

# Sounds From the Street: Levester Green on Art and Finding Stability

Transcribed by: Joshua Davis

[Music]

Host: This is sounds from the Street

Levester Green: I am Levester Joe Green the second and I'm Street Sense.

[Music continues]

Host: Your currently.. On Housed is that accurate?

LG: yeah-

Host: How long have you've been living on the street?

LG: I wana say about 3 years now.

[Music continues again]

[other music takes over]

Host: Sounds from the street when we get to meet the men and women who defined Street Sense D.C's none profit media center Dedicated to creating economic opportunities for people experiencing homelessness. I'm your host **Adam Kampe** and today's guest is poet **levester Joe Green the second**. Levester has been a vendor and writer for Street Sense and now hes a film Maker. Before we dive into Levester's backstory and the birth of Street sense film making co-op, he's going to tell us about the origins of his name Which is also the title of the short film he just directed and stars in called: "**I am Levester Joe Green the second**".

LG: I-I chose that name to establish that cause a few years back I noticed I like googled my name and there was like a thing going around like google just- Search and see what comes up. I saw all of these different Levesters and I'm like "huh?" I thought I was like the only one besides My father y'know being the second. So um that just kinda uh took me back like one of them had my same name like Levester Green and they were like right in Virginia n' I'm like we can't have that. [Chuckle]

AK: s'Yeah that's a very unique name so is that a uh family name That goes back?.

LG: it's a combination of Lester and Silvester so, AK: okay

LG: so you get Levester [chuckle], AK: yeah.. The one and only!.

LG: yeaa well- AK: except for that other one-

LG: Levester Joe Green the second the one and only Levester joe Green the seconds that is.

AK: So the name of the film is: "I am Levester Joe Green the second"

LG: Yeah

AK: And.. So there's always these workshops that Street Sense has been kinda changing it's going through.. - LG: A metamorphoses. [chuckles]

AK: yeahh yeah! Yup yup and uh the multimedia workshops that do the workshop and the illustration workshop and the writing workshop which has been going on for a while. And then there's this film making work shop which you're a member of or a founding member of I should point out. Uh could you talk about.. Could you talk about that work. Like what you discovered like oh it's- there's this thing going on and then you went to y'know maybe uh a class and then suddenly you've like directed a film.

LG: I've told this story before but when (structed?) for the workshop I've kinda keen on that word too like class versus workshop cause I haven't been able to get back in school y'know I tell that story too but y'know I guess you gotta read up on it and all that. It was just in the last issue but not to deviate from your question I-I met (Brian pryde?) too uh (brain bellow?) the instructor for the workshop, For the film maker co-op. I met him prior to uh bringing this uh co-op to Street sense. I had met him in (tinly town?) and like outside of **Friendship place** that's like a community resource up there on Wisconsin avenue. And y'know we gotten into conversation' he told me he was uh gran student, film maker, he had a thesis coming up and uh I said "low and be hold I'm a poet!" But um I'm kinda like on high aid trying to deal with this Street life and get back on track y'know and you got a lot of real life issues going on right now that's taking me away from my writing kinda put it on my back burner Cause I had plans for a book at that time but uh I had to defund. To deal with everyday life so um, that's also how I got started with Street Sense having [chuckle] this financial need and y'know being homeless. [Music]

LG: that's how brian got introduced into Street sense he saw that I was doing it he wanted to find out more y'know.. we really kinda like became the besets of friends y'know the best buds, hanging out. He helped me record some of my poetry I posted some of them on YouTube. So y'know I feel like he was helping me...same as he felt like I was helping him y'know and as far as his paper and his movie, film making career so um y'know he felt like uh since street sense was a none-profit y'know he came and (rapped to big brain...) and y'know he offered his services and that's how he was granted permission to uh open up the workshop and share those skills with all the rest of us and he invited me to attend the class as well y'know so, that lead to Another project! being a director, the opportunity to become a director y'know and addition to just being an author of my poem and stuff y'know? It's been uh it's been great y'know.

AK: yeah and the concept I think is fineable. The idea like it being a co-op which makes it a little different than the other workshops. That are going on where from what I understand if you have an idea and you wana realize your vision, then you got to crew on other people's films.

LG: yeah yeah! I think that was like the hole difference where's at first it was just me and him and by him stepping aboard uh - Street sense he just kinda broaden his reach cause y'know there's plenty of vendors at..-here Street Sense y'know all in the same predicaments situations so y'know that was a school for him he's able to help more than one individual and low and behold plenty of people who were willing to participate and grasp at the chance to tell thier story or just entertain y'know? Or just a chance to make a film it's a great opportunity y'know?.

AK: what is the film about?

**LG:** I am Levester Joe Green the second is about basically; my life, my poetry career, the trials of tribulations I've been through and trying to uh (adhire?) to society or make my way through it and up the path of success. I mean it just speaks so on all the hardships I had and the rewards and goals that I've reached. And all that led me up to the doorsteps of street sense basically In a nut shell just a story of my life, kind of like an autobiography.

**Lady:** And between my Husband and I, we have uh - five children [Music cuts in]

**LG:** I use to like take my mother songs, like her 45 discs I mean not disc we didn't have disc back then but a 45 singles. and like just put music in order, make tapes.

**AK:** That was a clip from Levester joe Green the second in the film among other things Levester reconnects with his mom gladdas who shares some touching Memories of Levesters youth.

**Mother:** from the weather all the way back to the comic strips or on the obituaries [chuckle] and he would sit and he would pick up the newspaper and he would go through the paper too.

**AK:** how did you find the paper? I mean were talking about meetin' brian and getting connected to the film part but how long have you been with street since prior to preforming and stuff?.

**LG:** it's gone on for like a year and a half I hadn't been with street since that long im working towards my second year now it's been a hack of a game changer especially the way that there um.. they've stepped they're game up y'know they've been in existence for over a decade for 10 years. They're anniversary was last year my first year was from- I remember when I use to see people with street sense back when they had a penny logos now I didn't think much of it y'know I kinda looked down on it y'know? And it's like the same thing with homelessness y'know? I never- it's been a long standing issue especially in the nations capital like you see the ugly truth I Remember growing up - I remember seeing shnider and all the protests and stuff going on y'know on the tv!

**Man:** because they figured out 40 years ago if that they didn't do it nobody would do it. So that's what's happening nobody's doing it. It isn't a mystery why there is millions of people on the street, it isn't a mystery why 10's and millions of hard working people in this country are spending 50,60,70% of their income on a place to live. A living double, triple, quadrable up. Living out of the back of they're cars. Or living in abandon builds [Fade out}

**LG:** But I was oblivious to it cause I wasn't living it, y'know what im saying? It was like before my time, who knew that I would be here too still fighting the same fight or in the same struggle y'know what I'm saying? So I think it's - I think it's a blessing because like my skills y'know have been brought to this cause. I'm just ecstatic to the opportunity to do something about it y'know what I mean? So whatever the workshop are struggling to ask of me I'm like: okay, I'll get back to you, Im on it tho\*, Im working at it at the same time this is like the struggling and fight of my life too y'knnow I was get out of this predicament situation I'm glad that I can help!. And y'know I'm not glad I had to go through stuff but it is what it is can't change the past but I'm bout to..(happy dad this opportunity??) dude. Make that impact cause I do feel like I'm a impacted player!.

[Music]

**AK:** I mean on so many levels it's Uh..good for the film makers aka you all in varying degrees of homelessness. It's good for the community meaning like a Larger D.C. community - yea! This

is the city you live in people walk by all the time and no one wants to see it which is partly why they ignore it or ignore you and or others y'know?. **LG:** oh yea. And I think having to be upfront about it and then to see it - people have amazing skill and yet life just went a certain way. But a lot of people are really lucky and some people are really unlucky.

**LG:** it's All apart life like (ragoo?) it's one of my favorite sayings! It's like ragoo! It's in there! [chuckle] it's in the game of life y'know? **AK:** yep yep yep! **LG:** yeah EA sports. It's in there! **AK:** it's in there! [both chuckling] it's in the game!

**AK:** okay so you're a poet you've been writing for years  
**LG:** Mhm since like 91  
**AK:** quiet a while?

**LG:** yea school \*chuckle\* over score

**AK:** yea? Damn! Could you share a poem?

**LG:** [chuckle] Alright I know one!- one that I did want to share with the new work workshops just want to start off . This one's called "fine as a fox How to farness a fox" kinda went with that thing off of that (bill bellvin movie...) "how to be a player" [Chuckle] "they say I need a ultradane and one that don't get profane, one who likes to hang with my nuts and not complain." [nervous chuckle] and when I say nuts that's another shout out to uh hip-hop, the fat boys, that use to be one my favorite groups - that's one of they're songs "my nuts" but he's talking about his buddies! [chuckle] his big boys that hang around him all the time! Y'know? [more laughs] **AK:** Fat boys! [Laughs] **LG:** yea.. **AK:** disordes' **LG:** Ohh man! [more chuckling] Yea they had a 3 movie deal! - I don't think they are gonna (clear that..? Wha?)

**AK:** yeah I need to go back and see these release,

[music]

**LG:** it has been like therapy for me

**AK:** can you talk about that notion ? Because that's Something that the paper is really good at because it allows y'know an avenue for self expression.

**LG:** Yea

**AK:** y'know via these workshops and the writing.

**LG:** oh yea wh-when I first came aboard I was kinda like in the back of my mind as to outlet.. Sorta like a stepping stone for me to release some of my poems and stuff another avenue, (venue?). I think first and formost that it was like uh a money maker for me y'know to make my ends meet y'know? S'yeah they just recently raised it up to 2 dollars and.. like last year and people were still having problems like well - like they said it's expensive y'know being on the streets I think they uh they did their research cause uh cause in (Utove?) they found it easier to house the homeless then uh trying to support them through the system or whatever **AK:** Yeah the housing firsts objective, **LG:** Yea. **AK:** The reason I know about it is because there's a segment on the daily show. **LG:** yeah I saw that that's how I found out. **AK:** it's actually Cheaper-yea basically the medical cost, the Shelters dealing with the emergency shelters, the tax payer

a lot of people are paying for homelessness and it can be solved. **LG:** yeah that's true. **AK:** or atleast one city at a time.

**[Music]**

**AK:** your currently on housed is that accurate? **LG:** yeah

**AK:** how long have you been living on the street?

**LG:** um.. I want to say about 3 years now well actually longer than that because that's just recently cause like I said I was renting a room for about 3 years and then I got evicted so um that's how I kinda like drifted up there to (tently?) y'know? Cause I was out near Merlin (gaesusperg Merlin...) the first and then I just ..I was kinda like hanging around downtown down there for like 2 months I had my storage ben and it was kinda hectic man and then um I came into some money to um inheritance and I got myself a truck so I was like that's my perfect solution I'm out of the elements and I can get around like I need cause about this time I was just tired of walking y'know tired of being on my feet so it was just what I needed but unfortunately it only lasted for 2 months y'know before I got into an accident. Well it also um allowed me to get back into the job market y'know by being a delivery driver and unfortunately it was my undoing to cause on a delivery this guy rammed into the side of me and nether one of us had a stop sign it was like in a shopping center the (kintlands?). He was coming in and I was trying to find a address I never did find that address ether **[chuckle]** and they totaled the vehicles so. **AK:** so you got pretty beat up? **LG:** nah it was on the passenger's side but y'know it just kinda took me out of the game. **AK:** cause the car was wrecked?. **LG:** yeah they towed it.

**AK:** and he wasn't liable?. **LG:** yeah they really couldn't pin point- they still couldn't that- was just a flaw in that uh particular enter section so now they're aware of it **[chuckle]** **AK:** now they know! Yeah thanks a lot. **LG:** right? **[Both chuckling]** **AK:** you were just doing a sevic duty okay so and then fast forward a couple of years later you find Street sense so yea but for example last night, where did you sleep last night? we were texting and emailing.

**LG:** um I was on the Street I was on the street I mean I'm at one particular place I Really like well enjoy y'know s'like it won't misplace in D.C. but y'know being outside anyway.

**AK:** Is it like uh covered I mean I Hope it's covered **LG:** Basically It's out in the elements but it's still outside y'know?. **AK:** yeah. **LG:** A cover so the rain won't be on you cause it was raining last night.

**[Heavy rain and thunder]**

**LG:** and it gets heated a little bit sometimes y'know so you can feel the difference.

**AK:** thankfully the weathers turning I mean this winter and your out on the streets in those conditions. **LG:** yeah.

**AK:** why are you not trying to be in a shelter? And I know that is an issue for people so cause some people like "shelters are problems" **LG:** I mean pretty much you kinda hit it on the head. I Mean but first of all I'd like to give a salute to brain cause he went through those conditions with me he was out there with me y'know what I mean? And getting through this film project y'know what I mean? Extreme, All or nothing, Do or die.

**[Music]**

People got to do what they got to do as they say when your back is up against the wall. But to answer your question about the shelters it's just not really my cup of tea vibe cause I tried it before I use to go to the one down china town it's that gospel rescue mission so They were like a cut above you had to pay to reserve your spot for like on a daily biases like 2,3 dollars And it was in a prominent area right there by Verizon center round the corner Gallery place. So I love that fact about it only thing I didn't like about it was it was like an open shower y'know? I'm not with that and y'know it's like it was an issue they were trying to press and I would hang around be the last one like "y'all go ahead I'll get it in" y'know then they start making it an issue "Nah but you gotta go in when I say". So it just came to a heading like look I'm not comfortable taking showers with other men cause a lot of them was coming from jail or y'know transitioning from jail so that's why they were in that situations so I'm like that's a jail house mentality to me y'know open showers even though colleges have open showers y'know that's a intuitional thing.

AK: And your striped of your privacy so it's a big issue. LG: yeah y'know.

AK: some people can just block it out and some people can't and that's an interesting point see that's a perspective most people wouldn't think about right? You should be thankful you have a roof over your head well y'know what? I'm a human with likes and dislikes about comfort like.. Just like you.

LG: Right and I took offense so I'm not in jail and I'm not coming from jail so I shouldn't have to be sharing no shower or feel like they're trying to put me in that mind state that had brought that to an end but like I said I had Highly regarded them up until that point cause I tried different one's I tried (emory?) on road island, I've tried uh they had one in south west it was jam packed. It's useurally dirty, denzy, fonk is in the air not everybody keeps they're bodies clean cause I mean a lot of people they'll look at me and say you don't look homeless that's why I try to stay upkeeped y'know what I mean? I'd be doing a disservice to myself If I didn't or if I wasn't able to y'know what I mean?. They've had me in a bad situation when I couldn't shower for a few days like before I knew of some places y'know like Friendship place or uh the water ministry down the corner up there y'know before I was aware of those I kinda had to rough it and figure out where I was gonna get my next shower y'know or I was just going to bathrooms and washing up every day y'know? It'd get hectic y'know knowledge is power so y'know what im saying.

AK: I have a couple more questions then I'll totally let you go cause like-

LG: it's cool. AK: so everyone's got a different style when they write the paper y'know depending on they're personality do you have like a think that you do like a pitch when your out there selling the paper?

AK: cause y'know some people kinda sing and some people shout maybe "Street Sense! Street Sense!".

LG: I sing on a day I get into a rhythm like that y'know but um other than that I mean if im really feeling lose I do "gotta get!" Y'know I start entertaining myself and y'know at the same time entertaining them. Probably got about maybe two, three.. Maybe four lines that I switch up y'know I'm just like Street Sense check out my Article, check out my poem, check me out brand new addition in Street Sense Y'know I just kinda keep it short and sweet but like I said if I get into the flow I get to feeling good or the moneys filling in I'm happy feeling ecstatic about it! Y'know it shows.

[Music] AK: why should people buy or support Street Sense? The paper But also the organization.

LG: they're doing good things not only good things but they're doing big things they're investing in their vendors now y'know with these workshops it's like where expanding the game so to speak. I use to hate using sports analogies but y'know homelessness isn't really a game I think it's important to support street sense because.. It's like I feel like resources are limited if they don't who will? And then on top of that it's the reason why I like Street Sense is because it's different from the rest of all the nonprofits so it's like you got three uh different elements and a system you've got the nonprofits including the churches y'know and you got the system social services and whatever shelters and then you have Street sense me being a talented guy not to toot my own horn but I just love the outlet y'know I attend almost every workshop now y'know so I gotta find time between I kinda juggle y'know my time between uh doing the papers, doing stuff behind the scenes so we can use all the support we can get for real especially me! I'm still out on the Street I shared that with you- that experience with you last night y'know i was basically stuck [chuckle] like I said the papers are investing they're doing big things they offering all of these workshops so.

AK: what's your dream scenario? where do you want to be?

LG: just becoming a big success man I feel like uh I could do more.. I could do more so uh those.. Like I said those resources I needed enabled to be able to do more. I want to enjoy life, I wanna lay in bed y'know instead of me always being the one asking them y'know asking you all? I want to be the one in the position to able to lend or y'know I got that now so y'know let's make this strong push y'know make this vision happen to end Homelessness.

[music].

AK: You've been listening to sounds from the street that was poet and rapper Levester Green talking about homelessness Street sense and directing his first film a short documentary "I am Levester Joe Green the second". Levester's film was procured by the homeless film makers co-op from the Street sense media center three of the co-op's films showed on E street cinema on April 29th on rave reviews. three more will be shown later this summer on August 26<sup>th</sup> to hear more sounds from the street check out "streetsense.org/audio" please keep the conversations going on Facebook and Twitter @StreetSenseD.C. The sounds from the street theme song "I need a dollar" preformed by aloe Blacc from the album "good things"

