

## *Gregory "James" Mech II*

*December 23, 1987 - December 21, 2014*

On Sunday, December 21 Gregory James Mech II died just two days before his 27<sup>th</sup> birthday.

James was brilliant with a heart full of love and kindness. However, his mind was haunted by depression and addiction, which James fought courageously and valiantly.

We discovered a poem by Portia Nelson and some personal writings that give insight into his struggle. We share them with the intention that they provide a greater understanding of mental illness. Our hope is that his words can help others in their fight.

We will carry the best of James as we go forward and will miss him greatly.

- The Mech Family: Greg, Lianne, Will, Katie, Yuval and Noa



### The Parable of the Hole

I walk down the street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I fall in. I am lost. I am helpless. It isn't my fault. It takes forever to find a way out.

I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I pretend I don't see it. I fall in again. I can't believe I'm in the same place, but it's still not my fault. It still takes a long time getting out.

I walk down the street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I see it is there, but I still fall in. It's a habit. My eyes are open. I know where I am. It is my fault. I get out immediately.

I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I walk around it. I walk down a different street.

- Portia Nelson

### From James's Writings:

It's from a book on self-discovery, and it's applicable in so many situations, particularly self-destructive and harmful behaviors. I've heard it and applied it to myself many times.

But when the hole is depression, the story can't be wrapped up in a neat little poem.

When I walk down the street I'm surrounded by people. Always moving forward down the same single street. There is no other street to take.

Sometimes it's just a little pothole. Some mud on my shoe and I keep walking. Sometimes it's bigger. Maybe I sink in to my knees. It's hard to keep moving forward, but eventually I'm up and walking again.

Those are the good days. The days where I can just smile and relax. Let myself be happy. Where I feel in control, where I'm ready to handle my responsibilities to myself, my family, my work, my life. Those are the good days.

On the bad days, there is no street for the hole. I see everybody walking over me as I fall deep into the gaping black maw. I land in a sea of filth, rot and despair. I'm up to my neck and I need to keep moving but the energy has drained from my body. I want to let go. Slip away as they all walk by. But I have to keep moving. I'm in up to my neck. I swim forward and struggle with every stroke.

I see the light above as they all walk past, but here it is dark. You swim to stay afloat. You move forward but you don't know why. The only end in sight is to stop fighting. Relax. Smile. And slip into the abyss.

But you swim. Sometimes for days. You swim because despite the dark, the filth, the rot and despair – you know you are blessed. You have a responsibility to the people who love you. So you swim.

Eventually I reach a bank. The darkness still palpable, but I no longer need to swim. I keep moving forward. At last upwards. Eventually I reach the road. I stand up and walk.

I walk down the road with the darkness at my heels. I know there will be another hole. It may not be so wide or so deep. I may be able to walk around it. I may not. I might be looking at a smooth road and suddenly find myself falling.

The hole is an insidious thing. People want to help you get out, but when the hole wants you, it keeps you. You struggle and fight and you hate the hole, but you know you just need to start swimming – slow, tedious, painful strokes. You try to tell people about the hole but most people have never seen it, much less been in it. Doctors give you pills and try and make the hole smaller, shallower or give you different ways to get past it. You try to meet your responsibilities –but you're always swimming –you've got nothing left. And you pray.

I pray that someday I'll walk down the road and I won't be covered in muck, or that I'll at least be holding the hand of a woman who doesn't mind the mess.

- James Mech