WE ARE

We are a voice, creative, political (damn right, we are!)
We are tigers, powerful and precious.
We are survivors, world changers, we can be a thorn in the side of Austin City Council.
We are an asset to our community.
We are strong.
We are people.
We are all we've got.
Dear friends, this zine was created for you by us at Gathering Ground Theatre*. We are a theatre and advocacy group made up of Austinites with lived experiences of homelessness and our allies. We envision a world in which individuals who experience homelessness are equal residents who enjoy the same rights, respect, consideration, and compassion as those who live in a home.

In this zine, we offer messages of solidarity and care as well as invitations to create your own work. May your burdens be lessened, and may you have what you need in these complex times. The small things we do have a ripple effect.

More information about Gathering Ground Theatre can be found at: gatheringgroundtheatre.com

WANNA JOIN AND HELP US TELL THE REAL STORY OF HOMELESSNESS IN AUSTIN?

Call 903.658.8143, message us at @gatheringgroundtheatre on FB or IG, or email us at: gatheringgroundtheatre@gmail.com

This project is part of the "ArtsResponders: Social Practice Responds to COVID-19" program sponsored by the Austin Parks and Recreation Department’s Museums and Cultural Programs Division.

*with contributions from Tenants Speak Up! Theatre, a performance and advocacy group focused on storytelling, education, and building solidarity between tenants across Austin, Texas.
Contents

Sharae.............................1
Jeanne..............................3
Steve-O............................7
Steven.............................9
Lisa...............................15
Steven & Destiny................18
Zaevy Zae.........................19
What’s Your Experience?........23
What’s Your Vision of Care?....27
What Makes You You?............29
Reimagine Public Safety w/Us....31
We Are............................33

"Permission is granted by the fact of your breath."
– Rev. angel Kyodo williams
I know you don't fully understand what's going on with this pandemic but neither do I. I just want you to remain safe, practice safe distancing, use good handwashing techniques, and always wear a clean mask. Most of all, know that you are always in my thoughts and that you are loved...
Jeanne

DID YOU SEE?

Once I looked and did not see what was before my eyes. I didn’t see the homeless, I saw the trash piled up, I didn’t see the needs they had, I saw the mess in my neighborhood and next to my highway. I didn’t see the people, only everything else around them. Why can’t these people work and be productive? The answer is they work and work hard – they work hard to stay alive, they work hard to forgive those of us who cannot or will not see, they work hard to try to help others on the street, they work hard to keep believing.

So in my superioress I demanded of God. I asked God why don’t you fix this? And God answered -- why don’t you? So now I see and I beg forgiveness for my smugness. Now I ask what can I do for you to the homeless, now I do what I can and then I do more. For now I see that we are all one paycheck, one insurmountable object, one blow to many, and one very tiny step from being homeless.
Be A Friend

No one said it would easy
No one said it would be simple
No one said it would be painless
No one said

But what they did say
Or should have said

Life isn’t easy
But friends make it easier
Life is complicated
But friends make it simpler
Life is painful
But friends share, so it is less painful

So be a friend
Be a good friend
Be available
Be there when needed
Be there even when they tell you to go
Be true even when they are not

You are the one that you answer to
You are the one who knows what you did
You are the one
But God knows

So be a good friend
The kind of friend you want to have
The kind of friend God is
Strive to be the best friend
Then you have done God’s work
Then you will have made our Father proud
Then you will have made yourself proud.

So be a good friend
Steve-O

Penguin wants housing

Then Penguin got the house
Penguin is happy now

He has room for his black and white tux

Penguin didn’t have a paycheck

but needs more fish

He needs 800 smack a roos every month

Go Penguin!
It's such a strange world that we live in now. It's late March, it's overcast. The weather is still cold and grey. Downtown Austin Texas. It's Friday evening, rush hour. Not a moving car in sight. The local popular slogan is "Keep Austin Weird."

But I don't think that THIS is what anybody had in mind. I'm heading to a local convenience store, I pass several darkened shops, all closed. Some are even boarded up. The birds seem to be the only living things in the city, singing their lonely songs, perched on dead branches that are slowly coming back to life. My mind screams, "THIS is the way that it starts in the movies, isn't it?" I push the thought away and move on.

As I approach Congress Avenue, I look toward the Capitol building. Nothing. I see neither cars nor people. I glance toward the river. There's a few dark moving shapes in the distance, dotted along the sidewalks. I turn the corner and I see that the lights of the convenience store are on. They're actually open! Never has neon and overhead lighting seemed so inviting. I quickly cross the street. As I enter the doors, I find that I'm the only customer. The store clerk looks up, smiles. But I can see the nervous look in his eyes. He clearly DOESN'T want to be here. Despite the comfort and sanity of another living soul, I decide not to stay long. It's getting dark.

The world CHANGES in the dark.
I gather my things and bring them to the register. The sudden mournful wail of a lone police siren. A patrol cruiser flashes by the windows. It's gone just as quickly as it came. The clerk finishes scanning my things. I swipe my card, bag them up, and I'm out the door. The birds have stopped singing. I examine my surroundings again. A few of the dark shapes are closer now. The closest one is just across the street, up the hill on a side street. It's headed in my direction. Had it been following me?

I stop moving and watch. "It" is a man. His hair is mussed. His clothes are dirty and rumpled. There's a dark stain on his shirt. He's moving slowly, but he isn't shuffling his feet.

He looks up and sees me.

His arms don't reach out, grasping toward me. He doesn't moan, he doesn't cry out in a raspy voice, "BRAAAAIINNNSSSSSSS".

I begin walking again and we cross the intersection together, giving each other some space.
As we cross paths, our eyes meet. I nod my head in greeting, he does the same. And I leave him to HIS fate as he leaves me to mine.

I quickly move up the hill, walking to the bus stop. Thankfully, the buses are still running. The bus will take me north, to relative safety.

I board the bus and leave downtown Austin behind me. I give a quick sigh of relief. I don't want to be downtown at night.
The talking oak to me it spoke
But any tree will speak to me
With truths being told
I gather so.
By those who talk to tell?
And those not listeners be,
even if they listen well.
They'll never hear a tree

You can't hide homelessness
To sweep something under the rug
means to hide a problem or something
unpleasant from other people, with
"intentions" to deal with later, or
simply ignore the issue.

Example: The company swept the products
technical problems under the rug, then
someone got hurt.

(under the rug): Poverty, people, life,
mental health issues, dogs, futures, hunger
HOMEless doesn't mean HOPEless, HELPless, or WORTHless.

Always remember that.

-Steven

When you bless others, you also bless yourself.

Positivity is a choice, and I choose to be positive.

-Destiny
A trouble mind awakens a trouble soul
Trouble awaits those who have troubled goals
I was made from clay so I was birth from a mold
When I lose my innocents life becomes so dull

To fight for my rights is to fight against the status quo
My will not strong enough I guess I don't belong
My mind keeps replaying this same sad song
I can't escape and I can't backtrace
I'm so far gone no one can relate
See the look on my face
We need a rescue
I am a nobody with a hidden truth
I am a soul who doesn't know what to do
World full of chaos
How does one stay in-tuned
The pandemic approaches an impending doom

I still find a smile and things to look to.
But I can no longer hide the face with my blues
Help will come soon
Better later than never
I've been waiting along time
Why does it seem like its forever
What has been your experience living through the pandemic? Below are a few prompts to guide you and some space to reflect. Take what works, leave the rest.

*The hardest thing about the pandemic has been.*

*The thing that has changed the most in my life since the pandemic.*

*Moments that have been surprising or delightful.*

*Something I’ve learned about myself.*

*Something I’ve learned about others.*
Take
receive

hold
give
care
care looks like . . .
care feels like . . .
care sounds like . . .
care tastes like . . .
care grows like . . .
Write your own “I Am” Poem

Template by Suzi Mee, Teachers and Writers Collaborative
Imagine a world where police are not the first responders ...

In our next project we will reimagine what public safety means and looks like for folks experiencing homelessness in Austin.

Share YOUR EXPERIENCE

Join our first online meeting Monday, March 8th at 3pm CT

OR

leave us a voice message

For meeting info or to leave us a message call: 903.658.8143
email us at: gatheringgroundtheatre@gmail.com