

## 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.