

THESE ARE WHAT'S KEEPING ME ALIVE

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Spoken:

In Camden the poor walk the streets
With no money or riches to show.
But everyone I met had so much more
Wealth than I could know.
The spirit there is more alive
Than any I have seen before.
Even without money they are positive
And embrace life and God even more.

I looked into the eyes of so many
Who were dying to be heard,
Dying for someone just to listen
And let them get in a word.
Just take the time to listen
To the story of a woman or man,
And you'll find love for a stranger
As you share and understand

*But of everyone I met
There was one who caught my eye.
She had long gray hair and sky blue eyes,
Which caught me by surprise.
When I asked her of the books
She held onto tight and near,
The next words that she said to me
Moved me half to tears.*

Sung:

**And she said "These are what's keeping me alive,
These are what's keeping me alive.
I've been here for so many years,
And these are all that I've got,
And since I'm not going anywhere,
These books take me away from here."**

Spoken:

So listen to the cries of people
With no one for them to care,
And try to turn your back on that
After you've seen it and been there.
It's easier to think of the poor
As an idea or concept far away,
Until you've sat where homeless sit
Or play where their children play.

I've been to where injustice settles
On a city where the days affairs
Mean nothing to a lot of people,
Whose actions show their lack of cares.
But as long as there are people like us
Who will lend helping hands and ears,
Their stories will live on forever
And help love and duty replace our fears.

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On the Camden, N.J. service trip, I was given the opportunity to step away from my own reality and into someone else's, away from the distractions of cell phones or the Internet. Everyone I met there seemed to enjoy life so much despite living in poverty. The one woman I focused on in this piece made me realize how important it is to appreciate the things we have instead of being unhappy about what we don't have. A simple passion for reading was enough for her to wake up every morning and to resist sleep every night. I felt it was important to share my experience and pass along this message.

—Cheri Cimon