



URBAN CURRENT

Out my window

"Out my window" sounds funny when you stop and listen to the phrase. Is it correct? Sounds all wrong grammatically. I'm missing a preposition. Should it be "Out of my window?" "Out through my window?" or "From my window?" Okay, maybe "out my window" is just one of those colloquialisms or slang phrases that become part of our language. Anyway, "out my window" is not referring to the movement of anything from inside to the outside through my window. It references what I've witnessed looking out my window.

Unnumbered street altercations have gotten me up from my desk. I heard yelling, the kind you immediately know is angry. It's intense, raw, edgy. I looked out my second-story window just in time to see a woman, screwdriver gripped in her upraised hand, running up behind a man who had his back to her. He was digging around in the trunk of his car. There was no time to yell, to do anything. At the last possible second, he turned, knocking her arm sideways. A tussle ensued accompanied by quite a colorful soundtrack.

I remember looking out my window, my eye drawn to the wall that overlooks the alley entrance 100 feet away. Overnight someone had spray painted over all the other gang graffiti, "FREAKY RIP." Later in the day, I learned the guy I knew as Freaky, living a couple doors away from our church building, had locked himself in the garage the night before with a running engine.

It was a dull thud or pop. I looked out my window in time to see a car pulled very close to the next parked car. The new arrival had busted the passenger window of the next car over with a bat or pipe wrapped in a blanket. In a moment, he crawled through his open window and through the window he had just broken, to wrench the stereo from the dashboard. Mind you, this was just seconds ... pulling in close to the other car, breaking the window, crawling in,

ripping the radio out, dropping back into his driver's seat, squealing back into the street, and taking off. There was no time for me to react, dial 911, or barely comprehend what I had just witnessed. If there were Olympic events for this kind of thing, this guy was gold for sure!

Out my window streams of police cars are racing by. Looks like a parade. Somebody told me when you see that many cops going that crazy you know it's one of their own in trouble. I've watched innumerable fire trucks of all shapes and sizes, ambulances, squad cars, paddy wagons, and unmarked vehicles, lights flashing, screaming down Kedzie Boulevard.

Out my window I see the basement apartment in the building across the street. I got up one New Year's Day and heard there had been a fire in a basement apartment on Kedzie Boulevard. Five children died in that blaze. I remember the inner agony that news report caused me. I thought about the children, the mother trapped in the flames, the smoke, the aftermath. I'm reminded of them when I see that basement apartment out my window.

I hear on the news that President Bush is coming to speak at a dinner downtown. I'm listening to the reporter as he says, "The president has just left O'Hare Field." Our church building is on a line between O'Hare Airport and downtown. Moments later I hear the thump, thump, thump, thump of large helicopters. I look out the window and see the two-helicopter presidential fleet pass probably within 300-400 yards of my window. I pray for the president.

Not infrequently these days, as I look out my window, I marvel over our neighborhood's dramatic changes. We watched the ghetto tenement across the street go condo. A complete gut. Everything brand-spanking new. Then the *For Sale* signs. Next, the new owners arriving, looking quite unlike the people who used to live there. Our neighborhood has gentrified block by block. The city has been changing neighborhood

by neighborhood. Our area is just one more of those close-to-downtown neighborhoods overwhelmed by the tsunami of urban gentrification, yuppie money, and hipster cool. Who are all these white people? I didn't know there were this many left in the country.

Out my window, I have seen our creaking, battered church bus empty itself of scores and scores (I know, that's illegal) of kids and young people gathered from the highways and byways of Chicago's toughest neighborhoods arriving for VBS.

Out my window I watched the kids from our Christian school run up and down the boulevard parkway, have a blast, then sit in a circle in the grass for Bible study and prayer. Out my window I have watched the news trucks from all the major stations crowd the curb on Easter Sunday morning, getting ready to assist us in evangelism. Out my window I have seen the street blocked and filled with school children and parents for our back-to-school events. Out my window I have seen countless cars and vans pull up disgorging humanity from dozens of nations arriving for Bible study and church services.

Out my window I see God at work in my devil-bound city.

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