

***The Stories We Weave* by Israel Bayer**

An introduction to Write Around Portland's Spring 2011 anthology *Still the Days Grow Longer*

Israel Bayer is the Executive Director at *Street Roots*, a street newspaper in Portland, Oregon. He has worked with street newspapers from North America and around the globe for more than twelve years. He also loves clothes that clash, poetry and stories from the wrong side of the tracks.



Innocence followed by a child's honesty. An old man stranded without love after a lifetime of searching for justice. A single mother bound by circumstance and determination. A young person spoiled by confidence, followed by greatness and tragedy. Love, discovered in all its forms, no matter the age or the setting.

The stories we weave and the paths we travel are connected, much like the words published on the pages of the book you are holding in your hand.

Each writer in *Still the Days Grow Longer* has delivered us his or her own unique experience and perspective. The courage and patience, joy and anxiety, that it takes to write anything, much less publish it, is hard work. It takes dedication. The writers should be extremely proud of themselves.

Collectively, the writers before you have traveled to far-off lands, slept under bridges and in mansions on the top of the hill. They have experienced the joy of making a homemade meal with their parents, and walked in flip-flops in the cold of winter.

They continue to learn and move forward even after failures fill up the night sky. They have found the time to laugh and appreciate one another, even when sadness and obstacles make life hard. They smile and bring us something more valuable than gold and silver, something that is within each of us: dignity.

They write of tall tales and simple gestures. They rhyme and flow, blend and glow. They write each line for the first time, a thousand times. Simplicity.

It's not easy to find that space as creative writers, that place that no one else owns, a place where you feel relaxed enough to produce words on paper. Sometimes writing comes naturally. Other times, it's like mowing the lawn after a hard rain. It's a slog.

The poems and prose before you are an expression of people's lives today. An archive to future generations that will look back and search for understanding about life among common folk in Portland, Oregon in the early 21st century.

Throughout history, the words and emotions written by everyday people are often times delivered to the public through the lens of others. Scholars, politicians, novelists, journalists, religious leaders and playwrights have created narratives that tell of working and poor people's lives. Rarely is the voice of the working poor themselves put into print for the world to appreciate. That's the beauty of Write Around Portland, and the writers who took the time to explore the workshops and deliver us something special.

Welcome to a wonderful collection of creative writing put together by a group of people diverse in both their experiences and perspectives, whose writing is both inspiring, and timeless. Welcome to a journey we can all share. Enjoy!