folk reminded me the day before. "Is anyone *supposed* to be out there?" I kindly challenged her. The ignorance frustrated me. A regular volunteer at this soup kitchen and she allowed this community to teach her what? What had she learned imbedded in her interactions with the "repeat customers" in the line behind me? To put it bluntly, by the words she spoke to me I assumed all she had learned was that those experiencing homelessness have darker colored skin. False- homelessness does not discriminate. For me, the question of the racial make-up of the homeless was **ANSWERED**.

The greatest fault of society's misconception of homelessness is that it is used to define someone's personhood. Homelessness is an experience that a human *being has*; it is not what a human *being is*. You or I could have the same experience with the flip of a coin, and just

like most every other experience in life, this one too should have an end. A human being is a person before they are homeless- they are a *person* experiencing a disaster. Poverty, like floods and forest fires, is a disaster all the same and it is time this community found some relief.

As the hours of the second day progressed, it was clear our luck had run out. Businesses were less understanding, and the weather was less forgiving. The down pour of rain left us soaked and struggling. With no food, and no energy, we sat in a deep, frustrating reflection on the stools of yet another Subway for what felt like hours. Since being up at 4am, I felt as though I had aged years sitting in such defeat and desperation for so long. Trying our luck at one more business, Dunkin' Donuts, we were conflicted in our successful efforts. Six doughnuts. My digestive system, already filled with trash can croissants and a multitude of other starches, wanted so badly to reject the sugary, processed treat. The sandwiches we had previously received were long gone, and our desperation was great. With every bite I

felt sick- sick from the unhealthy assortment of food in my body, and sick that I knew in my everyday life that I had a choice in what nourished my body.

As the sun set and the night grew cold, I

our guide that night, called the "hypothermia van" to bring blankets- blankets from moving companies that were made of recycled wool and were awful and scratchy, and wonderful and

of money could keep both my body and my heart as warm as the bodies that surrounded me.

The morning came too quickly. It wasn't the police knocking at my feet, or the

below freezing temperatures shaking me awake, but the annoyance of a powerful gaze from the eyes of around thirty business men and women that stood before us. 5am was the time. The start of yet another work day. The business men and women stood far away from us as though homelessness was something infectious you could catch if you got too close.

The night prior had been quiet and reflective so the morning didn't bother me so much. The

I suppose that's really all it comes down to. As we approached the 9 o'clock hour that signaled the ending of our 48 hours experiencing homelessness, the simplicity of the answers I had discovered were coming to fruition. There is such a misconception out there that believes the solution to homelessness is to provide resources- food, water, clothing, shelter, dollars and cents. In reality, the solution lies within relationships. In fact, it is far more realistic that those experiencing homelessness will die from mental health disorders before they die because of malnutrition or lack of resources. Life on the streets is more difficult than many of us will ever be able to fathom- so why do so many continue to walk past these individuals and write them off as "crazy", "drunks", "addicts", "lazy" or any number of the harmful things that get said every single day? Instead, allow the words "lonely", "hurting", or "human being just like me" to come into your mind. This small, yet incredibly important change in our language has the ability to change our thoughts, as well. A simple conversation is really all it takes.

As my week in D.C. continued to educate me and change my life forever, I questioned what it was like to be homeless, to be in my father's shoes or to join the ranks of the 643,067 human beings who are homeless on any given night in America. What I got was an interesting response. Andre, my challenge guide on the first night, answered compassionately explaining that he doesn't call himself homeless because he has a community and individuals that he can always go to. What he is lacking is a



Hour 49; post Challenge photo.

knew it was time to begin preparing where we would sleep. The first night's misery proved educational when it came to crafting the bottom most layers. The treasure of an old foam mat accompanied with cardboard from the night before felt as though I was jumping on a pillow-top king size bed in the pent house apartments that towered above the Macy's department store I laid in front of. With below freezing temperatures John,

perfect. These blankets were my bodies' safe haven.

On this second night I had never understood more what the phrase "my community is my currency" meant. Coupled with the foam pads, cardboard, and endless blankets, the bodies on my right and on my left kept me from freezing as I slept with ease through the night- comparatively anyway. No amount

city had quieted down and it was just me and the streets. It felt sort of peaceful in a way- the hustle and bustle had disappeared and the city lights glistened as they reflected off the rain covered streets. I remember feeling grateful- after a long two days with no food, no warmth, and no acceptance, I was feeling grateful on this second night because I had found comfort on cement, and support from other human beings.

house- the physicality of a roof over his head. This simple change in language has the power to persuade our world to reassign harsh definitions that directly impact interactions with this community and expand our minds to a greater tomorrow.

Fort Collins, CO is said to be one of the greatest places in the United States to live, so why not make the support and the services for the homeless community a part of what makes this community great?

Traveling back here after an experience so impactful, and so frustrating, was not easy. This trip was all about learning. The 48-Hour Homeless Challenge serves to bring a greater awareness to those who choose to participate, fully and wholesomely. In Marc's words, "Alternative Break is another channel of positive social construction justice. Via relationship building, (he) can serve as an influence through students to attempt to

make the world a brighter and equity laced place for all Creator's designs".

To say that the Challenge solely broadened my awareness would be an insult to the family of the streets of D.C. What the challenge did for me is impossible to put into words because they do not yet exist.

But I do.

I exist in this world more alive and passionate than ever before. My time on the streets of D.C. lit my fire and changed my life—it brought me to a point where I was so broken down and could no longer stand how this community was being treated, that I have decided to stand up. Over a year has passed now and I haven't given a dollar to a human being experiencing homelessness since I've been back. I haven't put a roof over someone's head. I haven't dropped out of school or sold everything that I own. I've opened my eyes and my heart and I stood up for the human race.

The next time you feel your heart start to break and your hands tense up, your eyes sting as you walk into a nice restaurant and one of your brothers or sisters stays out on the streets rocking back and forth

to stay warm, do not hand them a dollar and keep walking. Do not think for a second that this changes the existing order- that this changes anything.

The solution is not rocket science. Ask their name. Ask for directions- they know the streets better than anyone. Ask if they like a dark roast or a latte- empower them with that choice. Buy a cup of coffee for yourself and your brother or sister of the streets and sit down and have a conversation that matters. Have a conversation that says *I see you, and I know you can do this at your own pace.* Have a conversation that is richer than any dollar amount. Have a conversation that is so heart breaking and painful for you to hear that you change the way you interact with all human beings because you realize that *everyone has a story.*

Being less of a house is the result of one simple, disastrous turn of events. One simple element changes things whether it is one drop of water or one conversation. And you ask what one person can do? The power of one can astound you. One person matters to this world. Listen with your intellect as well as with your heart.

"All people matter."

