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A Lonely Walk Down 24th Street

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Inspiration:

Growing up in North Omaha, I have always been acquainted with 24th Street. My grandparents and parents grew up going out, socializing, and creating memories on 24th Street often. It was a meeting place filled with history. I remember thinking I could not wait to get older to meet up with my friends and experience the things people before had fond memories of.

As I have gotten older and started taking the world in with a more mature lens, I noticed that the 24th Street my family knew was not the 24th Street I would embrace. I started this project wanting to capture life and the architecture of old buildings, but I quickly realized that was not the only message I could tell, and there, my project was born. "A lonely walk down 24th Street" is a tribute to the beauty accompanied by emptiness.

Brief History:

24th Street, formally known as the Street of Dreams, has been a staple in the north Omaha community for over a century. It has become a time capsule of liberation and is stagnant in its elderly years.

24th Street got its nickname, the "Street of Dreams," because there was a time when people believed anything could happen there. The Street was filled with hotels, stores, clubs, hotels, and so much more, lining Dodge Street. The Street was lit up 24/7 and housed many Jewish, Scandinavian, and African American people.

The Street was indeed a dream, but America's biggest boogeyman, racism, plagued the area in 1919. September 28th, 1919, was the lynching of Will Brown after being accused of raping a white woman. His last breath was taken from him before he could stand trial, and this marked the downfall of 24th Street. For the next 40 years, civic duties were neglected by the city, and to eradicate the "ghetto," North 24th Street experienced a series of fires, riots, and bombings.

Journey:

I started planning for this project in January to capture the historic buildings and the surrounding community. I looked at historical photos and talked to my family about how 24th Street played a fantastic role in their upbringing. When the spring rolled around, I was so excited to take pictures, and on my second walk, I started to notice the lack of movement, gathering, and community before me.

When I began capturing photos, I spent time photographing buildings and ultimately not being happy with them. I noticed that the buildings were not telling a story and not captivating me, and It had a lot to do with the absence of people. Buildings cannot tell stories independently; this requires human interaction and attachment, which is missing from this prominent part of my community.

Around the end of April, I decided to shift my project in a more telling direction and capture the beauty of its stagnant state. You can see there are very few people in my shots, and that is to design and the state of my community.

I started to capture things that were empty, condemned, and older. I kept the history and architecture portion by researching the history and significance of the neighborhood. I walked up and down the streets without chatter, music, laughter, etc.

Once I entered the stage of being satisfied, I started to challenge myself on how to convey my story digitally, and I decided a website would be the best platform. Still, the blog and gallery style mix would be the best. The gallery showcases my view of the Street, but the blogs allow my voice to be heard.

The podcast was a series of questions to engage you on the importance of the Street and what we are missing as young people in the community. Our discussion touched on history, current issues, views, and politics. I chose my classmate because, as a young woman who devotes her time to helping small businesses and volunteering in our community, I was interested in hearing her perspective on 24th Street State.

The spoken word and poetry are a craft near and dear to my heart. I have been writing, performing, and studying certain pieces. Poetry added a sense of intimacy to my project. It allowed me to give my mind, thoughts, and emotions a platform. I did not force myself to write those three poems; instead, I found words coming and just writing them as they came to me. Some took hours, the second poem was finished over a week, and the one specifically about 24th Street was written and refined throughout the whole project.

Challenges:

Challenges I endured throughout this project included creativity wall, SD card malfunctions, and teaching myself how to use a different brand of equipment. In a traditional thesis, there are many challenges, but depending on your topic, an abundance of information can guide you in your completion. At some point, creativity flows less and less on some days. There were many days when I wouldn't say I liked any photos I took, felt like I was not doing enough, and felt a meekness in what I was producing. I had to keep pushing myself to see it through until the end.

The other challenges associated with this were losing a large portion of my photos when my SD card fell to be defective after collecting days' worth of work. This left me discouraged, wondering if I would finish, but I decided one bad thing would not define me and my project.

Another challenge was teaching myself how to use an older Nikon Camera, which was gifted to me by my granny, who passed away three years ago. She told me stories about her life in Omaha as a young mother, and how she spent time on 24th Street, so I wanted to honor her by using something she gifted me. The controls are similar, but learning the sensitivities was another ball game.

Concluding thoughts:

In conclusion, this project speaks to my journey and thought process, showcases a skill, and provides images free for interpretation. It shows the work I put in and tells a story. My lonely

walks blossomed before me, and I look forward to sharing a small but prevalent piece of my community.

Website: <https://poodle-fiddle-dx46.squarespace.com/>

Source: "A History of 24th Street in North Omaha." *NorthOmahaHistory.Com*, 27 Oct. 2013, <https://northomahahistory.com/2013/10/27/a-history-of-omahas-north-24th-street/>.

- History of North 24th Street provided me with all the historical content and photos.