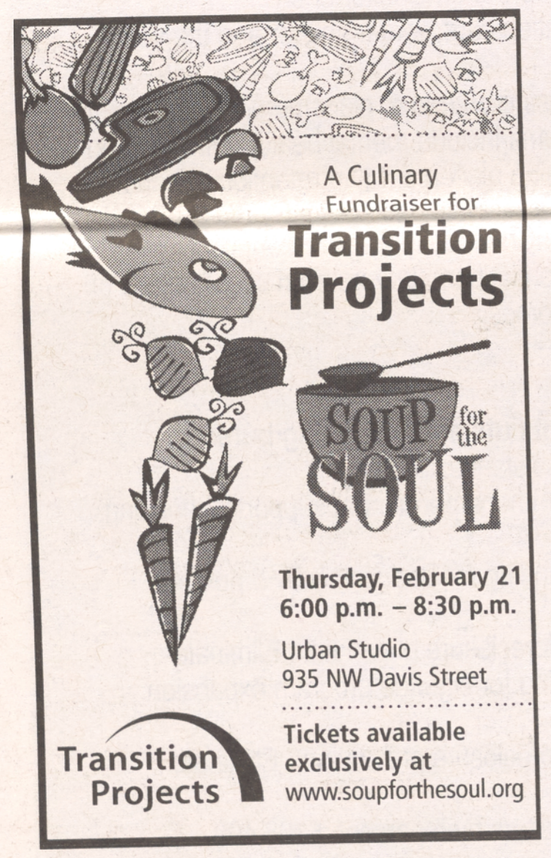
Doubt
By Dennis Kennith Rollins

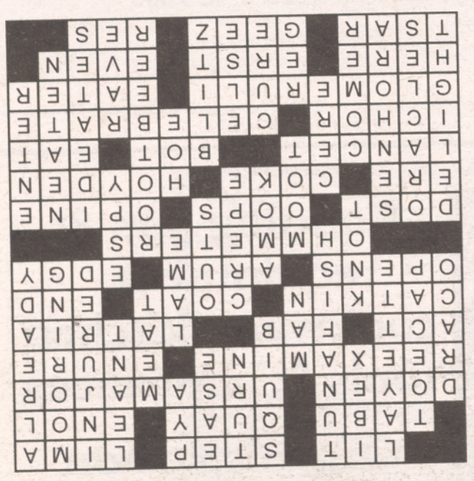
Fairly mild
Set in situation for Obscurity
Restless mind
Unshadow of a doubt
Just an equation for another to see
for someone to doubt unseemingly
To judge
To care less
To doubt
For a reason unsecure,
rendered in thought,
To sharp
To understand
Just like a flag flapping in the wind it is
To doubt.

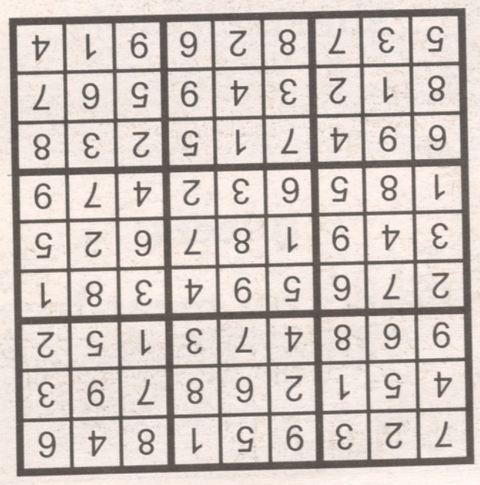
Hope
By Paula Ramirez

The ground is hard and cold.
This situation's getting old.
Getting up when we are told.
This life is far from gold.
The pain and fear
From sleeping here,
Hoping our time is getting near.
When we get that phone call,
We will cheer.
Our ship has finally come in.
Now who's gonna sneer?



Answers to puzzles on page 15





Swing by for a paper and a bit of metta for the road

BY ANN-DERRICK GAILLOT
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The Starbucks at Southwest Fourth Avenue and Oak Street attracts all kinds. Teenage boys fooling around with a video camera; in the corner two men with thick glasses and slick hair discuss television; a man in a dirty sweat suit comes in an out repeatedly; a couple cling to each other on a bench next to a window; someone outside carries a sleeping bulldog in a stroller.

VENDOR PROFILE
Luke Sensei

Which ones are experiencing homelessness? Which one is the Street Roots vendor I have an appointment with today?

I sit looking for someone who looks like he may be looking for me. Everyone seems to be contentedly going about his or her business, so I order a drink and wait. Fifty people must pass through the café before I meet Luke Sensei. Neatly dressed in a cap, crisp jacket, and jeans, he was the goateed, professorly looking man tucked in the corner reading a thick book that I had failed to acknowledge. How did it take me almost half an hour to see him and ask if he was the vendor I was looking for?

Unfortunately, Luke is now used to the pervasive misunderstandings toward people experiencing homelessness. He, too, admits to long ago seeing a man holding a sign and asking himself, "How could someone get like that?"

Now, after being homeless for over a year, Luke has a greater understanding of the realities of homelessness and the popular perception of it.

"People just don't get it," he says. "They just don't get it." Among the things people just don't get is the number of obstacles to finding employment that pop up as soon as someone loses his home: blank address and phone number on your job application, limited Internet access, nowhere to keep your possessions while you interview, limited access to transportation. "Here you are trying to succeed," Luke says, "and you can't do it. There's just all these hoops. People just don't get that."

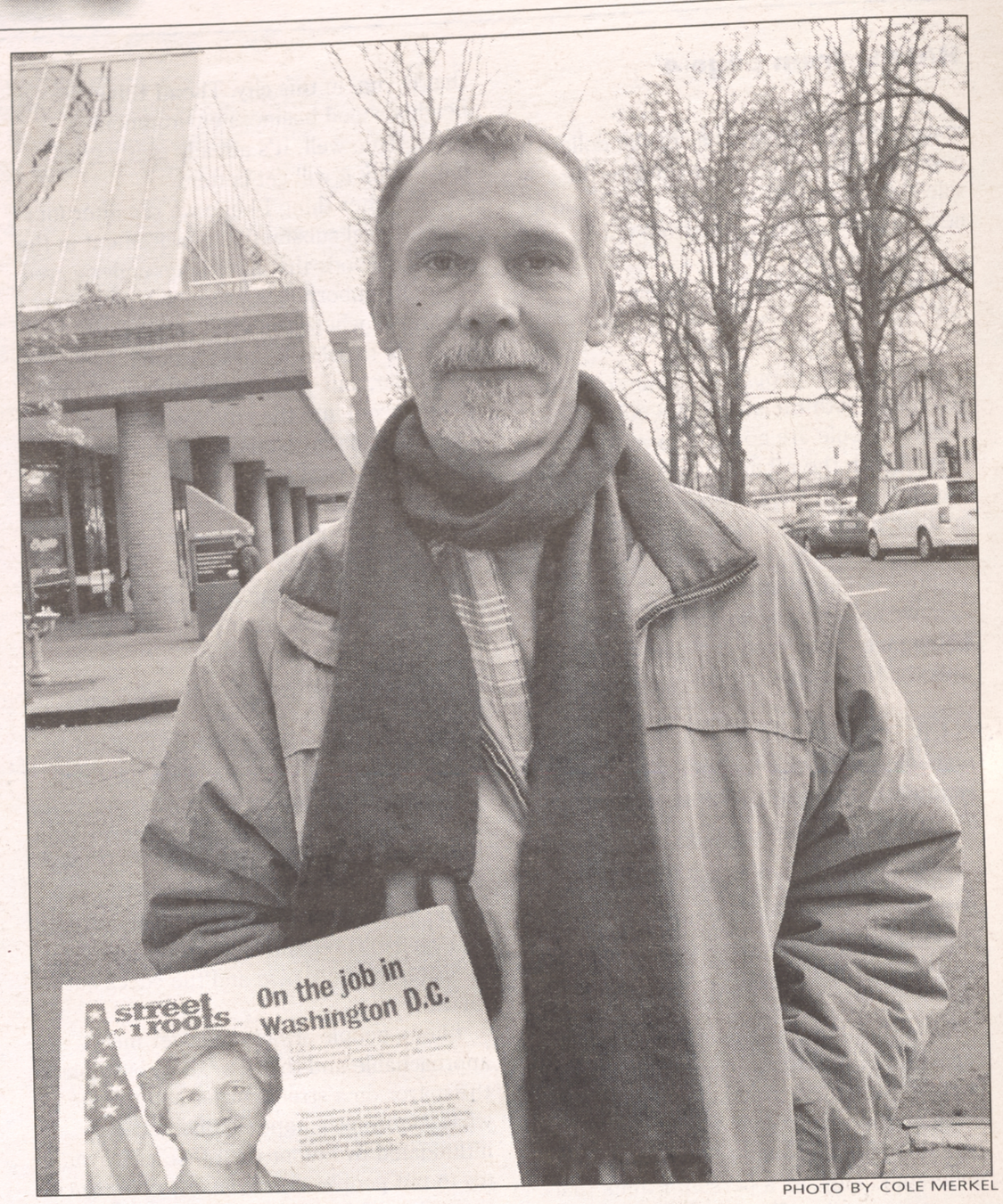


PHOTO BY COLE MERKEL

Another thing people just don't get: People from all walks of life are experiencing homelessness in America today. Luke Sensei has had a particularly colorful life path as he describes it. A well-traveled Chicago native and father of two, Luke moved to Portland six months ago from sunny San Diego where for five years he taught Zen Buddhism and was the residency director at the Red Lotus Society, a nonprofit that promotes peace through meditation.

Informed by his extensive philosophical and religious study, he has come to see his current experience with homelessness as a learning experience and selling Street Roots as a sort of "spiritual boot camp."

Over the past four months Luke has spent almost every day selling the paper at Whole Foods in the Pearl and Starbucks at Southwest Fourth and Oak, where the staff has taken a particular liking to him and they know each other by name.

As for the business of selling the paper, Luke describes his selling style as decidedly unaggressive. Someone will walk by and he will wish him a good day or say hello or ask, "How are you?"

He holds the papers all the while but doesn't mention that he is selling them. He is merely there to connect and demonstrate the Buddhist principle of "metta," or loving kindness and goodwill, acting as an ambassador between two communities of a city he has come to love.

During the more lagging times he meditates as he stands, his way of maintaining his calm demeanor and peaceful mindset. In addition to the opportunity for spiritual betterment, Luke is also grateful to Street Roots for the sense of dignity and hope it provides him.

"Street Roots is awesome," he says with a smile.

Buoyed by his journey to inner peace and the wonderful people and opportunities he has found in Portland, Luke looks to the future hopefully as he works on getting his massage therapy license in Oregon and plans on teaching and advocating for those experiencing homelessness.

Until then, be sure to stop by one of Luke's vending spots if you are curious about what he may teach you.

CORRECTIONS

Street Roots strives for accuracy, but we're human. So we also strive to correct errors in our paper whenever possible. Please report any errors to our managing editor, Joanne Zuhl, at 503-228-5657, or write to joanne@streetroots.org

VENDOR WORK ADS

Available for light work, cleaning, and shopping. Assignments will get done! Contact Essie at 503-901-9594

Work Wanted
Dog walker; House cleaner; Care giver. Dog lover who is honest, sober and reliable. Rate: Private treaty. Eileen V. (message) 503-228-5657