



Elizabeth A. Davis ©Diane Sobolewski

I felt forced to write this show. I mean, not like gun-to-my-head forced, but forced in the way that one is forced to skydive or tell someone you love him for the first time; if I didn't, I would never again look in the mirror without some sense of regret. Writing began in fits-and-starts essays about the angst and profundity of being friends with a guy who slept on the streets. *Indian Joe* then grew with TLC from smart people challenging me to ask better questions. Others then dared to suggest I write a song or two. I replied, "That's a terrible idea." 16 songs later (and residencies at the Johnny Mercer Writers Colony at Goodspeed Musicals and Goodspeed's Festival of New Musicals), I think they were on to something. *Indian Joe* is based on a version of real things and real people, and the fear of being real about it all is, well, real. But we keep

finding—and I think you probably would, too—that real things have the ability to affect us most profoundly.

Who Is Joe?

I wrote Joe's obituary while we were simultaneously writing this show. It included portions of the following, based on the information I was able to cobble together over our 14-year friendship.

Narciso Allala, long known as "Joe Lightfoot Gonzales" or, endearingly, as "Indian Joe," passed away Friday, August 15, 2014 at the age of 68 in Waco, Texas... "Joe" only completed the 7th grade, but had his Masters Degree in street smarts, living many of his 68 years intermittently on the streets across America. He took his infectious laugh and no-nonsense attitude with him. "Joe" worked hard when he found odd jobs, operating by the motto, "Don't take no wooden nickels." He loved the outdoors, to walk for hours uninhibited, keeping himself strong and full of fight. "Joe" had a Robin Hood heart, was fiercely loyal to some, and polarizing in most all

respects. His sense of humor, however, was unmatched, as were his civic and social opinions...

Why Joe?

Joe was the flesh, blood, grimaces, and profanity to scriptural platitudes about poverty I never quite understood. More, Joe was a fighter, a questioner. Somehow, I saw myself in him. However, my desire to empathically associate with Joe's journey disabled me from seeing my privilege and mixed motives. I couldn't see the invisible barriers he faced: economic paralysis, cultural underrepresentation, and atrocious, historic divides fueling his racism. But gradually, though Joe had no home, he became home to me. He remains such.

How You Can Help

We are on a fast-approaching deadline to raise \$50,000 to fully endow the Joe Lightfoot Gonzales Memorial Fund through Baylor University in Waco, Texas. The scholarship will go to a first-generation college hopeful, ideally of Native descent.

Imagine: a kid with no previous educational hope sleeps in a beautiful dorm room overlooking the I-35 bridge because a guy called Joe slept under the I-35 bridge and inspired hope in others.

GIVE NOW:

indianjoethemusical.com/take-action