

Song for the homeless

by Marie Simon

I weep tears for you,
Like falling stars are raindrops
In the night,

The veil of my soul is dripping,
Wet with dew
Of my salted sorrow,

Hear my voice raised in song,
My beloved
Grandfathers and Grandmothers,
Mothers and Fathers,
Sons and Daughters,
Sisters and Brothers,
Uncles and Aunts,
Cousins and Friends,

I sing to ease your suffering,
As you travel the concrete jungle,
With no shelter to call your own,
From thirst and hunger,
For a lack of clothing,
No place to relieve yourself,
The frigid air of night,
Cold, cold wet rain,
Harshly blowing winds,
Blue ice and falling snow,
Sore and broken feet,
Loneliness.

I call out in song
To all who are here,
Answer me this,
Aren't we all human beings?
Why do some have?
And so many have not?

I cry this whale song,
If all of us brothers and sisters
Don't make it
None of us make it.

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Office Cat Rooty
sends a warm
thank you to Pat
who brings us
bakery goods in
the morning.
Thanks, Pat!



PHOTO BY LEAH INGRAM

Vendor: 'I know what they're going through'

BY LEAH INGRAM
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

If you take a stroll through the Pearl District and turn onto 10th and Hoyt, you might be lucky enough to meet David Fink Jr., a Street Roots vendor. David is the kind of guy whom you could find reminiscent of a quiet Woody Guthrie as he stands by a light post, bedecked simply in a brown camo coat and blue jeans. He possesses an unassuming air and a refreshingly genuine persona tempered by a past littered with hardship and conversion, exhaustion and renewal.

Fink has criss-crossed the country from the East Coast to the West Coast and back again, traveling through Alabama, Montana, West Virginia and Oregon. Whether it was by foot or Greyhound bus, he trekked through these states enjoying everything between southern cooking and the sight of majestic mountains. He says that traveling can be difficult, but that he would do odd jobs to make a little bit of money here and there.

Fink left his home state of Pennsylvania in 2005 to travel the country. His leaving was preceded, however, by the conclusion that he had to make a drastic change in his life. "I wasn't walking the way I should have been," said Fink. With this realization, he

VENDOR PROFILE David Fink Jr.

decided to revisit his Christian background. "I was in the church since I was a little kid," he said. "I was always back and forth; I couldn't make up my mind." He resolved to convert to Christianity, and subsequently joined a ministry program for 14 months. "It wasn't just for people with physical drug addictions," said Fink. "It was a spiritual recovery (program)." This program, he said, helped him leave behind addictive habits and to rethink his future.

Since joining this ministry program, he says that his life has changed for the better. "I see life from a different perspective now," said Fink, and he attests that he has improved both physically and spiritually. After completing the ministry program, he moved away from Pennsylvania, leaving behind his sister Lisa and friends. He came to Portland from Eugene last month and found a job with Street Roots. He says that he loves both Portland and Portlanders, and that he enjoys chatting with other vendors and with his two favorite customers, Jackie and Sheldon.

When he's not working, Fink says that he likes to read religious material and attend Liberty Street Church, a nondenominational church on Burnside. The church helps him with getting food, and the members volunteer at the Portland Rescue Mission, where Fink now resides. He says that many of the members of his church used to live on the streets, as he has done in the past. He says that the members "just honestly love people" and that he feels welcome there.

It is easy to see that David Fink himself participates in this unfettered and unselfish love of others. When asked what his biggest aspiration in Portland was, he did not reply with wishes to accumulate material items or to further himself financially. He instead replied that it is to help other people. He says, "Right now I have been called into ministry, I know that ... for people like myself - I know what they are going through," he says with earnest.

David Fink hopes to find more private lodging on Burnside. He says that he stays at the Mission "for now, but not for long." Despite his extensive travels, David Fink says that he will stay in Portland. That is, he says, "unless God wants me to go someplace else."



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