

Safe Streets Arts Foundation

Box 58043

Washington, DC 20037

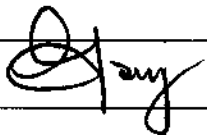
ATTN: Dennis Sabin, Director

Dear Dennis,

Enclosed, please find my latest work *A Homeless History Lesson* - a focus on "at-risk" youth combined with an observance of Black History Month. While I realize it is too late for your consideration for this year's *From Prison to the Stage* production, but perhaps you can consider it for next year. It employs minimal props or stage effects and is realistic. While a work of fiction, the play is enacted all across our nation daily by a generation caught in the throes of addiction without a true knowledge of a rich cultural heritage.

Thank you for considering my work.

Yours,



Gary K. Farlow Inmate 0125977

Nash Correctional Inst.

P.O. Box 600

Nashville, NC 27856

**“A HOMELESS HISTORY LESSON”**  
**A PLAY IN ONE ACT**

**CAST**

<b>DARRYL</b> <i>(REBELLIOUS YOUTH)</i>	<b>SCENE 1</b> DARRYL'S MOM'S CAR
<b>THOMAS</b> <i>(DARRYL'S FRIEND)</i>	<b>SCENE 2</b> HOMELESS SHELTER
<b>POLICE OFFICER</b> <i>(HOMELESS WAR VETERAN)</i>	<b>SCENE 3</b> DARRYL'S BEDROOM
<b>BARNES</b> <i>(HOMELESS WAR VETERAN)</i>	<b>SCENE 4</b> HOMELESS SHELTER
<b>SAM</b> <i>(SHELTER VOLUNTEER)</i>	
<b>MR. CORY</b> <i>(SHELTER DIRECTOR)</i>	
<b>KENNY</b> <i>(SHELTER RESIDENT)</i>	

## SCENE 1

(Setting—Darryl and Thomas sitting in car)

Darryl: Oh wee! Lord child, Thomas, Did you see the long legs on that female?  
Thomas: Yeah, It'd take Santa Clause a minute to fill her stocking.  
Darryl: Quit bogarting (hands him a joint).  
Thomas: That's that "Primo" bud, man. What's up with you and Shela, dude?  
Darryl: Are you kidding? I'm gonna do like I did with my old girlfriend. Start an argument then kick her to the curb. Make it seem like it's all her fault. I don't have money to throwaway on her. I can barely support my bad habits. Pass the forty.  
Thomas: I feel you. This whole relationship thing is all about money anyways. Look over there. (man holding a sign--will work for food).  
Darryl: Hey, you bum! Get a life, and quit begging, you freaking loser. You believe that guy. He needs to get his drunk butt a job. About that relationship thing; I just don't get it; giving gifts, everyone acting like a Lifetime movie with their big cheesy grins, pass the forty, (almost spills). Watch out! You spill beer in my mama car and it won't be a roasted turkey for Sunday, it will be my butt. Keep it down. Keep it down!!!

(siren goes off)

Both: OH NO, man, its the police.  
Darryl: I told you t keep it down. Hey where you going? Oh man!

(Thomas quickly jumps out of car.)

## SCENE 2

(Setting--Homeless shelter)

Darryl: (takes off coat) I can't believe it. I have the worst luck in the world. It's the weekend, all my buddies are out partying it up, and I'm stuck here at the homeless shelter, doing community service.  
Sam: It might not be too bad. You might even have fun, here.  
Darryl: Fun, have you lost your mind? What can be so fun about working in a homeless shelter?  
Sam: Don't it make you feel good to help people who are in need. Look on the bright side, it's only a few hours a day.  
Darryl: No, I don't feel good about being forced to help losers and vagrants and there isn't a bright side. Besides this community service, I'm grounded; mom says no more free ride, and I have to get a job. I can't even drive her car anymore. On top of that, my partner Thomas has tickets to the

biggest concert of the year and I'll be stuck in this hell hole.

Sam: At least you'll be able to stay out of trouble and come to the shelter's Black History Celebration.

Darryl: Whoop-te-do!!! I get to ham it up with a bunch of low life winos and crazy crack-pots.

Sam: Hold up, Darryl, a lot of these people didn't have much of a choice being here; others just made bad decisions. Alcoholism and drug addictions are a sickness. You're being unfair.

Darryl: Who said life was fair. Drop it. Anyways why are you here? What did you do to get community service?

Sam: Me? Nothing, I volunteered to come.

Darryl: What? Are you out of your mind? You're as nutty as these cats are.

Sam: Not nutty, blessed.

Darryl: Hold up man! Time out. I'm not here for a sermon; I'm just here to do my little work and break. Alright?

Sam: All right; but I'll be praying for you.

Darryl: Save your breath, Rev. Farwell, I can take care of myself. ....Why did the judge have to send me here of all places?

Sam: Seems to me you got off light. Maybe he felt like working here would teach you some valuable lessons about life and the less fortunate.

Darryl: Listen, hear that? That's a violin playing my favorite song. I couldn't care less about these losers.

Sam: Lighten up, Darryl, this is Black History Month. Where's your pride?

Darryl: Just another day to me Where is everyone anyways? I thought this place was filled with needy people.

Sam: Chill out, they're all at dinner. Here comes someone now ..... Hey Mr. Cory. This here is Darryl. Come for his community service.

Mr. Cory: Splendid, we could use an extra hand around here.

Darryl: More like forced labor.

Mr. Cory: Better than spending time behind bars, wouldn't you say, son? Sam, you know your way around, they need some help in the kitchen.

Sam: Sure, no problem. See you around Darryl.

Darryl: Let's hope not.

Mr. Cory: Darryl, I realize you don't want to be here, but the judge ordered it. I expect you to be here on time and unless the earth opens and swallows you, you will be here or I will turn you in, and you know what that means. No drugs, no alcohol, and no weapons or coming in high. I'm strict but I'm fair. Do a good job, and I can give you some extra hours here and there. Do you understand?

Darryl: Like crystal.

Mr. Cory: Without further ado, I need you to sweep the dorms. Don't forget to get under each bed.

Darryl: You're the boss *(starts sweeping. As Darryl begins to sweep, he utters "Y'all gonna make me loose my mind up in here!" Then begins to sing the song while sweeping.)*

Barns: What!

Darryl: I need to sweep under you bed.  
Barns: No! What you need to do is stay the hell away from me!  
Darryl: Whoa horsey. (looks at him carefully) ..... I know you, you're the bu--, I mean the guy with the "I'll work for food," sign.  
Barns: Yeah, and your the dumb kid the police busted. Now you're the bum at the homeless shelter (laughs hysterically). Now get away from me!

(continues sweeping)

(As Darryl continues sweeping and he and Sam talk, Barns acts as if he is experiencing flashbacks from the war. He pantomimes tossing a grenade and the resulting explosion; "machine guns" Darryl and Sam while giggling maniacally, all to Darryl's horror but Sam's bemusement.)

Darryl: That guy over there's one miserable dude  
Sam: Oh, him, that's Barns. He's a little out there. Fought in Vietnam. When he came back his wife had took the kids, everything and just split. Hasn't heard from them since. He started drinking alot, quit caring and never recovered. You know, Darryl, you may not believe this, but Barns is living history. He was in Washington at Dr. King's march on Washington in 1963. Barns marched at Selma in 1965. Before that he even participated in the sit-ins to desegregate lunch counters. Then went off to Vietnam. Where you and I may just *read* about history, Barns has *lived* it.  
Darryl: That guy's a Vietnam vet? You've got to be kidding?  
Sam: No really, he's even a decorated hero, pulled out 3 of his fellow soldiers, was wounded 4 times. He sets off the metal detector every time he comes through our doors. The guy hates charity. The law picked him up and gave him a choice; here or jail. If it wasn't for that he'd still be on the street in the cold. He's his own worst enemy.  
Darryl: That's for sure.  
Sam: You have to realize that Barns fought for civil rights and for the army, then just sorta fell apart, the guilt is eating him up inside. Even for something that isn't his fault. We still need to have patience, and help him in his recovery.  
Darryl: I don't think anyone can help that miserable dude.  
Sam: You'd be surprised.  
Darryl: Don't start that again. (Sam just smiles)  
Darryl: I figured he was just another bum.  
Sam: (interrupting) A lazy bum begging for food? Listen Darryl, things aren't always what they seem. More than a few come from broken homes, others suffer from a sickness called alcoholism and addictions. Heck, some even have gambling problems. Each one of these people are in different stages of their life. This month provides us with the prime opportunity to remind each of them about their proud heritage. Great African-Americans like George Washington Carver who discovered over 300 products developed from peanuts and sweet potatoes while inventing more than 500 agricultural inventions. Or Althea Gibson, who paved the way for athletes such as Arthur Ashe and Serena Williams by being the first African-American to play at Wimbledon

and win a major tennis tournament. Our history is full of such individuals who make it possible for you and I, Darryl, to hold public office like President Obama, sit on the Supreme Court like Thurgood Marshall, be an astronaut like Ron McNair, start a television network like Oprah Winfrey, chair a Fortune 500 company like Herman Cain, lead the military like Colin Powell, or make breakthroughs in medicine like Ben Carson. You see, Darryl, because of the hard work and sacrifices of such great African-Americans, there is no limit to what you can do or be. Come sit in on the rehearsal to our Black History Celebration. See what you think.

Darryl:

I have to finish up. I'm not into history.

Sam:

Mr. Cory won't mind. You are working by the hour remember?

Darryl:

Well, anything to get me out of work can't be all bad.

### SCENE 3

(Darryl's house, Thomas looking in through the window)

Thomas:

What's up, dog!

Darryl:

What's up man. Keep it down. You know I'm grounded. I'm lucky my ma lets me out to pee.

Thomas:

Let's go, I got two tickets to the concert and Nelly and Sebrina are waiting for you and yours truly. Get saddled up and lets hit the trail, cowboy.

Darryl:

Nelly and Sebrina, are you kidding? I've been trying to get her for 6 months, but she's always got another dude hanging on her hip.

Thomas:

Now's you chance bro. I picked up a little something to kick the party off reez-ight. (waves a little baggy)

Darryl:

There's a problem.

Thomas:

What?

Darryl:

I have to go to the homeless shelter for community service, not to mention, mom dukes. (voice yells out)

Mom:

Darryl, you got somebody in there boy? Don't make me get up.

Darryl:

No ma, I'm just reading. Shhhh!

Thomas:

Call in sick. Your mom will think your at work.

Darryl:

Can't, Mr. Cory said unless there's come kind of natural disaster, I better be there or else.

Thomas:

He's bluffing, we are talking about Nelly and Sebrina--the pancake twins.

Darryl:

I know, I can't afford to chance it.

Thomas:

You mean you'd rather hangout with the vagrants and walking thrift-shops and be sober all night, man are you crazy?

Darryl:

Not all of them are bums. Remember that guy with the sign....

Thomas:

(interrupting) Stop, reality check, dude. Nelly, Sebrina, concert tickets, ride, blow, royal crown, only thing missing in this picture is me and you.

Darryl:

I can't. It was the alcohol and drugs that got me in this fix to start with. I can't even remember half

the things we do on that stuff. Last year when you and me went to Point Lake, and got ripped, what can you tell me?

Thomas: We got smashed.

Darryl: What else?

Thomas: Shane, fell in the fire and got burnt up. We had a good time.

Darryl: We had a good time but neither one of us can remember hardly anything cause we were too screwed up. I want memories to last, man.

Thomas: You are starting to sound like a saint. What are they to you out at that shelter? Darryl. Come back to us buddy--run towards the light, Darryl. (laughs)

Darryl: I'm my own man, they can't change me, you know I don't care about those bums. I just need to lay low and not push it.

Thomas: So be it. The great Darryl has spoken. Have fun at the helter skelter shelter. I can't say I'll be thinking about you. Well, I gotta run, duty calls and the love soldier has to do combat. But before I go, would you like a little blast from the past?

Darryl: Mr. Cory has already warned me not to come in high.

Thomas: How will he know?

Darryl: No thanks. (Yelling)

Mom: Darryl, that better not be that Thomas I hear, boy!!!!!!!

Darryl: No mamma, I was just singing..... Man, get out of here. (Thomas leaves)

#### SCENE 4

(setting homeless shelter)

Darryl: I should have went to the concert with Thomas, I might still be able to make it. Hey mister you got the time?

Kenny: (looks at watch, taps it) It's 7:20.

Darryl: That's a nice watch, where did you find it?

Kenny: Find it? What do you mean where did I find it?

Darryl: I thought....

Kenny: (interrupting) Guess you thought a guy like me couldn't come by a nice watch, unless I found it or stolen it, right?

Darryl: I didn't mean to sound....

Kenny: Let me finish. This watch belonged to my dad. He gave it to me years ago. It's the only thing I have left, since I went to prison.

Darryl: (backs up and holds up hands) Hey look,

Kenny: You don't know the half of it. Now listen. People like you don't know, but you assume alot. You're quick to speak and slow to listen. I've heard what you said about us. Like you're so much better. I was just like you once. It could be you in prison or a homeless shelter.

Darryl: There's no way in hell.

Kenny: Let me tell you a story: When my people passed away they left me everything; house, car, a nice bank account. You couldn't tell me anything. I partied like it was 1999. Women, trips to Vegas, shooting dope--man everyone loved me. Within a year everything my people worked hard all their life for was gone, and when the money disappeared so did all those friends. You got lucky.

Darryl: Lucky? Man I got busted.

Kenny: Yeah, you got caught early. You have the opportunity to turn it all around. It took me losing everything I held precious in life to realize how utterly lost I was. Entering prison, I was stripped of everything, even my pride. Then I began to read. I had never even picked up a book prior to prison. Eldridge Cleaver, Malcolm X, Rosa Parks, Angela Davis, Marion Barry, Fredrick Douglas, Al Sharpton, Tupac Shakur, Bobby Seale, Marcus Garvey. Do you know what they all share in common with me? They are all African-Americans who served time in jail or prison yet emerged from that to go on and achieve success. Some even continue today to make great contributions for us African-Americans like you and me. Learning about them gave me a new life.

Darryl: A new life? You still have nothing.

Kenny: There you go with all the answers, again. I have more now than I ever had, something drugs, sex and alcohol can't give me. I have a sense of self that I never had. Sure, I made some poor choices in life. But, that's not the total sum of who I am. I have a heritage I can be proud of. *I am somebody!* (said with emphasis). I'm working now, putting my weight back on, and the friends I've made don't like me for what I can do for them, they like me for who I am. Next month, I'm moving out of the shelter, into my own place.

Darryl: That's great, man.

Kenny: Don't patronize me, boy. When I look at you, I'm looking at a shell of my former self. I was you 10 years ago.

Darryl: You're crazy man. I'm nothing like you. I don't have any problems. I don't need any program.

Kenny: You can deny yourself all you want, until it's too late. If a man don't know he has a problem then in his mind, he don't. You think you have trouble now, it's only the beginning. This is a wake-up call.

(setting-Darryl sitting down)

Sam: Hey Darryl!!! You're missing all the fun.

Darryl: I'm just thinking, Sam.

Sam: Don't want to be around all the bums?

Darryl: It's not that. Those people aren't bums. They just..... I don't know.

Sam: Problems come in many different disguises. Sex, love of money, drugs, alcohol, and even so-called friends. Pride, anger, resentment, and loneliness can destroy a person's soul. Unless you have some kind of purpose, we're fighting a losing battle.

Darryl: Easy for you to say. You have everything I wasn't born with a silver spoon in my mouth.



Sam: And I was?

Darryl: Well, I assume.

Sam: Darryl, quit assuming things. Haven't you learned not all things are what they seem? You think I just come to volunteer my time just to be nice? No, I was born an orphan, in and out of foster homes all my life. You name it, I did it. I grew up hating the world and blaming God for everything that had ever happened to me. At 19, I was in a robbery. Things went seriously wrong and my partner was killed. I spent 14 years in prison, I didn't slow down. I had so much hatred and rage. I was sitting in lock-up one day from stabbing another inmate. I was ate up with resentment and self-pity. I was tired of running. Life wasn't worth living any longer. I had lost all hope. Right as I was preparing the sheet to hang myself with, a volunteer came to the cell. I'll never forget it. He had this glow all around him, like he hadn't a care in the world. At first, I was jealous, I didn't want anyone to be happy. He told me I could stop running. Darryl, just because I served time, or just because you were arrested, it doesn't mean life is over. Even Dr. King was jailed several times but went on to win the Nobel Peace Prize. You can turn your life around. We have a heritage to be proud of. You and I, we're the torch bearers for the next generation. Dr. King's dream cannot die with us, Darryl. We have to keep it alive and pass it on.

Darryl: Tell me more about this history.

END

## About The Author

Gary K. Farlow attended Guilford Technical Community College, majoring in Administration of Justice. He completed undergraduate studies at the John Marshall School of Law in Atlanta, and earned a Jur.s Doctorate from the Thomas Jefferson College of Law at Head University in Christianstead, St. Croix U.S. Virgin Island. He also holds degrees from Western Illinois University, South Piedmont Community College, Montgomery Community College, and the Southeastern Theological Seminary. He is past chairman of the Greensboro Human Relations Commission; represented North Carolina Governor James G. Martin on the North Carolina Board of Examiners for Nursing Home Administrators; represented North Carolina at the 1984 national Conference of the Aged; was a Reagan and Bush Administration nominee for the African Development Foundation; served on the United Arts Council of Greensboro Historical Museum and Society, and the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce. He is a former vice president of the Gate City Jaycees, the Lions Club, and Founder of the Senior Theatre Consortium. Mr. Farlow's previous writings have appeared in *Chicken Soup for the Prisoner's Soul*, *the Volunteer's Soul*, and *the African American Soul*, as well as *Serving Time*, *Serving Others*, *the Journal of the American Health Care Association*, and two poetic anthologies of the National Library of Poetry, *Essence of A Dream* and *Visions*. He is the author of both *Prison-ese: A Survivor's Guide to Speaking Prison Slang*, first edition published by Loompanics Unlimited, and *The Cellblock Gourmet: Inmate Recipes From The Big House*, published by the Graduate Group. Mr. Farlow is a Former Associate Editor of the *East Triad Press* and *The Greensboro Sun*; sports reporter for *The High Point Enterprise*, and has written various features for *The Greensboro News and Record*. He is a recipient of the PEN award for Prison Writers and has written a playscript entitled *Sticks*, which deals with he HIV/ AIDS epidemic in the nation's prison system. His works are contained in three poetry

chapbooks, *Conferring With the Moon*, *After Midnight*, and *Into the Abyss*, as well as having his poetry released on audio-cassette by the National Library of Poetry entitled *Visions; The Poetry of Gary Farlow*. Mr. Farlow has traveled extensively and has been a guest lecturer at Rand Afrikaans University in Johannesburg, South Africa, and at the Medical University of South Africa in Pretoria. He has appeared on *Eye on Washington* and *Good Morning South Africa*. His poetry has also been released in two additional anthologies, *Collections*, by Illiad Press and *The Best Poetry of America*, by the National Library of Poetry.