

# We Are the Cracks

Thomas Edmondson Whigham Jr.

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This week was the first time I realized the level of intimacy that comes with being a human's advocate. If you open yourself to them, they open themselves to you. They are also marginalized, lonely, discarded, used up, burnt and hurting, in and out, and worse than anything, they are ignored. They suffer in the darkness, between the cracks of the world. They suffer with shame, and dignity, and a sense of purpose and a greater sense of its absence. They live as we would want but we give them nothing to show for it. Valiant struggles and battles are mere medical reports, scars are scribbles on pads dated callously in type. They exist as the burden of society because of their burdens, and we burden them with this every step of the way. We hate them, the idea of them shames us, or makes us care between commercials, or angers us. Romney says 47% are addicted to entitlements and pay no income taxes. They'll vote for Obama.

I speak with real humans, mothers, women who've endured your worst abuses. They are the collective fault of every darkness, every piece of our society the sunlight cannot and will not touch. We can't control everyone.

I spoke to women proud and broken. "How can you explain how they hold me down at night and I can't scream and I can't move?" The demons do this. The uncle who forced his dick in her mouth when she was nine, behind the shed. After a cousin or his friend got her pregnant, years into her teens, after her mother forced the abortion, another uncle came, in the dark, and broke her will. When she told her grandmother, her aunt and cousin told her she was stupid. She could have got money, they said. Like they had. The memory bleeds tears across her face, the

shame wracking the frame as I hold her. Words are ashes. This is a pain to be touched only gently, softly, the merest of comforts.

Another tells of the brother-in-law, and the husband who stabbed her lungs and forced himself upon her. "I was too scared. I waited for him to divorce me." The knife missed her heart by a centimeter.

These are not even the pains of their complaint. These are just the scars of a brutal life. And I must make the case, sure, tie the thread, make a knot of it. She cannot trust people so she cannot work with them or for them, and we have this diagnosed, her brain is paranoid and schizophrenic. Her brain is the aftershock of the trauma. And she held it together through this, still determined to be the good person her grandmother raised her to be. But her grandmother didn't know the truth about people.

She is great. And the best she can hope for is that we will, one day, blessedly, call her disabled.

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## Shoes

Joshua Greenstein

■ *Joshua Greenstein is a third year medical student at Florida State University.*

