

In These Days of Mostly Darkness There are
Moments when the Clouds Part, the Sun
Winks and a Rainbow Appears, Briefly

**#3 A Crisp T, an All Weather Hoodie,
 a Handheld Device
 Three Moments of Affirmation**

I ran into Charley, one of our RWA Maintenance guys, in the corridor outside the boardroom as he was setting up the Café for our Job Fair.

"Hey Charley, how ya doin?"

He's wearing a crisp white T with block lettering. One of several I noticed he'd recently added to his wardrobe.

"There a documentary filmmaker here, he's doing a film about homelessness. His name is Don Sawyer. He'd like to interview some folks who've experienced being homeless. Would you mind talking to him?"

"Yeah, OK."

I'm guessing Charley's in his mid-20's; he's been around for a while - Shelter, sleeping rough, sometimes housed - life has been a struggle for him.

"Great, I'll come looking for you after Don's finished interviewing me. Hey, where are you living now?"

"I'm over at _____ Union."

"Working full time?"

"Yup. I'm fillin' in for Ronnie today."

"Doing good?", a nod.

"You're lookin' good, man", a smile.

I didn't have to look far for him when the time came. He was waiting right outside the interview room.

As I was leaving, Albert arrived with his case manager, decked out in an all-weather hoodie, complete with a rain repellent outer shell. He'd been working on a mural on the side brick wall of Building 29. The weather was a bit nasty.

I'd met Albert a few months ago when he asked to meet with me, attracted by the art in the building, he brought photos of his work. At the time he was sleeping a bit rough, sometimes crashing in a vacant room over on Hollis Street. Now he had a room, a case manager and a job - muralist. He is a very fine artist.

When I got back from my swim Don was still interviewing Albert while Raymond was waiting patiently crouching outside the interview room completely absorbed with a hand held device. We exchanged "hi's." I was fascinated by Raymond's stillness. He's been around for a while, in his mid'20's, shuffling between shelter and the streets. Our previous attempts at housing Raymond hadn't proved successful.

Albert emerges from the interview room, still swathed in his hoodie, flashes a faint smile and heads out to resume his painting as Raymond literally bounces into the interview room.

The next day I run into Charley outfitted in a different crisp T, this time black, in response to my 'How did it go?' I get a smile and "great." Then I see Sarah, CSPECH Case Management Supervisor. In response to my inquiry on Raymond, "Oh, he was on cloud nine about being interviewed. We got him housed, you know, he's living at 496 (Lincoln Street)."

"Ya either got faith or you got unbelief and there ain't no neutral ground"

- Bob Dylan

I'm attempting to block out the din caused by the man put in the White House by the Electoral College stomping on our

Constitution by focusing on these affirmative moments experienced by three men who have spent a good bit of their young lives on the margins of our culture.

Jim Cuddy
March 2018

Notes:

1. I've changed the names of the three young men to allow them to remain anonymous. Their 'new' names were not chosen randomly, instead they are names of other young people who I worked with in a different place and a different time in our culture when I was a young man.
2. Don Sawyer's first documentary film Under the Bridge can be streamed from Amazon Prime or purchased from iTunes. It's well made and worth watching.
3. The Bob Dylan lyric is from "Precious Angel."