



Chelsea Chronicles: Navigating Life and Transit

VOL. 01



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Note to the Readers :

The original theme of the Zine focused on the crucial role of public transit in affording individuals both independence and mobility access, with a particular emphasis on its benefits for seniors and youth. It encouraged the reflection on different modes of transportation residents use throughout their lifetimes and in their daily routines. As I received an increasing number of submissions it became clear that the focus was on Chelsea residents who live in this small but vibrant city. While you may come across some content related to transit, you will also get a small slice of life of Chelsea. The stories also integrate data gathered from a subset of survey participants from the Healthy Neighborhoods Study (HNS). This is a collaboration between GreenRoots and HNS. I want to give a special appreciation to Shinelle Kirk, a Research Associate for HNS who supported Mitikei and I every step in creating this zine. Thank you everyone who contribute to this zine without you this would not have happened.

- Ruth Alcantara





GreenRoots is a resident-led, grassroots, community-based organization with a track record spanning close to 30 years of achieving significant environmental justice accomplishments and public health victories in the communities of Chelsea and East Boston. GreenRoots' mission is to achieve environmental justice and greater quality of life through collective action, unity, education, and youth leadership across neighborhoods and communities .

GreenRoots understand transit justice to be a key pillar of environmental justice and economic justice. As one of the most densely populated and transit-dependent communities in the Commonwealth, we see access to public, affordable and reliable means of transportation as central to transitioning from our dependence on fossil fuels, reducing our carbon emissions, improving our public health and lifting our communities out of poverty.

You can learn more at: <http://www.greenrootschelsea.org/>





The Healthy Neighborhoods Study (HNS), based in Boston, is the largest resident-driven, participatory action research project in the US about neighborhood change processes, like gentrification and climate change, and their impact on health.

We believe in the expertise of the residents most harshly impacted by gentrification and climate change and of the advocates who work to address these impacts. They are exactly the leaders we need to understand these injustices and develop solutions to correct them.

We use research to fuel organizing and action for equitable development without displacement in Greater Boston. Through Participatory Action Research (PAR), residents, advocates, and planners work with academic researchers to turn their lived experiences, insights, and expertise into data, facts, and information.

We use our HNS 5-step PAR process to engage residents, understand their research interests, and ensure that tools are designed to respectfully collect useful and actionable data.

Resident Researchers and Community Partners design surveys, interviews, and observational tools to collect data that informs action on topics that matter most to their own neighborhoods, advocacy, and health.

The 9 Massachusetts communities taking part in the Healthy Neighborhoods Study are the cities of: Brockton, Chelsea, Everett, Lynn, Fall River, New Bedford and the Boston Neighborhoods of Dorchester, Mattapan, Roxbury.

You can learn more at: www.hns.mit.edu

Meet the Author and Designer

Mitikei Chengerei



Mitikei was born and raised in Ethiopia. She came to the United States in 2016.

In Ethiopia, she took courses at Addiss Ababa University and worked as a math tutor and clerk accountant.

Currently, she is actively involved in supporting the community and works as a Certified Community Health Worker at GreenRoots.

She likes to share her life experience in order to motivate and inspire others.

Contact :mitikeic@greenrootschelsea.org

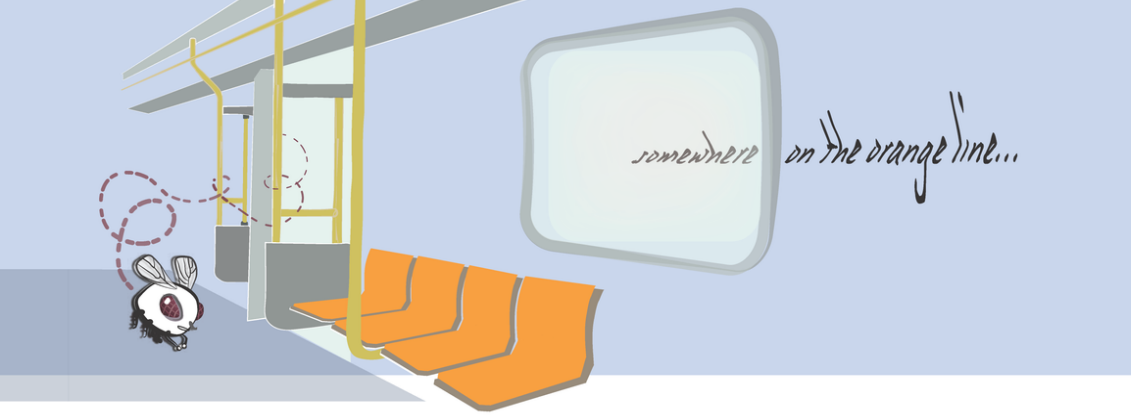
Ruth Alcantara



Born and raised in Downtown Los Angeles, Ruth earned her Bachelor's of Arts Degree in Environmental Studies from the University of California, Santa Barbara.

She has been a part of the GreenRoots community as a RAY fellow. She is thrilled to share this project with others and hopes that it inspire other to create in community too.

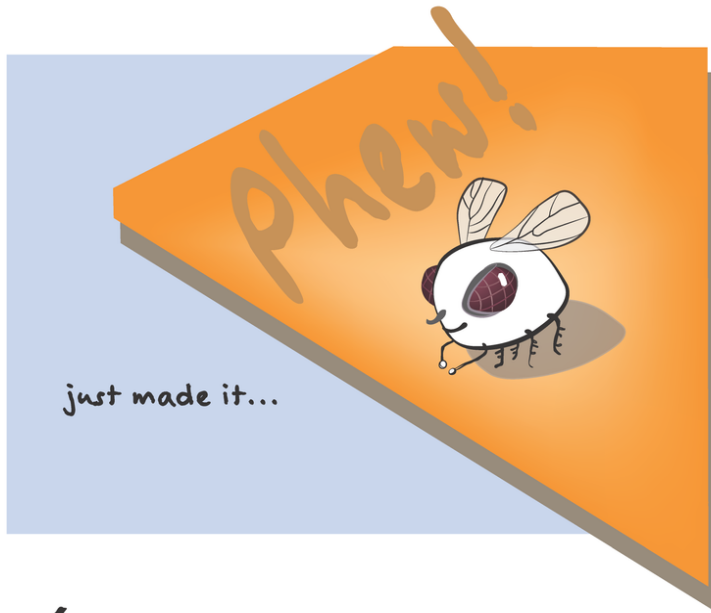
Contact :rutha@greenrootschelsea.org



FLYBY THE FARE-FREE FLY PRESENTS...

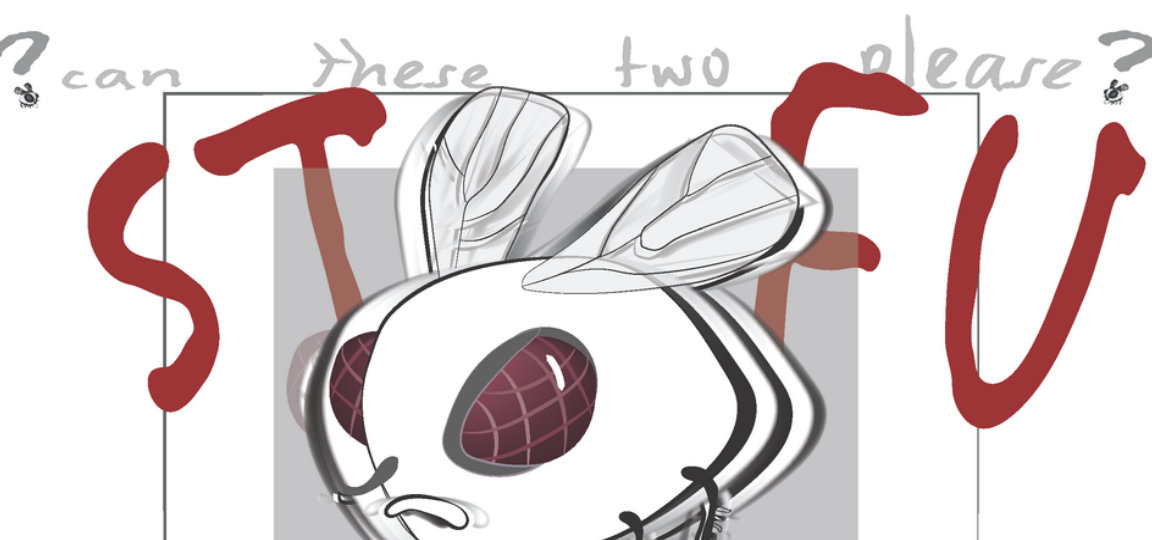
TRANSIT FOR ALL

BY ZAHRA SAIFEE
& AMRITA SAWHNEY



long a
9.9.

seat to himself





Riding a ferry in my car while
on a road trip in the Outer
Banks



people to new places to things to other
people



It's 3:45 am on Monday morning, and Hugo, a young man from Chelsea is starting another work week. At just 29 years old, he carries the world on his shoulder trying to balance providing for himself and supporting his family back home.

At 4:30 am, his alarm goes off and he is reminded that it's time to step out into the brisk cold air and head to work.

Similar to Hugo, 47% of Chelsea residents included in the survey work full-time.

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If an aircraft arrives later than expected, Hugo eagerly stays around for the overtime, arriving home closer to midnight. For many individuals, enduring long work hours with minimal rest represents a significant sacrifice. Among Chelsea residents who participated in the survey, 11% reported having to work additional hours due to inadequate funds to meet their expenses.





For Hugo, this wasn't the American Dream that he saw on television. However, he is grateful to have 2 jobs and a place to live. Ideally, Hugo would rather live alone and have a car to drive to work, but for now, a one-bedroom apartment and a car are out of his budget.



T

PUBLIC TRANSIT
PUBLIC GOOD

MBTA riders and workers
for a low-income fare

SAFETY FOR RIDERS

STOP BAKER'S SCHEME

POINT GIVE AWAY THE MBTA.ORG

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SCAN THE
STREET
FOR WHEELS
AND FEET

Public Transit Riders Meeting

RIDERS NEED
LOW-INCOME FARE

11

A story we tell, while making it happen in reality.



A story about low-car communities, public spaces, housing, and the worlds we want to live in. Inspired by real-life movements and people — perhaps like you — and made to inspire more possibilities like this around the world.

Stories are life. They help us imagine what's possible, share experiences, and shape the paradigms we see through every day.

What are the most important things for us to be envisioning right now?

Transcending cars. Communities and public spaces. Housing. Degrowth. Local power. Making the worlds we imagine a reality.

That's what *Ride* is about. Inspired by real-life people (perhaps even you!) doing the work — from tactical urbanism, to housing cooperatives, to direct action and critical mass rides. It's a story that can be told anywhere — and as we produce it, we can do the work in real time. Intertwining culture and groundwork. Making change locally, *sharing stories everywhere*.

If you want to tell a story like this, the *Ride* script (ride.movie/script) is free to use, borrow, remix, copy, adapt, and make your own. You don't need to start from scratch to tell a story like this — you can pick it up and run with it, and start doing the work, with the people around you.

And you can check out the trailer (ride.movie/trailer) for a taste, a feeling, an image and a vision of what this can look like. All made from real footage, woven into what you're seeing now.



Watch the trailer
ride.movie/trailer

Sam Butler
ridetogether@sambutler.us

For Minoo and Okot, a young married couple, Chelsea appeared to be the perfect community to raise a family. As both first-generation immigrants, they had a first-hand account of how difficult it can be to balance work and family obligations.



After the birth of their second child, they decided to move to Chelsea, a seemingly more affordable and vibrant area, so that Minoo could stay home and care for their family. Like many others in Chelsea, 55% of the survey respondents reported having children.

To cut back on costs, Minoo chooses to walk her oldest daughter to and from school and frequently shops at a local food pantry. Rising food prices and stagnant wages are leaving many struggling to make ends meet. Out of 308 people surveyed in Chelsea, 48 responded that they went hungry in the last month because there was not enough money for food. On days that Minoo needs to restock their food, she struggles to bring a cart full of groceries along with their 2-year-old home on the bus.



So far Okot has been proud of his ability to provide for his family, however, today is different. As he returns home and checks the mail he notices a letter from his landlord, informing him that there will be a rent increase. Sadly, Minoo and Okot's situation is not unique. The rising cost of housing has created a financial burden among residents. Our findings revealed that 36% of Chelsea residents surveyed have experienced a financial housing-related hardship.





As Christmas approaches, Stephanie, a single mother of two working tirelessly, has not experienced her usual festive cheer. About 3 months ago, Stephanie started a new part-time position at an upscale restaurant in Downtown Boston. While the tips are generous and can help support the family, they still fall short for covering holiday expenses.



Three days a week she travels in the brisk December cold from Chelsea to South Station to the restaurant. Public transit use is not uncommon for some Chelsea residents. Among those surveyed, 20% used public transit five days a week with 33% using it to go to and from work.



For Stephanie, trying to adjust to this new normal has been challenging. Just a few months ago, her husband passed away following a prolong illness, leaving her in the role of a widow, single parent, and the main provider for the family. Some may consider Stephanie lucky because she lives in an affordable housing unit, making her rent cheaper than average. From our sample, nearly 38% of Chelsea respondents receive government housing assistance. And, while affordable housing provides some financial relief, balancing competing household responsibilities, parenthood, and daily life can still be difficult.





Over the past year, her apartment has been infested with mold which exacerbates her son's asthma, the heat works intermittently, and her landlord has not responded to any of her concerns. Our findings revealed that 24% of respondents spent most of their time with a few that have health challenges. For Stephanie, moving isn't an option right now because she couldn't afford it and loves Chelsea's proximity to Boston. While heading home from work, Stephanie, in search of some holiday hope, mentally reminds herself to contact social services to inquire about Christmas assistance programs.



While traveling to Portugal last summer, my friend and I decided to skip booking hotels and instead rented a van to travel and sleep in. We drove all along the coast, stopping to swim in the ocean, enjoy local cuisine, and tour small towns. The freedom and independence of driving gave me a more personal and intimate journey where we could connect with the culture and with one another. Although we don't see one another very often living in different countries, our travels in the van left me with beautiful memories to look back upon. - Jordan Llanas



Bill has faced considerable challenges in his retirement. As a senior living on a fixed income, he heavily depends on social services to meet most of his needs. Like countless other retirees, Bill never anticipated that retirement would be so difficult. Over the course of 4 decades, Bill worked as an ironworker, contributing to the enhancement of Massachusetts' infrastructure. However, he is now unable to work due to a work-related injury. Across all 9 HNS communities, 15% of those surveyed reported that they cannot work because of a disability.



Bill spends most of his days in state of sadness and isolation, eagerly waiting for the seasons to change. Survey findings revealed that Bill's feelings are quite common. 32 % of Chelsea respondents reported experiencing occasional feelings of downheartedness in the past month. On the days that Bill does venture outside, he relies on the T ride to transport him to local stores around Chelsea.

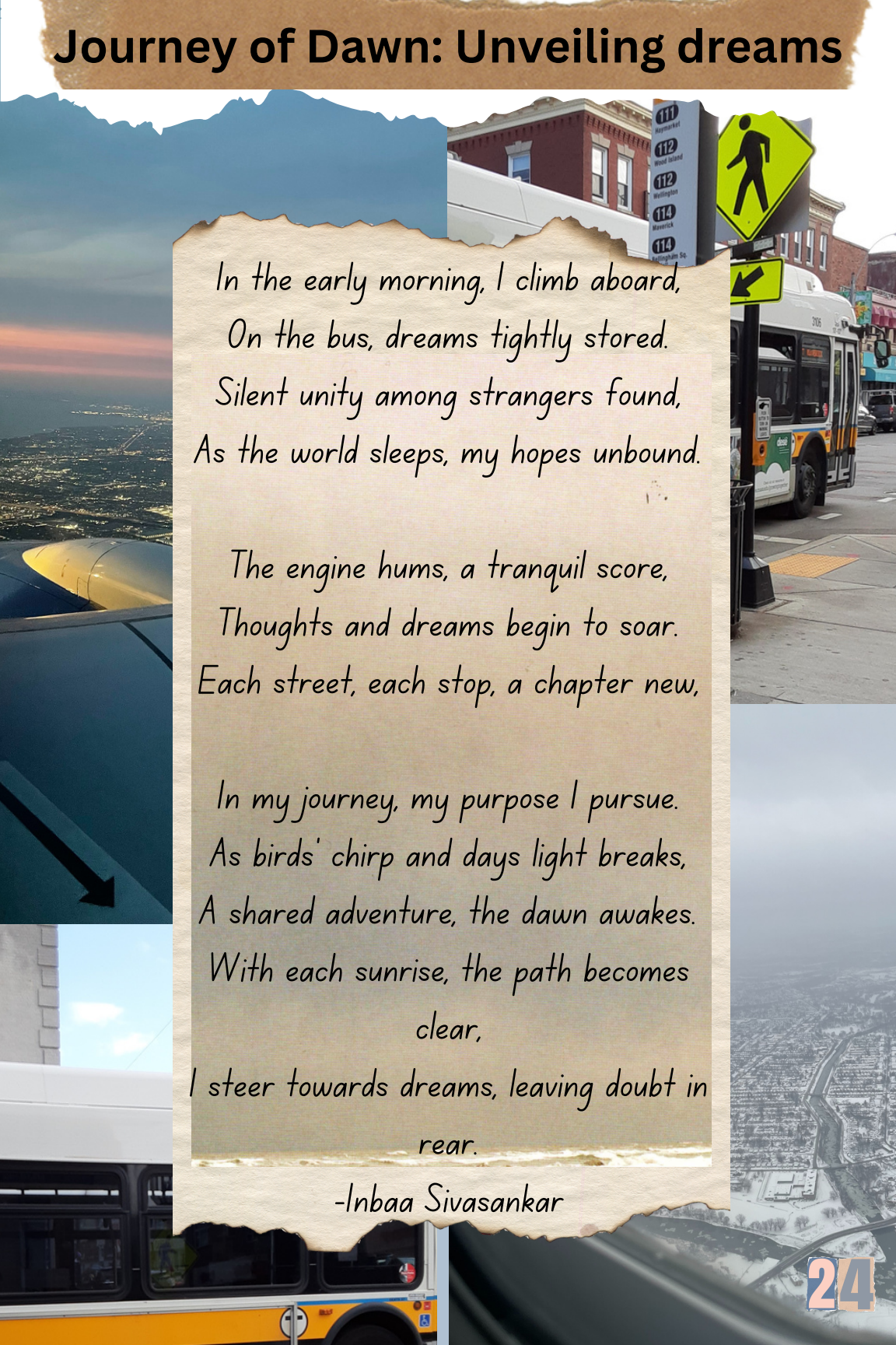




This isn't his ideal life. Bill feels stuck and hates relying on others for assistance. When summer arrives, Bill fondly reflects on his memories at the beach. Regrettably, using public transit in his wheelchair makes it nearly impossible for him to get there.

evznikn

Journey of Dawn: Unveiling dreams



In the early morning, I climb aboard,
On the bus, dreams tightly stored.
Silent unity among strangers found,
As the world sleeps, my hopes unbound.

The engine hums, a tranquil score,
Thoughts and dreams begin to soar.
Each street, each stop, a chapter new,

In my journey, my purpose I pursue.
As birds' chirp and days light breaks,
A shared adventure, the dawn awakes.
With each sunrise, the path becomes
clear,
I steer towards dreams, leaving doubt in
rear.

-Inbaa Sivasankar





Earth Day

Now that we'd dug a hole deep enough for the root ball

Of the hawthorn tree that would fill it; now that the two nice guys In the big orange Department of Public Works pick-up truck Had shoveled compost into it; now that we'd helped The arborist place the tree upright in the hole like a flag; and now That we'd finished spreading compost around the base of it And he was leaning on his rake with a smile on his handsome face—





It was a pleasure, in that residential block of Highland Street Between Maverick and Central Streets on Bellingham Hill In Chelsea, overlooking Eagle Hill and Logan International Airport in East Boston, across the mouths of the Mystic River And Chelsea Creek in Boston Harbor, right precisely there, Between the gray granite curb and a mortared stone wall In front of a house with a cement stoop and vinyl siding, To hear Eric, the gentle, young, and good-looking arborist From the Greening the Gateway Cities division





Of the Department of Resource Conservation in Boston, Furrowing his brow and frowning with feigned embarrassment, Explain to a curious teenager there with her classmates From a task force on environmental justice at the nonprofit, La Colaborativa, that was instrumental in keeping the community Of Chelsea fed and vaccinated throughout the pandemic, In response to her question about the gender of the tree, That, come to think of it, he couldn't actually remember offhand Whether hawthorns like this, famous for their fragrant flowers, Were monoecious, gender-specific, binary trees that exist As sexual complements, "and by complements," he said, "I mean symbiotic opposites, not flattering remarks spelled





With an i," that depend, for reproductive success,
On butterflies and bees to deliver the fertile
pollen in summer From the ovulating flower of a
tree of the opposite gender, Or whether they're
dioecious, hermaphroditic trees instead With
bisexual flowers, and therefore can be considered,
As another teenager huddled around the tree well
with Eric And her classmates pointed out—all of
them the children





Of refugees who fled the endemic poverty and gang violence In the conservative Catholic and evangelical-Christian countries Of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador, in the Northern Triangle — Code-switching from accented English to colloquial Spanish And hip-hop Spanglish in her one remarkable, multivalent sentence, With her reddish-brown skin, her jet-black hair, her cool sneakers, And her silkscreened t-shirt, as models of a gender identity,



Fluid and nonbinary and confusing to the
conventional
Hetero-normative values, that a surprising number
of people
Have recently been experimenting with, even here
in Chelsea,
Where a woman named Peg, who'd crossed the
Tobin Bridge with friends
From a task force on poverty at the Church of
the Covenant
In the exclusive Back Bay, to the delight of
everyone there
Confirmed on her phone that the hawthorn is,
indeed, a nonbinary tree.

-Scott Ruescher

(The Latin American Literary Review)







WAKE UP

How long will we sit idly by and deny
a reality that many do not even realize
will impact, all of our future?

Searching and seeking
looking desperately for hope
while the powers that be promote
and condone the disparities
poor folks live and try to cope.

Inner city woes tryin to stop wars on our streets

courage



Asthma rates soar and our children can't sleep
gaspin for breath and trying not to wheeze
So why would we have time to worry about trees
or polar ice caps or carbon footprints, or any of
these?

Cap and trade agreements and Co2 emissions
Big whigs plan and negotiate the big decisions
Poor folks work day to day ...life issues press
just trying to pay bills a source of great stress

Utilities bills soar, single mom's quandary
pay for heat, buy food to eat or
maybe a little soap for the laundry





No time to worry about climate change stuff
when trying to get through this day is more than
enough

Do we all breathe the same air?
does the breath for the rich...
taste the same for those of us feeling despair?
Therein lies the question which most of us might
hear...

Would you really have done something? If you were
there?

Why wait for tomorrow when it's present and very
clear.

By Mela Bush and Achale Takang



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Photos :

Camilo Auyero

Ruth Alcantara

Jordan Llanas

Vladimir Perez

Priyanka Rangadass

Noemy Rodriguez

Gail Roderiques

Ana Vegas

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