

# street culture

## Judge strikes down Alaskan city's encampment law

BY CYDNEY GILLIS  
REAL CHANGE NEWS

A superior court judge in Anchorage has ruled it is unconstitutional for the city to immediately destroy belongings taken during sweeps of homeless encampments.

In a Jan. 4 ruling, Judge Mark Rindner struck down an Anchorage encampment clearing law that allowed city crews to dispose of possessions seized at camps. Rindner said the law violated due process in two ways. The city posted five-day warning notices that provided insufficient time for people to collect belongings and move, Rindner said. In September 2010, Anchorage's city council added an appeal process to the law that gave homeless persons two extra days to clear out. But Rindner said the process afforded no meaningful recourse because a person can't retrieve belongings once the city trashes them.

The state of Alaska and the city must provide vehicle owners and tenants at least 15 days to claim abandoned property, the judge wrote. Citing previous cases in Fresno, Calif. and Miami, Fla. Rindner rejected the City of Anchorage's argument that it is too expensive to store seized, wet belongings. Rindner noted the city already has a process in place for storing lost-and-found property.

The ACLU of Alaska brought the suit in April on behalf of Dale Engle and other homeless people in 2009. During a 2009 sweep, the Anchorage Daily News reported that Engle, a homeless veteran, lost all his belongings, including his military ribbons.

In a statement, an ACLU of Alaska attorney said the opinion is important because it recognizes that homeless individuals have the same fundamental property rights as others. The city could appeal the ruling, but the ACLU said it's hoping the council will work with it to revise the ordinance.

The City of Seattle and Washington State Transportation Department provide three days' notice prior to clearing encampments. Each has a policy to store belongings but seldom does, citing wetness as a justification for disposal.



[www.streetroots.wordpress.com](http://www.streetroots.wordpress.com)

## Answers to puzzles on page 16

4	9	8	5	2	7	6	1	3
5	6	2	3	4	1	8	9	7
7	1	3	6	8	9	5	2	4
9	4	5	7	1	8	3	6	2
2	3	6	9	5	4	1	7	8
1	8	7	2	6	3	4	5	9
3	7	4	1	9	5	2	8	6
8	2	1	4	7	6	9	3	5
6	5	9	8	3	2	7	4	1

## A star is born at 10th and Burnside

BY KAISA MCCROW  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

To meet George, a Street Roots seller outside of Powell's Bookstore on Burnside, is an opportunity to experience a theatrical sales pitch for living a good life. Encounter him on your way into Powell's and you will likely hear him shouting something to the effect of, "Street Roots, it's the Hollywood Gazette of homeless newspapers. Only we have a crossword puzzle and we're cheaper." Whatever his pitch, he delivers it quickly and effortlessly, a true actor and salesman.

### VENDOR PROFILE George Denison

George is good at grabbing people's attention with witty, colorful remarks that elicit smiles all around, and he loves what he does. George is definitely a salesman, and though technically it is a paper that he is selling, customers walk away with something more. Hopefully, according to George, what they walk away with is a day made a little brighter.

George grew up in Modesto, Calif., and received his bachelor's degree in communication studies, including theater and business studies, from San Jose University. Later, he spent time in San Francisco where he worked as a waiter, model and actor before making his way up to Oregon, working as an apartment and property manager and a handyman. During this time, George experienced the hardships of homelessness, which shaped a lot of the way he sees the world today. It has given him a hard work ethic — he says he initially sold Street Roots for 14 hours a day to get on his feet — and a passion for believing in the good in people. "I never met a person I didn't like," says George, meaning that you can always find something good in someone if you choose to look for it.

George says that he has found his home selling the paper, which he first heard about while eating at a soup kitchen in Portland. It is through interacting with the diverse array of people in Portland that keeps a smile on George's face. He says that it was when he found Street Roots he found his true home. "Some of the most interesting people are street people," he says. He also says street people are his biggest supporters. It is both the support of people on the street and the

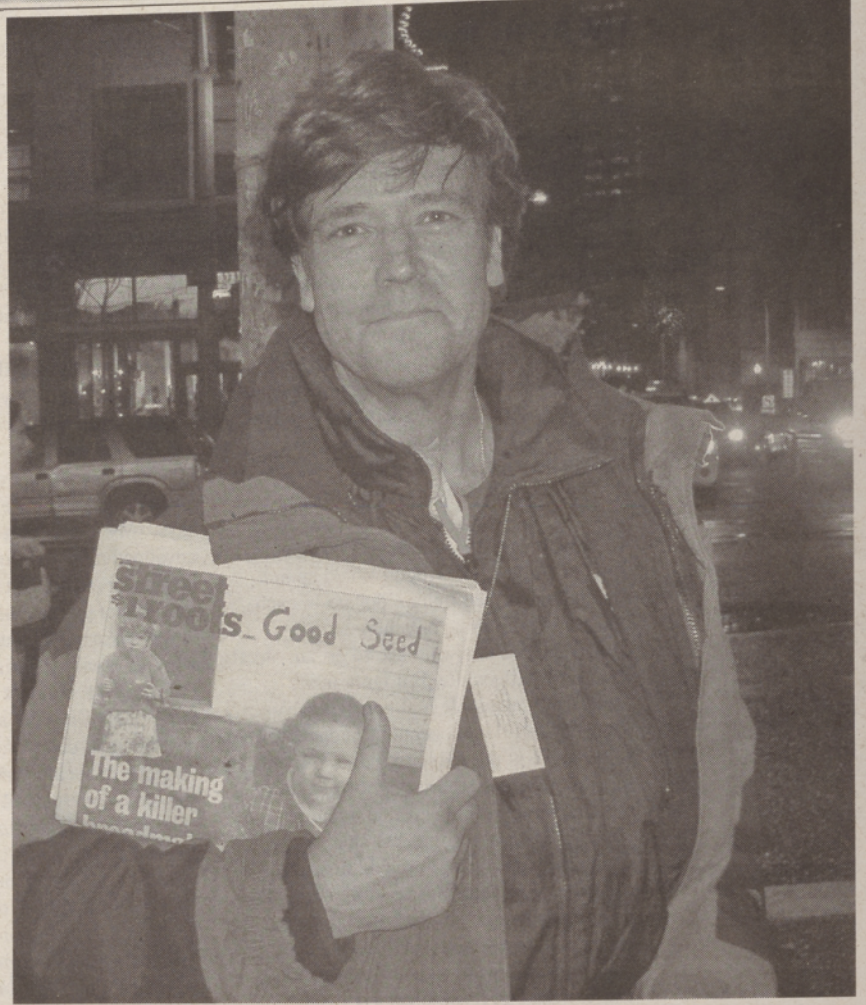
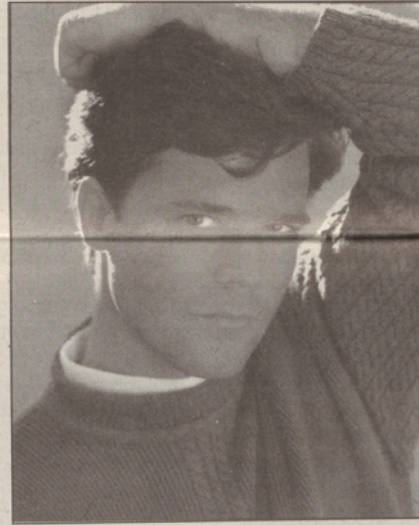


PHOTO BY KAISA MCCROW

George Denison at his sales site outside Powell's City of Books on Burnside. At left, George from his portfolio back in his modeling days.



richness of his experiences with them that is so satisfying to him. Mostly though, George is passionate about sharing news of marginalized people and celebrating those who he feels so privileged to be working among.

He loves Street Roots because it is about celebrating diversity. "Meet Portland street celebrities. We've got 'em. It's not homeless news, it's about special people that have a temporary stopgap in their living arrangement, which is requiring them to camp for a little bit." It is this kind of positive spin that invariably makes people smile, that draws out an extra bit of compassion, and hopefully, gets them to buy a paper.

And George has a lot of stories about selling papers. He sold a paper to Fred Armisen, Moby, and a group of amped up fans in line for a ZZ Top concert. He says he rallied their support as a "down-and-out ZZ Top fan," using the energy of the show to get people excited to buy the paper. However, George says he isn't personally dazzled by the celebrity likes of Moby. Rather, it is the "street celebrities" that he encounters every day that he is more into. George critiques a cultural norm that celebrates people with wealth and beauty. It isn't just rich people that have a story worth telling. George points to high-rise condos visible from Powell's, and says, "You see those condos? Those are like a million dollars. People are living up there, and right across the street is someone sleeping in a doorway." George makes a visible connection between a deep class divide right off of Burnside. But he isn't judging. "The people that have money, they deserve happiness too. I'm not putting them down ... We're all God's children."

Statements like this are George's reminder to seek equality for all people, wealthy as well as poor, and not to take anything too seriously. Work hard, make people smile, and revere your own celebrities: you can find one on Burnside, selling Street Roots most evenings.

### VENDOR WORK ADS

Cassidy Morse: Looking for work. Will do most anything, light and heavy. \$10 an hour, four hour minimum. Please call 503-224-5398 or Street Roots at 503-228-5657.

Pete Marshall W. and Julie W.: Pleasant mannered and experienced at labor. Odd jobs. Yard work speciality. Repairing household losses. Pay back huge debts. Leave call back

number and detailed message: 503-946-3959, or Street Roots, 503-228-5657.

Vincent Bartlett: Laborer for hire, any type of work — painting, yardwork, moving, handyman, light or heavy. Honest and dependable. Call Street Roots at 503-228-5657 and leave message for Vincent.

For just \$5 a month, you can help support Portland's only street paper and homeless and low-income vendor program. Learn how to set up an easy and safe recurring donation at [www.streetroots.com](http://www.streetroots.com).