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Streets Are for Nobody: Awilda Cruz

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Streets Are for Nobody: Awilda Cruz

Thirty; one of ten siblings; abused at an early age; kicked out by mother; pregnant at twelve. Successfully completed substance-abuse treatment; has apartment, job, her daughter back in her life, supportive relationship. Began GED classes January 1991 and plans to attend college.

I have been just so disconnected from my past since I've been a child. God knows who's what, when, and where.

For a lot of Hispanic background, their culture is you deal with your problems in your house and you don't tell nobody and if you do, "Shh!" you know, how dare you! You get slapped — you know, get punished. So how were you gonna come out with these issues?

[Her daughter was taken away. She began drinking at fourteen, found a job and an apartment, and got her daughter back.]

I just went like first year of high school and had to drop out because having to work a job and having my daughter at the same time — I went on temporarily, um, AFDC until I started workin'. And that worked out for a while. But, um, I met the man which I thought was the man of my life and my dreams and was gonna rescue me and take me away from this impossible world and he was someone that drugged and dranked just like me. We went out for two years, the result of it — I had a son from him. There was a lot of mental abuse, a lotta physical abuse, and, um, I decided I took enough of that in my first marriage and now it wasn't gonna happen in my second life around, you know. So, I left him.

So from fifteen to eighteen, I was in Hartford, Connecticut, and decided to settle down. It was just a geographical cure. I stopped drinkin' and druggin' for about two years. This time I was gonna try it differently, a religion way, and have this higher power in my life, a spiritual foundation. My husband started to come back in my life. I wanted him back in my life because I had a son with him, and I didn't want to end up like my mother, an alcoholic without knowing who the fathers of her kids were — she was never married — I just didn't want to be like her. I wanted to have a real chance in life.

I lived about eight years in Hartford, Connecticut, and I tried to build a . . . foundation out there, but, I found myself in a real bad financial setting, real bad, and decided to make fast cash. I decided — I'll have a legal job and a illegal job and sell drugs and make fast money, so I'll be able to survive.

Interviewed by Melissa Shook, July 29, 1989, Shepherd House, Dorchester. Reprinted, with permission, from "Streets Are for Nobody: Homeless Women Speak," Boston Center for the Arts, 1991.

Last year I got arrested for trafficking heroin and, um, I believe then I hit my bottom. By going up to Framingham [prison] and seeing myself in the situation I was in, I had no other choices but to know that Awilda had a problem with alcohol and drugs. It didn't convince me that first time around because, as soon as I came out, I did the same thing over and over. But the second time, I, um, I feel like I surrender because I wasn't that lady that was always dressing up real high class or had my Eldorado and have my nice home in Providence, Rhode Island. All these things were taken away.

The last time I shove a needle up my arm, I was sayin', "Oh, God, help me. This hurts and I can't do it no more. I'm gonna die. I'm . . . I'm desperate. Help me." And I kept on cryin' and I took the needle outta my arm. I said, "The hell with this. I can't go through this insanity no more." And that's when I went for help. ☹️