

“Boston is a House of Mercy”

Mercy - Mercy is the compassionate treatment of those in distress, especially when it is within one's power to punish or harm them.

Hunched over the pool of Bethesda,
“House of Mercy”,
Waiting for a miracle only given to one or three,
All by chance it seems,
Though no one stops to think maybe it's
The lack of hands drawing one another to the streams.
Maybe it's the fact that the law of this land is
“Every man dragged by his own feet”.

It's the way the projects face each other and
their backs are built turned away from the rising of the sun,
Shadows aching over the people, a relentless drought,
Like agua posada, the community swells and bursts.

Why does it burst? Lack of access to quality foods,
too much noise, too much alcohol,
Too much watching our backs, too much survival mode.
Too much pressure, we all got our hands on our heads.
It's the way mindsets are passed on.
The way parents tell their children don't take handouts. Don't talk to strangers, your
neighbor could be the enemy or a friend, but who can know? How to know?
It's the way little children slide down play structures made of needles and
bullet holes, fractured reflections of how things should be.

It's the way community health is tied to my mental being,
And my mental to my spiritual being,
And my spiritual to my physical needs,
The way my stomach grumbles at the
same time my heart rumbles in rhythm with grief,
Grief when the hallways of this apartment building aren't cleaned,
Grief when the plumbing still leaks,
When the city inspection doesn't necessarily lead to the end of the rat infestations,
And here we are around and back again wondering,
Why do the babies keep getting sick?
And then when they are sick,

Medicines cost everything in papa's wallet,
And counseling isn't appealing, Papa doesn't want to hear someone
Spell out a problem he already knows.
He already has two jobs, but hey, what's another?
If papa is just fine with no sleep,
Baby thinks he can wake up in the middle of the night and cry forever,
Because he'll grow up strong, strong like papa to work two jobs,
And never bat an eye.
And mama finds a way to get creative with ramen and eggs,
But after awhile, no amount of sazon can take the bitter taste out of mama's mouth
When the bill comes in a little higher this month.

Is it genetic predispositions,
Or social predilections,
When some kids are higher on the list for all kinds of long winded diseases,
The kind that parents think are pronounced "death" "guilt" and "debt", synonyms of "it
must be my fault", the kinds of diseases children think sound like magic tricks,
Tragic this is, to go
Round and around and back again,
To the pool of Bethesda,
No one can want more than the portion they gave ya,
Even when we try to climb,
The climb is met with penalties,
And the penalties bring out the worst of us.
Desperation is the language of people gathered with only a thread holding them
together,
In barren lands uncultivated, too busy tending the abundant gardens of men
who have more money being worn on their backs than the money it takes to pay my
rent.

So what to do?
Do we hate those who have?
Do we copy their lifestyles and deceive ourselves?
Do we covet the evil that comes with having so much and still, wanting more?
Or do we find ways to grow our own fields and dig our own oasis?
What if it's not the pool that brings the healing, what if we are the house of mercy?
Well babies grow up, and now grown, they know something papa and mama felt but
couldn't explain.

You all in this room,
are those babies now grown.
You learned to plant gardens of peonies, lilies, and lilacs
Budding in due season
One complimenting the other
With collective fragrances,
Never competing.
The most pleasant aromas are those of
Collaborative growth, a harmonious endeavor it is,
To love a block you come from, but even more to love the one that isn't yours,
To see the humanity, the need, to uplift the dignity of people like you and me,
To hear, to learn from each other, to collectively build the heart of our own streams.

It's the way each of you had a part.
Some laid out the soil, like Families First or Urban College, teaching parents the
language of new beginnings, empowering them in their God given purpose to raise a
generation better than their own.

Others sowed the seeds, MPDC and Young Man with a Plan are giving our youth tools to
build their own platforms while Greatest MINDS is breaking apart the mold they fit
inner city kids into, unveiling the horizon with an all hands on deck approach to
mentorship.

Still others came to water the buds, MAHA and Urban Edge are helping Black and
Brown folks build wells of their own, while Boston PIC is helping kids find more than
one way to build up a life they can love and secure.

And the ones who speak to the plants are my favorite kind of people, the overseers, who
pick up multiple jobs, the ones who understand that action begins with a word that is
powerful to set ablaze the past to make way for the now.

But in the glory of the blooming,
And the splendor of harvest,
We must already think about tomorrow.
We must consider how to cement progress,
Prevent exploitation, indeed, even amongst our own wolves dressed as planters sneak
in,
And we must be ready to throw away spoiled fruits,
Tossing to the side tools for the garden that just won't do,
Scoping out the landscape, and grasping renewed will, refreshing our minds, to put a
hand to this plow again,

And prepare for the next season.

It's not how we begin, but how we finish.

It's the way we pass tools to the next group.

It's the way we stay committed to the beloved,

To the children of today, and the children of the future.

It's the way we fashion together a new way of thinking,
from the lessons of diverse individuals with a common divine design.

And we busy bodies hum together in perfect melody in the work of transformation.

Today we celebrate the small victories,

Looking ahead and beyond, uplifting what has been done,

And dreaming of what can be.