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A day at "Operation Good Neighbor"

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A day at "Operation Good Neighbor"

Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"As I tour the facility, I feel a sense of guilt for all that I have in my life. My clothes are fresh, in style for the most part, and when I have had enough of them, I give to the "unknown" and "unseen" people for whom I feel distance. After my tour is over it is time to go to work. We open the doors and place the sign carefully out in front of the old church that was donated to this venue, which was so foreign to many. I am feeling a little nervous about how I will talk to the people coming in for donations. What will I have in common with them? An hour passes before my first "customer" arrives. Thank goodness, because I was beginning to feel as if I was wasting my time. I pondered, "is there really such a great need in my community; I would know about it if there truly was such a need". I found my thoughts righteously judging, "just get a job, anything would do, I see signs all over that say help wanted". "For heavens sake, help yourself climb out of the lowly acceptance of poverty."

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Brief Essays



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**** A day at “Operation Good Neighbor”**

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Thankfully, a woman and child arrive to lift me from my boredom. After carefully assessing a toy section in the back of the building, a sweet little girl comes to me with eyes bright, handing me a pink bear that carries a rainbow on its belly. Someone, given the worn fur, had obviously loved this little bear. “She is sad and needs a mom,” said the little girl. The mother asks the price and proudly tells her daughter that she can buy the bear. The girl called “Anna” immediately embraces the bear and begins to form an attachment, one that seemed carefully avoided prior to being told she could have the bear. As Anna’s mom searches copiously through the mass of women’s clothing, Anna initiates a quiet conversation with her new bear. I feel moved by her animated speech

and warmth toward the tired bear. While I wait for Anna's mom to finish "shopping" the manager of this site, a story that will stay with me for some time, tells me.

Anna's mother, who is called Roberta, is mentally ill. She suffers from a disease called "Manic Depression". Unfortunately, she is often non-compliant with her medications that are needed to sustain stable emotions. Therefore, Anna lives in an environment that many would consider unstable. She is unable to count on the stable security of a parent, which is her God given right. When Roberta falls into the depths of depression, the people of the church come together and schedule around the clock care for Anna. At this moment, thoughts of my own childhood come to mind that include a beautiful home where security, love, and friends could be counted on. Teddy bears galore and new clothes that were often worn only once adorned my closet. What must this child feel? This just isn't fair I tell the manager, Charles, of the donation site. But Charles explains that issues such as these are quite common. Poverty affects many people right in my community. Some people are affected due to illness, both physical and mental. Other people are affected due to loss of job, or a spouse. One woman, I'm told had a husband that worked on a farm. He had little education and is an immigrant from Poland. He died suddenly and she had no training of any kind to put to work. He did not carry life insurance and they have no family. Now she depends on "operation good neighbor" for her food, clothing and the warmth of friendship.

Roberta comes to the counter as the man is finishing his story. I want to give her everything and more. Charles totals her things and places them in a bag along with some day old cookies and bread that were donated from a local supermarket. He wishes her a blessed day and asks Anna to "give me five". She playfully slaps his hand and runs to

her mom laughing. A sadness and emptiness lingers as I wait on the next family.

Suddenly I feel so inadequate. How can this happen to others as we live our daily lives in abundance? I am feeling a compassion for humanity that is so easy to ignore. The reality of our world is not seen in my life. It is seen in the eyes of everyone we meet. We are all Gods children put here for a purpose. Although that purpose is something I continue to seek and struggle with, I believe it must ultimately better our world. Not my world alone, but I am starting to realize this world has been given to me to live in as a gift, its God's world.

By: Caroline Randall