

The Journey, a poem by Suzette Shaw

"They start off as interns.
We start off as homeless.

We will work side by side.
You as an intern, me as an advocate.
In the community daily while in the thick of it.

While you work on your college degree,
You'll use my work as your thesis,
All while I labor for free.


As you climb the ladder
You'll move up the ranks
And become a member of the elite think tank.

From a cubicle to a corner office with a view
You become new,
Relabeled with an expert point of view.

Unhoused, we will be lucky if we
Move from the streets to a shelter
And end up in an SRO,
In the heart of Skid Row.

On equal footing,
We will become community stakeholders
While you and the other 501c(3)s
Plan a community takeover.

I had no other place to go.
Skid Row, my home, as I would come to know.

You will gain stature,
From being known as Becky to Ms. Rebecca
With her Ph.D.
That's right.
The expert world  renowned
Who earned her undergrad stripes
In the hood hype.

You'll go on to get your Masters
While still in your laid back tatters.

Then, you'll get your Ph.D
And be considered as the expert of me.

My trauma will be merely
Labeled as DRAMA.

My trials will become my testimony.
I'm no phony.

My title will become known as
Grassroots Advocate.

With all your expertise,
Yet, you don't know the half of it.

We will go from being friends
To separated by three degrees.
Someone I use to know,
But you'll become distant
While building your life.

You being considered
For an appointment as a Fellow
Now you can barely say hello.

Someone I will distantly
Come to know in the crowd
As far as the eyes can see,
The current existence of WE.

Yep, WE will go from
Looking each other in the eyes
As allies,
To someone I will no longer have to rely.

Your title will get fancier,
Us running into each other,
Will get fancier.

You'll travel more extensively.
The few blocks around me,
The most I'll probably see.

This zip code will probably
Be the last I know.

Here is probably where we will live
Until we die
And God calls us home.

The journey of you and me,
Separated by three degrees.

The End.