

## A Peaceful Radiance

As we drove away from the night saturated city, we left poverty behind and peace lingered in my heart. I sat in silence as I remembered, and I vowed to never forget. I would never forget the conversations or the love, the faces or the peace. I sat in warmth, remembering those cold and hungry. I hoped that the difference in my life that was made that night was also made in his – that inspirational man. I wondered if he was still experiencing the peace and the love and the unity that I was.

That night, the night we spent under the bridge, peace surrounded us and overwhelmed us. Peace isn't simply the hopeful outcome of battles and the grudgingly decided on solution for hate – real peace is holy and true, pure and facile. It is helping one another through dark times and forming a bond between two diverse worlds – the helpless and those with the ability to help.

That night, I and many other volunteers went under the Burnside Bridge to feed the homeless, talk to them, and reassure them that they are not alone or forgotten. Here the homeless gather and lay in their dilapidated blankets trying to cling to any warmth they can. It is anything but a peaceful sight.

When I arrived, I felt overwhelmed and slightly uncomfortable. I could not imagine what these people and I would have in common. What would I say to them? I felt disconnected as I watched the other volunteers unnervingly talking to the homeless. As I sat alone, my eyes caught sight of a man who was also standing alone. I watched as he slowly ate his soup, he too looking around at the conversations. I was drawn to him. As I approached, I noticed his deep eyes were filled with life, one of hardships and loss. The closer I inched towards him, my warm shoes scraping on the ground, the more I noticed his red, frigid face.

“Hi, my name is Tessa”, I said, slightly reserved. “How do you like the soup?”

Throughout the night, we had many lighthearted conversations about my life and his life back in Oakland, California. Eventually, he told me of his sufferings and how he became homeless. I listened. I had no life experience to relate to his, I had no idea of the sorrow he had endured – we were so different. So I listened because I knew he just needed someone to care.

As we spoke, no one else in the world mattered. We were engulfed by peace between two types of people, the poor and the privileged. He felt the peace, too, and never stopped smiling. We both knew that the separation of classes was overcome by a real and pure peace. We created peace. This was peace. This is peace.

Because our group of volunteers lent a helping hand to the needy, we created unity under that bridge. We created a light of hope amidst the dark night. We created peace – and we made the world a better place.

If we all helped each other, if we all loved and aided the poor, the pained, and the impoverished, we would take substantial steps towards world wide peace. We all need to help and love because that is where the heart of peace lies, that is where peace is achieved. When we all learn to do this, to achieve true peace, we will illuminate our dark world with an everlasting peaceful radiance.