



The Truth in the Ruins of Pleasure and Desire

Robert Camara

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Combining poetry, prose, and pictures, Robert Camara invites readers to receive his ideas about humanity and the interconnectedness of life. With the publication of *The Truth in the Ruins of Pleasure & Desire*, Camara proposes spiritual solutions to today's most difficult social and political dilemmas.

Camara strongly believes that our troubles begin when humanity willfully interferes with God's plans and disrupts the sacred connection among all beings. As if speaking from the pulpit, Camara admonishes readers to remember that "we are the ones who make mistakes; God never makes a mistake." The way to avoid tragedies like war and famine, he suggests, is to trust in God and not man.

Camara himself, however, holds some very human opinions about God's plans, ranging from support of universal health care to the rejection of same-sex marriage. Camara declares his personal truths in a series of sermon-like pieces that discourage critical analysis. "Think about it," he implores repeatedly, suggesting that any sensible person is bound to agree with his conclusions. This closed loop leaves little room for disagreement or debate. His description of mankind's ruin—rampant consumerism, failing schools, a dismal job market—appear on the surface to prove his point, but his choice of examples is most often selective in favor of his original opinion.

Sepia-toned photographs inserted between essays soften Camara's otherwise emphatic tone. The images create a contrast between the gentle, abstract shapes of God's natural world and the harsh environment of man, echoing the message of the text. The soft-focus photographs could easily stand alone, but Camara uses the opportunity to offer more commentary, adding evocative captions like, "A mind cannot teach what a mind does not know," and, "In a land of lost souls, the wise feed for wisdom."

Poetry provides Camara's message with another vehicle, one he appears quite comfortable driving. Where his essays tend to break off into tangents, his poems are direct and pithy. More inquiries than admonishments, the poems explore Camara's own feelings of inadequacy and reveal him as a man with many questions, and not necessarily all of the answers.

Together, Camara's three forms of expression encourage the reader to make connections between image and word, thought and feeling. The multifaceted presentation echoes his message of interconnectedness.

SHEILA M. TRASK (November 9, 2012)

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