

# Street Roots receives five awards, three firsts, for journalism

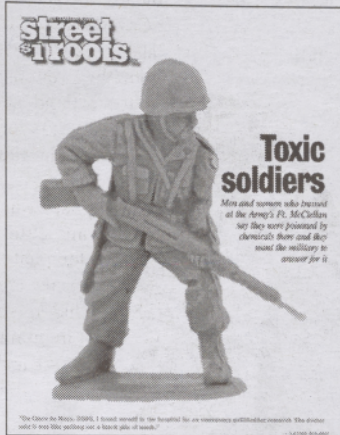
Street Roots reporters Emily Green and Jake Thomas took home three first-place awards from the Society of Professional Journalists for environmental and science reporting, health reporting and general news reporting.

Green took home top honors for her report "Toxic Soldiers," about the men and women who trained at the Army's Fort McClellan and are now fighting for compensation for the toxic exposure they suffered. She received a second-place award in health coverage for "Ghosts of Agent Orange," about the ongoing genetic effects of chemical use during the Vietnam War.

Thomas received top honors for his coverage of Safety Net and recognition for his reporting on the Social Security payee process for poor and homeless people. Thomas spent months investigating the federal inquiry into the Portland-based payee program and the fall out from the closure of one program serving more than 1,000 qualifying individuals living in poverty.

Green joined Street Roots in November as a full-time reporter in advance of the newspaper going to weekly circulation. Thomas has been a longtime freelancer with the organization and more recently works as staff reporter at Inlander in Spokane, Wash.

This year Street Roots competed against a broad field of non-daily newspapers throughout Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana and Alaska.



## Orphan

by Harold Thompson

"Orphan" is a very empty word, starting with the letter "O" that reminds me of a big alphabetic hole. It conjures up images of loss, of being rootless of unwanted and untenable love.

When I think of "orphan" I think of something flying around in the great human universe, searching for home but never quite finding it.

I'm an orphan.  
As sure as the Earth travels around the sun in an eternal bliss, interstellar pas de deux, I'm an orphan.

It took a while to really use the word  
It was like I was standing  
by the curb of life and my spirit  
brushed up against me, turned the  
corner and disappeared from sight.  
I preferred to think of it dissolving  
into the light at dusk, with bits of  
swirling and glittering particles of affection.  
I couldn't bring myself to imagine it being gone.

Yes, I'm now orphaned without the presence  
And the comforting feeling of never knowing.  
I can barely make conversation in that silent intimacy that only love can bring.  
I'm physically alone, in a world of no compassion.  
That lonely solitude is like a gash on my heart.  
I'm an orphan of these sensations, of the superficial and beloved things  
that made my spirit my spirit.

But then again, I am an orphan of all the things  
That existed beyond and within and around this beautiful presence.  
My spirit will always keep me company  
And I'll hear deep within my soul:  
I am here. And always will be.

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