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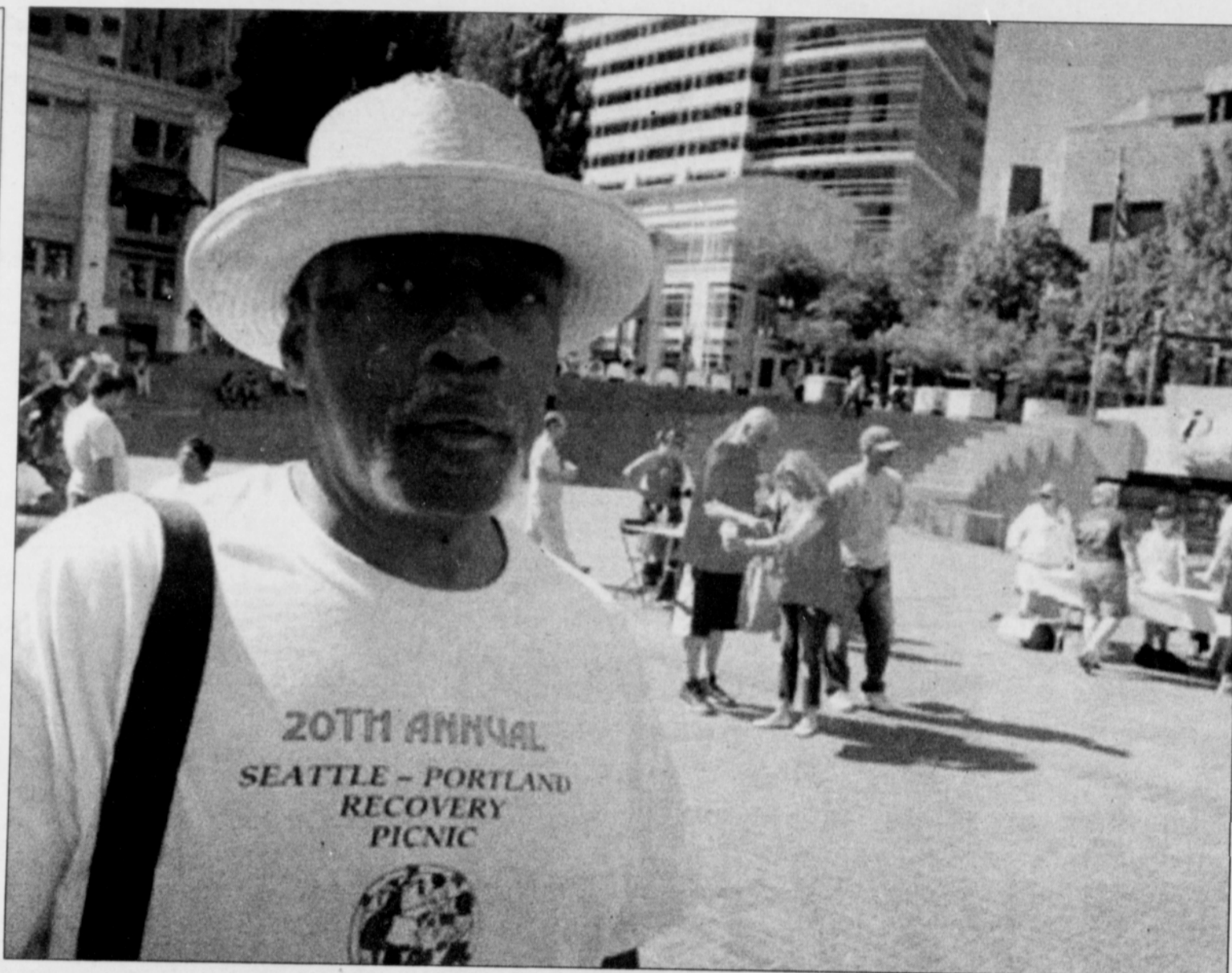


PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

With the perspective of a father with a child incarcerated, Nabeeh Mustafa calls attention to the harm that comes from trying juveniles as adults in the criminal justice system. 'Society does not benefit,' he said. 'You have all these young men in the system with Measure 11 sentences (7 and 1/2 year minimum) who will be released at some point. They face the very real prospect of being released back into the larger society with a huge deficit and no ability to compete in a job market that is already difficult for those without college degrees.'

When Justice Fails

continued ▲ from front

"Research suggests that for youth, being a victim of crime in the previous year was related to committing a violent offense," she said. "And so, we believe that we have to invest in helping people harmed by crime and violence, rebuild their lives."

In Oregon as in most states, she said, the mandatory minimum sentencing laws affect African-American and Latino youth disproportionately.

Black youth make up 3 percent of Oregon's youth population but account for 20 percent of Measure 11 charges. Hispanic youth make up 19 percent of Oregon's youth population but account for 30 percent of Measure 11 charges.

Other findings show that prosecuting young people as adults makes it more likely that they will reoffend than if they were handled in the juvenile justice system; there are cost-effective and proven ways to reduce juvenile crime and recidi-

vism; and that advances in adolescent development research suggests that young people have a different potential for change than adults.

The Portland "Justice for Youth" event was part of a national rally in 20 states aimed at keeping children out of the adult criminal-justice system. About 30 local and state organizations were co-sponsors of the event.

Chris Thomas of Oregon News Service contributed to this story.

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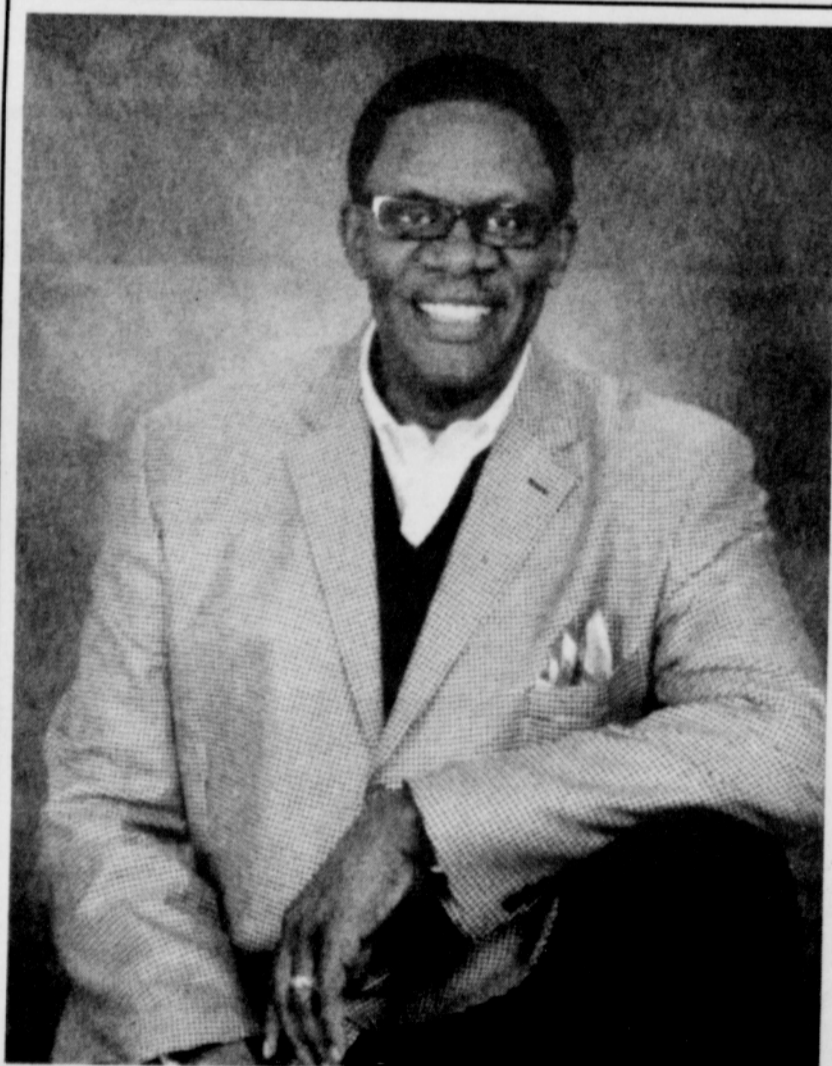
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