

## ***Thrive***

By José Faus

Imagine Big Boy exploding, spreading toxic clouds over green canopies, playgrounds, parks, streets, the rivers' confluence, borders, defining spaces we roam, have roamed, and eternally roam.

Imagine a bleak, graying dawn as you walk along the barely decipherable to find only remnants; a ball against a burnt post, a stuffed bear against a collapsed wall, an unfinished dinner on a hand-tatted mat, a tattered table cloth and a disintegrated roof with one bare tree visible among the defiled vistas, broken windows and unfamiliar paths.

Imagine fences, tendered lawns, painted facades, homes, hearths and sagging porches, emptied of the growing voices once spanning high pitch to deep and resonant notes at play and bursting seams, now obscured in shades of gloom.

What if the flowing notes that swelled Vine were silenced, muffled, a squeak of breezes squeezing through weathered slats and weakened roofs filling the empty clubs and rotted seats where Mary Lou, Big Joe, Jay, Bird, Count and Prez once plied their trade.

What if the written remnants of the first journey, our paradise, were waylaid like dropped pick-up sticks, silent musings, disappearing beneath moss, lichen and neglect?

What if memories' marbled halls preserved only the pleas and accounts of the well fed and meticulous manicured, ordained suits with gleaming shoes, crisp collars and finely tuned speeches of repeating guile, deceit and circumstance?

Who enshrines the tales of those who filled the walls, houses, roads, schools, stores, highways, and communal Sunday afternoons? Or the comity that bound the shouts and smiles of strangers in unison when the home team made the grade and hordes flooded the streets in gaudy blue and red parades? Or the epic tales of resurrected memories once swept aside by waters rushing fast, overwhelming roots, foundations, from bluff to bluff leaving rotting carcasses, broken bodies in their wake.

Find it here, this instant, as we sit, share and celebrate what has brought us to this place, our hands laid one upon the other and the cement of well-intended consequence. Applaud what made us and makes us grow and build the gleaming edifice high on the hill we call home.

Life is a sharp point on the ground tracing a plat, a house, a street, a neighborhood, a music hall, a picnic stall on the hill, a good meal on a sturdy table, a laugh on growing faces, the security of a full refrigerator and the surplus of time to sleep and dream or lounge lazy on a bank along the rivers' edge, or in the shade of stout timbers,

Humanity's Habitat, where we huddle and see borders dissolve in the bright light of embraces and well-maintained homes.

Associations abound, over in Rosedale, from grassroots flow woven strands of communal life honoring the way a family draws around the pocket park next to the church, prayer booth and voting poll, and the rush of streets that cascade from the bluffs onto Mill and wind about a theater, and a curbing road that takes us to the Woodyard.

Walk along Jersey Creek down the winding flood plain, serene green grass at the edge of concrete banks coursing past resurgent ball fields where kids at play belie the liquor stores and car yards. Go on farther still past the octagonal hall to Somalia Bantu and Juniper Gardens where a store should be and see plots abundant in corn, leeks, onions, lettuce, tomatoes, growing skills and business dreams.

On Avenue of Life celebrate Wednesday's Impact. Dream a house, secure a job, gather funds, buy food, provide a nursery where children in sing song learn the ABCs and parents the making of contracts, deeds and degrees. Find the helping hand when sick, the lifelines to secure the familial hug, and the freedom to roam from one place to the next with the skill to navigate blind justice, absent which we spiral to lunacy. Jump the safety net become a trampoline sending us bouncing higher, closer to our dreams

Follow Diosselyn's journey - Guatemala to Argentine to CABA, EPIC and Art Squad, painting on tagged garage walls in forlorn alley ways, then engaging fingers like tines, tilling dead soil and clay, infusing nourishment for growing in summer's heat a sustainable garden life. Not a dreamer but a fighter, head up, head down so not to fall through the cracks, feet firm on the ground, eyes always returning forward.

On a clear path, Ajamu fights for his desires, knows water's flow and drainage, spigots and shut off valves, water's waste and sustenance. Knows water sometimes flows green and stagnates in sieves where moneylenders and shills deprive the thirsty their living wage. See him open the sluice gates at the union, where an account is more than a ledger, instead an emblem of dignity and respect.

Not of age to steer a car enough to organize book drives, Kennedy Johnson gathers tomes, cleans, sorts, and catalogues them on shelves to gift, for words are meant to flow unimpeded. Worlds, stories, and picture books with lessons to be found between the covers; Big Bird and Dr. Seuss, and Ferdinand the Bull, ride a magic carpet, fly Little Prince like to a Secret Garden, Where the Wild Things Are and the Lorax thrives.

This dream hums a seductive lullaby swelling louder into song as streets surge, and a full marching band leads the assembly to the banquet hall where gathered beneath gleaming lights we tell joyous tales of what once was, is now, and can be as in harmony we thrive.