

And No, It Ain't For Sale

By Michael Vance

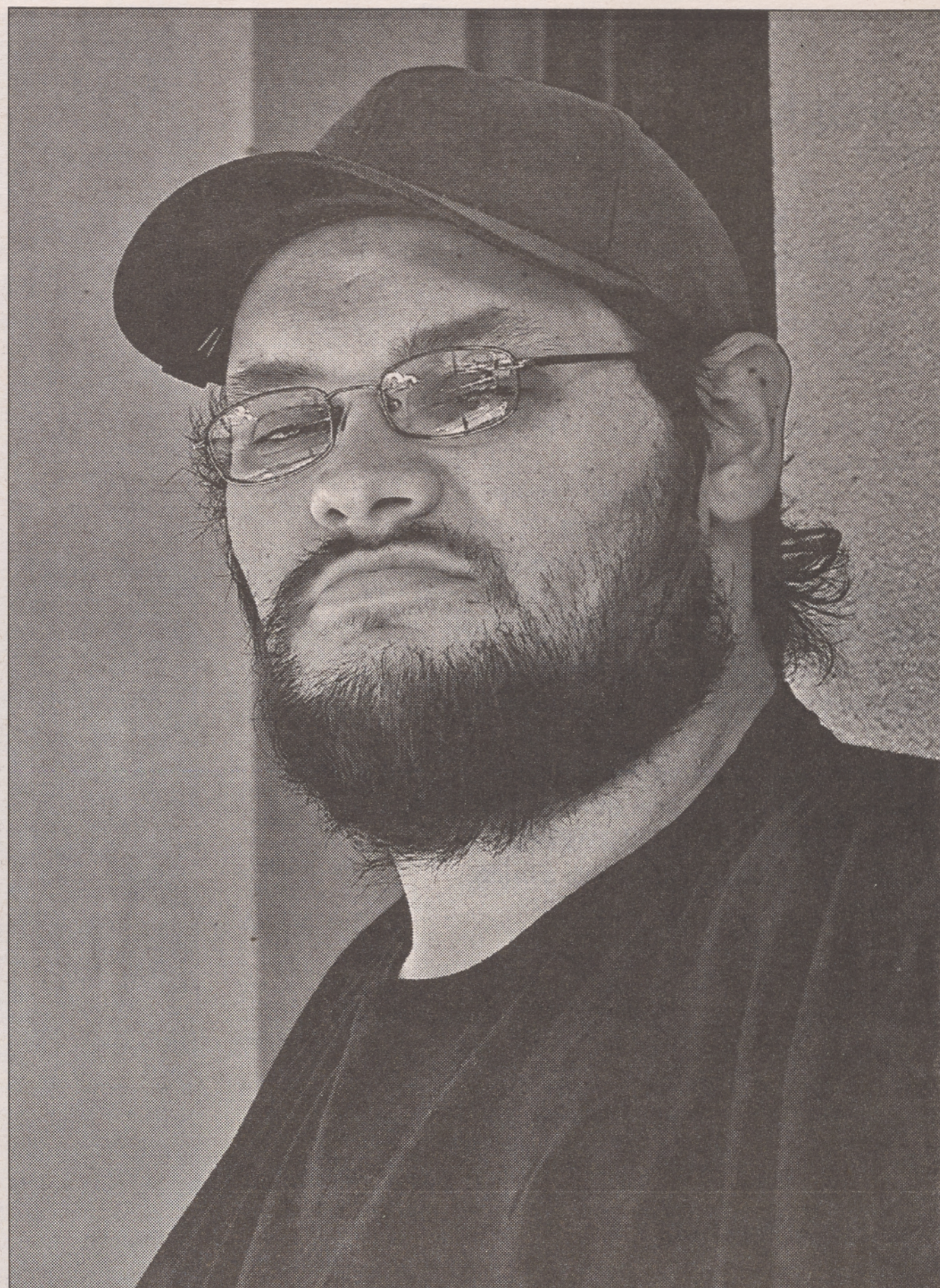
From a tucked away trailer park
To an apartment zone
In a flat desert town then
Onto a bigger stretch of hell
In Portland.

Through the tears, the parties,
The trainwrecks. Onto,
Almost through to the other
Side. I understand little,
Having been through much—
In one piece! Reeling or not.

I discover that Earth is home.
One huge high-arched roof.
Plenty of gorgeous non-clusterfuck
Inbetween all else, that is.
So explore! Live On!
Forgive, get rockin.



BY BEN ZAROV



Street Biography

PHOTO BY KENDALL

Keith BY KENDALL

Keith, who is turning 35 this summer, left an abusive home when he was 16 and spent years on the streets, first in his hometown of Klamath Falls and then in Portland.

"When I got to Portland, I was 18 and I didn't look for services. My mom always said I'd never be able to live on my own and I wanted to prove her wrong. So I started hanging out in the North Park Blocks looking for other kids my age. I'm a good listener, and I found people would confide in me. Everybody needs someone who'll listen to them, and if the person who's listening can also understand and care, that fills a major need."

Keith has a mentor who has trained him in listening skills. He has a therapist and he is taking classes to help others overcome sexual abuse and domestic violence. He now lives in subsidized housing and has some self-taught computer skills that come in handy for himself and others.

"I'm making it. I don't have a lot of money but I have resources. I have emotional support and I'm doing what my mother predicted I couldn't do." Now at any given time he has 20 to 25 teenagers he's mentoring.

Keith facilitates a support group for young people in the North Park Blocks every Thursday evening. He volunteers at Sisters of the Road and he makes his cell phone number available for those who need a listener. "There's a lot of sexual exploitation that goes on, especially with LGBTQ kids, and of course there's racial profiling and discrimination. My worst fear is for kids to get caught up in the

so-called criminal justice system because once they're caught up in that, their whole lives are screwed. If I get a call from a kid in crisis, I'll go to them directly. A lot of kids I work with are out in Gresham and I'll just jump on the MAX and go."

Keith has a dream to secure funding for a youth home. "I'm not talking about a shelter or a day center, but a home for a dozen or so kids, where they can get some stability and one-on-one attention from someone specifically trained to help with their issues and support them. My vision is to give them a base until they're ready to be on their own, and I want it to be the kind of place where, for three or four years, they have a place to come back to. I want some slack, some forgiveness built in."

Keith says there are kids who aren't ready to take on adult responsibility and that's fine. "I've had kids say to me, 'Keith, I can't do it,' and I say 'OK, fine, go fly a sign, and when you're ready, come back and see me.' Every one of these kids deserves respect, deserves to be seen and heard, and they're all more than the worst thing they ever did."

Kendall is a
photographer, writer,
listener, and retired
college professor. Her
work includes stories of
people on the margins
of society who prevail.



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