

Robbie Gamble

John Leary

We enrolled at Harvard the same year.
Friends said, you two absolutely should
know each other, but we never met.
I heard stories: he lived off-campus,
on cold nights he let homeless folks stay
at his place, then he got kicked out too.
When Jimmy Carter rolled out
the military draft registration, I went
to my hometown post office in Brookline
to picket, and an elderly woman screamed
at me, brandishing her Auschwitz tattoo.
He chose the tougher picketing assignment
in Southie, got beat up by longshoremen.
After college, we both moved on
to Catholic Worker houses of hospitality,
living among the homeless and the holy.
I shifted to New York, he stayed in Boston,
where they loved his apple-cheeked wisdom,
his calm, conciliatory voice in meetings
when bitter consensus was almost too much
for community factions to swill down.
At twenty-four, jogging home along the Charles
one evening, he just dropped, pulseless.
Now I have spent most of my adulthood trying
to catch up to his brief, beatific arc.
I heard the paramedics were astonished,
that he had the most tranquil smile
when they rolled the body over.

Robbie Gamble's poems have appeared in *Scoundrel Time*, *Solstice*, *RHINO*, *Pangyrus*, and *Poet Lore*. He was the winner of the 2017 *Carve* Poetry prize. He works as a nurse practitioner caring for homeless people in Boston, Massachusetts.