

Outright Radio
Series 2003
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Out on the Street

From PRI, Public Radio International, it's Outright Radio, I'm David Gilmore. Today on ORR, we present stories of queer homeless youth. Kids who, by virtue of heavy circumstance, find themselves suddenly without home or family and their fight to regain their strength, pride and reason for living.

First up, Dmae Roberts brings us the story of Miracle, a young black lesbian living on the streets of Portland, Oregon....

"And I know that, what's really sad is I know that when I get into my apartment, if I do, if and when I do get an apartment. I know that every night I go to sleep I'm going to wonder if I'm still going to wake up and be in that place. Or if I'm still going to be able to come back that night."

In the second half of the show, the story of Kevyn a man who managed to overcome his own homelessness now makes the rounds helping others in Phoenix...

Quote from Phoenix piece:

All true stories and all on a theme of Out on the Streets... Today on Outright Radio. We hope you'll join us for the next hour as we present these extraordinary stories from the heart of gay America.

Music

It's difficult to determine the actual numbers, but the generally agreed upon statistics on queer homelessness say that as much as 40% of homeless youth (between the ages of 13 and 21) identify as gay, lesbian, bi, or transgender. And most of those kids were thrown out of their homes **by their parents** when they came out or their sexuality was discovered. Additionally, according to Robert Connoley of Indiana Youth Group in Indianapolis only a small percentage of homeless youth actually end up living on the streets... that a much higher percentage have been ejected by their families and then end up couch surfing and relying on their friends – which is a fairly tenuous and unstable source of housing for youth. They also tend to fall through the cracks as they are often underage and not emancipated from their parents leaving them unable to get work, health care or attend school. By federal definition these youth are: homeless.

Music

Now, in Portland, Oregon, estimates are that there are 1,000 homeless youth living in the downtown area at any given time and 30% of them are gay. There is a bit of good news: the Mult-no-mah County Office of School and Community Partnerships says that the numbers of streetkids are on the decline due to a well-organized network of services that work in together to get the kids off the street.

As you'll hear in the first half of our show, physical and mental abuse, drugs and alcohol or some major family trauma are almost invariably the reason for the homelessness. For Miracle Draven it was all of the above.

Producer Dmae Roberts spent several weeks with Miracle on the streets...But before we begin: a word of caution for some of our younger listeners: today's show contains a few references to some of the details of drug use and prostitution.

Here's Miracle's story...

MIRACLE ON THE STREETS SCRIPT
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STORY

DMAE: I FIRST MET MIRACLE AT SMYRC, THE SEXUAL MINORITY YOUTH RECREATION CENTER IN PORTLAND. I WENT THERE TO FIND A HOMELESS YOUTH TO INTERVIEW AND A 21-YEAR-OLD BI-RACIAL AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUNG WOMAN WITH A GREAT SMILE AND FRECKLES VOLUNTEERED. AT FIRST I WAS TAKEN ABACK. SHE DIDN'T LOOK HOMELESS TO ME. WELL DRESSED AND CARRYING A RATHER FULL BOOKBAG, SHE LOOKED LIKE ANY STUDENT. I TOOK OUT MY MIC AND TAPE DECK AND SHE BEGAN TELLING ME OF HER FOUR-YEAR ODDYSSEY LIVING AS A STREETKID THAT BEGAT AT 17 WHEN HER DAD FOUND HER WITH ANOTHER GIRL.

MIRACLE: He caught me. With her. Yeah, he actually caught me in the middle of something with her and that's how he found out. But,

DMAE: Your dad?

MIRACLE: yeah, my actual father.

DMAE: What'd he do?

MIRACLE: He paced--for like an hour, in front of us. And we're like, we're really scared, it's really quiet. And then he had a conversation with me where he told me that there's no way I was gay because I'm black. He said all kinds of names because I was gay, you know, I never got any discrimination from school about being gay, from anywhere about being gay except for him. Period. See, I'm going to be completely honest with you: my first girlfriend was my stepsister. Yeah, her mother was married to my father. And of course that meant that we lived together. And we had to live together. And with my father coming around to the whole idea that I was gay, when he got mad at me, he would hit her too. Like, he would beat her up because it hurt me. And um, we broke up, me and her, and he got worse and I just couldn't stay there. And then my new girlfriend was like, you don't have to.

DMAE: MIRACLE LEFT HER DAD'S HOUSE JUNE OF 1997 AND COULDN'T SHE GO TO HER MOM BECAUSE SHE DIDN'T APPROVE OF HER GIRLFRIEND. SO MIRACLE BEGAN LIVING ON THE STREETS. SHORTLY AFTERWARDS, HER GIRLFRIEND LEFT HER AND MIRACLE FOUND A STREET FAMILY—OTHER HOMELESS KIDS---TO WATCH OUT FOR HER. SHE SOON LEARNED WHERE TO GO FOR SHELTER AND FOOD AT THE THREE MAIN SERVICES IN PORTLAND—JANUS GREENHOUSE—A SHELTER, OUTSIDE IN—A MEDICAL CLINIC AND NEW AVENUES FOR YOUTH—AN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL.

MUSIC UNDER

MIRACLE: A day on the street would be waking up at Greenhouse. Bitch about food we didn't want to eat, and how much food we didn't have. Probably leave there about 8-ish because they kicked us all out, and the only way to stay was to do chores and, you know, I'm not going to do chores. So we left.

And we used to kick it at this place we called Paranoia Park after that. Usually one of my friends who didn't stay at the shelter or one of my family members who somebody had called or something would come down with a new thing of drugs, which is just the bags that we sell. And that's all we did all day. Just find people to sell the drugs to. Yeah. So we'd sell crystal meth and that was all we ever sold and that was all we did either.

If we, if it was a day when we were sick, then we'd probably kick it up at Outside In, that's one of the clinics and drop-in centers downtown. And I don't know if they ever knew we had our drugs on us or not, but we usually always did if we were selling them. Some of us had bikes and some of us didn't stay at the shelters so we'd stay at squats or whatever. And if you stayed at the squat then you woke up whenever you woke up and then you'd come downtown. A squat is basically front camping. It's like camping without the luxuries of a sleeping bag or a tent or anything like that. It's really just camping though. Sometimes abandoned houses, or houses that they're trying to build down or what not. Or under bridges and trees, in bushes. Basically it's just anywhere you're safe at night. Where you can go to sleep without cops. And, you know, re-up as we call it. That's when you get your drugs again. And then if you actually do

the drugs you sell, which I did, then you have to do your shot, which takes like, ever, cuz then you have to find somewhere to do it and make sure you have all the stuff and then you have to walk up and down the streets and just find people to sell it, sell stuff to.

MIRACLE: You don't eat when you're on crystal. You're not hungry. Your appetite is suppressed. That's why you get so skinny. Cuz you're really just not hungry, you don't even notice that you're not hungry, you're just not hungry. And I never really had enough time anyways, cuz when I wasn't sitting at the library I was running around. You know, um, I think my number one thing that I always ate was Pepsi, always Pepsi, I still drink Pepsi. And Star Crunch, which is a Little Debbie snack. That cost 25 cents. Cuz I can't spend my dealer's money, so I have to spange my own money and then go and get a Star Crunch. That was like all I ate. When you're out there dealing and doing everything you're doing, and selling, and everything, it can take up to two weeks before you actually fall asleep and come down, yeah. Anytime you get tired you just take another hit. You know, or snitch out of some of the bags or whatever and create another hit, whatever you have to do. Because you can't fall asleep—you got to sell as much as you can or your dealer's going to get pissed. Or you're going to be sick cuz you're not getting any drugs, so you have to start over again. But when you're really high, you don't get cold, because your heart rate's going so fast that you're sweating all the time. So you don't get cold. And sleeping on the concrete the cold actually turns into warmth. You know, like you could sleep on concrete every day in your life, and if you tried to sleep in a warm bed you wouldn't be able to sleep because it's not cold.

DMAE: I LOOK AT MIRACLE AND SEE SOMEONE OPEN AND TRUSTING—NOW. BUT I WONDER ABOUT THE MIRACLE A YEAR AGO BEFORE SHE KICKED HER CRYSTAL METH HABIT. TO HER CREDIT, SHE REALIZED THE DRUGS WERE KILLING HER AND PUT HERSELF ON A BUS TO TEXAS TO GET CLEAN AT HER MOM'S HOUSE. IT TOOK A YEAR. BUT SHE DID IT. NOW SHE'S BACK IN PORTLAND AND SHE FEELS THE STREETS CALLING TO HER. THAT'S WHERE HER FRIENDS ARE – HER STREET FAMILY. WE MEET THE NEXT WEEK ON A BLUSTERY, RAINY COLD TUESDAY IN DOWNTOWN PORTLAND.

SOUND: TRAFFIC, OUTDOORS

DMAE: So as far as difficult days, being out, you know, on the streets, how does this rate, weather wise?

MIRACLE: The rain makes it difficult because you have to find shelter, stuff to cover yourself up with. When you get wet, you get colder, so you don't want to do that. You got to wear more clothes, but you were already wearing more clothes so you're okay with that. The toughest days to deal with are the ones that are rainy and windy, cuz then there's really nowhere to cover up at. So today would probably be like a 5.

DMAE: WE HEAD TO THE CENTRAL PUBLIC LIBRARY—A CLASSIC BRICK AND STONE BUILDING ABOUT A BLOCK WIDE AND SEE A BUNCH OF KIDS SITTING ON BENCHES.

MIRACLE: This is where I started dealing. Where I learned how to hide drugs. Where we actually sat and just chilled at before we actually went back to work. I guess you could call it break time.

DMAE: MIRACLE GREETES HER STREETMOM, TEACUP, WHO IS NINETEEN. THEY TELL ME HOW THEY USED TO PREPARE THE CRYSTAL METH IN BAGGIES RIGHT IN PLAIN VIEW...

MIRACLE: Most people don't see you if you're homeless anyways, and if you're doing something real bad, like drug-related or whatever, they'll act, it's like denial in your head, subconsciously. You'll see it but you don't. You know, so they'd look right at us, we'd be like hi, and they'd still keep walking. It's like they didn't care.

TEACUP: The worst look I ever got was the corner of the eye look where they snap a shot, keep walking.

MIRACLE: It's a snap look, just a little look. Like they're trying not to see you. Like it's rude or something to see you, and then they turn away and keep walking.

TEACUP: Or they're embarrassed of seeing us because they think that we're scum, underneath them, and they have no idea who we are so they keep walking and judge us for who we are just because where we're at. I mean, some of us did not choose to live here. You know, some people have and that's their bad, and most of us had gotten kicked out. I had

gotten kicked out because I came out to my mother and she was Jehovah and they don't accept that at all and ever since then I've been living on the streets.

DMAE: TEACUP IS BIG AND MUSCULAR AND AS SHE SAYS -- BUTCH. SHE USES HER SIZE TO PROTECT HERSELF.

TEACUP I have been in a lot of fights. One time I had to take on...he was 6' 3" and about 165 pounds. And he was a pretty good fighter, and he hit me pretty good, but I got him down enough so I could at least get away. If you're butch it's a lot easier, cuz there's more intimidation. I can use intimidation and get away with it—with any guy. I mean, unless I don't know him.

MIRACLE: Not me, I call for a dude, cuz I'm femme. I'm not about that, I'm sorry.

TEACUP: Yeah, femmes are really hard...

MIRACLE: I could, but I'm just not. I'm like um, nope. Yeah. I use my ability to be cute, could someone help me.

TEACUP: It's a little bit harder if you're smaller. I mean, it all depends on your size. I mean, if you're not very intimidating, but if you fight at least once and have a whole bunch of people see it, then you're fine. If you're small and you don't fight, it's going to be a lot harder, especially towards older girls that can hurt you and if you f around with...if you're like a homie hopper, which is if you hop around from guy to guy, having sex with them...

MIRACLE: Or girl to girl.

TEACUP: Yeah. A lot of people come down here saying they're gay and just because they don't want to get raped or whatever, and they say that and people actually find that out then they might get...because it's not funny to say that you're gay and you're really not. It's not something you joke around about because we are who we are. And you can't change that. And you can't cover it up because it's just messed up. I mean a lot of people will hurt you if you lie. Cuz lying is not a very good thing.

DMAE: AS WE TALK, A PAIR OF LIBRARY SECURITY GUARDS APPROACH. I NOD TO THEM AND THEY STROLL BY. HAD I NOT BEEN THERE, MIRACLE AND TEACUP WOULD MOST LIKELY BE ASKED TO LEAVE. I NOTICE OTHER PEOPLE STARING AT US AND IT ISN'T JUST THE LITTLE MIC I'M HOLDING THAT CATCHES THEIR ATTENTION. IT'S THE WAY THEY LOOK AT THE GIRLS. I SEE THE CORNER-OF-THE-EYE GLANCE MIRACLE AND TEACUP DESCRIBED. JUST THEN, A VERY TALL, HANDSOME AFRICAN-AMERICAN YOUNG MAN COMES TO US. MIRACLE INTRODUCES HIM AS GADGET. ALL THE KIDS HAVE ONE TO PROTECT THEIR ANONYMITY. MIRACLE ACTUALLY CHANGED LEGALLY TO HER STREET NAME. THESE KIDS ARE CLEVER AND CREATIVE, AND THEY WANT TO WANT TO BELONG TO A FAMILY. AS GADGET TELLS ME, EACH FAMILY IS A NETWORK WITH ITS OWN CULTURE AND RULES.

GADGET: The family is based on a group of about, now on the streets, probably about 100 to 200 so, for the fact that about half of them are either passed away, in prison, in jail, or in other states. So.

DMAE: You count the ones that passed away then.

GADGET: Oh yeah, we count the ones that pass away. Yeah. Once family, always family, you know. And we always respect that, you know. I'm now on the transition of moving off the streets, on the streets, kind of a little back and forth you know cuz I figure...I kind of did this little poll that every time I get off the streets, I end up getting back on. And I just go back and forth and I try keep it stable as possible so I don't do the rock back and forth kind of thing. I have to like cut my friends off at certain points of times, just so I can start my life, cuz I end up finding myself getting dragged back down with them.

MIRACLE: Handling family business and what not ...

GADGET: Yeah, handling family business and I end up getting dragged back down here to the streets and it's just like God, look what I was doing. I had a nice job, I had a house, I almost had a car, but now look where I'm at, I'm back down here again. And some people it's actually very hard, I've seen people down here constantly, just don't really care. And there's certain points of time when I just don't care. That's the habit I have to break. Is I have to start caring. I have to say look, this is stupid.

DMAE: GADGET HAS TO LEAVE. MIRACLE AND TEACUP WANT TO SHOW ME THEIR FAVORITE PUBLIC BATHROOM. AN IMPORTANT PLACE TO KNOW WHEN LIVING ON THE STREETS.

MIRACLE: This is the bathroom....

TEACUP: Usually when you go, you go in the bigger bathroom. You come in here, close this, put your coat here, and start bagging them up.

DMAE: What is this?

M: It's a baby changer technically. But it's real convenient. It works just like a little table. Cuz you can close the door and you've got yourself a little. What am I going to say, I'm going to say a lab. Right there.

DMAE: ALL THREE OF US ARE IN A HUGE BATHROOM STALL. THEY SHOW ME WITH PRIDE HOW THEY SQUIRTED INTO THE BACK OF THEIR THROATS OR WHAT THEY CALL WATERLINED CRYSTAL METH.

TEACUP: But when I was really hardcore in my addiction and I didn't have any water, I'd use toilet water.

DMAE: why not this water?

TEACUP: Because people would see you fill up your cap, your white cap of your rig and take it in there, and it's not very. I wanted to be more secretive.

MIRACLE: Yeah, it's not very anonymous.

TEACUP: Or sometimes I'd use puddle water or my own spit.

DMAE: TEACUP IS THREE MONTHS SOBER AND SAYS HER BIGGEST TEMPTATION IS TO MAKE MONEY. MIRACLE AGREES.

MIRACLE: My biggest thing right now is I keep wanting to sell it to make more money. I don't want to use it. I just want to sell it.

TEACUP: It's easy money. I know a hell of a lot of people that use.

MIRACLE: Get your hands on 120 dollars and have 500 dollars before the day is done. Boom.

TEACUP: 500, 2000 bucks when the day is done. I've sold 600 dollars worth of dope within two hours a day.

DMAE: What does that do for the people who take it, you know?

TEACUP: I make sure I test it before I sell it.

DMAE: That's not what I mean--

MIRACLE: We're hurting other people the way they used to hurt us. It isn't any quicker money, it really isn't. It just gets me closer to the stuff and makes me lose my life just a little bit more, you know. I know that.

SOUND OF TRAFFIC, OUTDOORS

DMAE: WE SAY GOODBYE TO TEACUP, AND MIRACLE TAKES ME ON A WALKING TOUR.

MIRACLE: Where we're heading next is a place we street kids call Peterson's. What it actually is is the Galleria MAX stop. And what we do here is it's a store where they sell Little Debbie's. And it's 25 cents each and you can spange that easy. And you can get something to eat. They used to take food stamps but they don't now. And we just sit there. If people are looking for dope, that's where they find us at. Cuz the library is generally where we just sit and kick it and get our stuff together and don't sell anything. And Peterson's is where we used to find all the clients, I'm going to call them. That wanted to actually buy.

DMAE: KIDS WITH BOOK BAGS ARE SITTING ON THE PAVEMENT PANHANDLING. WE WALK BY A BUILDING AND MIRACLE LOOKS FOR A MIRROR THAT USED TO THERE.

MIRACLE: I used to walk down these streets and look in the mirrors and see if I looked all right.

DMAE: What would you see. What would you look for?

MIRACLE: What I'd look for is things that looked out of place like scars on my face was not good, cuz you can check with that. If my coat was funny and I couldn't tell why I'd look at that and make sure it looked, you know, like I owned it. And didn't look dirty, stains, things like that. Put my hair back together. Little bit better than I could just on my own without a mirror. Tried not to focus on the tears in my eyes. That was crap, I never looked at that. I never ever looked myself in the eye down here.

MUSIC TRANSITION-30 SECOND ID BREAK

SOUND OF PARK, OUTDOORS, TRAFFIC

DMAE: A WEEK LATER ON A CHILLY WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON. THE SUN IS PEAKING THROUGH CLOUDS JUST AFTER A MILD RAIN. I FIND MIRACLE AT A PARK NEAR A SCHOOL. ELEMENTARY AGE KIDS ARE PLAYING IN THE BACKGROUND WHILE MIRACLE SHOWS ME HER FAVORITE BENCH.

MIRACLE: Where we are right now is called Couch Park. When I wanted to get rest from prostituting or prostitution which is right around this corner here. I'd sleep here, kick it here a little bit. You have to walk up and down the street and look at the cars and see if they nod their head at you and that's your signal to get in the car. I'd come here half asleep, needing to come down but not wanting to, so I'd come down here, do something with some guy, at least 20 dollars, and then go get another bag and then come back and get more. And then I'd take my friends out to eat, or I got a really sick friend so I get him a shot or whatever, or whatever they needed or whatever, and then turn around and come back out.

DMAE: FOR TWO YEARS OFF AND ON, MIRACLE SOLD HERSELF TO MAKE MONEY. I LOOK AT THIS 21-YEAR-OLD WHOSE SPIRIT SEEMS UNTOUCHED AND I TAKE IN HOW MUCH LIFE SHE'S ALREADY LIVED.

MIRACLE: They'll try to say that they'll give you 40, right, and they hand you 20. Well, I'd cut them for that cuz that's just rude. So yeah I remember this one time I had to actually...he just wouldn't stop and he kept hurting me. And it was in his car in one of these parking lots around here. And I actually had to cut him in the back and the hand to make him let go. And then he actually threw me out of the car. But I managed to get the money anyways, somehow.

DMAE: And you did it for how much. What was your pay scale?

MIRACLE: I'll be specific actually. A blow job is 20 and anything with penetration is 40.

DMAE: A BLOND MIA FARROW LOOKING YOUNG WOMAN IN A RED SWEATER WALKS UP TO US. MIRACLE SPRINGS FROM THE BENCH TO GREET HER. THIS IS CARRIE, HER FIANCEE OF ONE MONTH WHO HELPED MIRACLE FIND TRANSITIONAL HOUSING WHERE THEY BOTH LIVE IN RIGHT NOW. CARRIE FINDS THE DORMITORY STYLE LIVING FAR FROM IDEAL.

CARRIE: I hate it. I can't hug her, I can't hold her, I can't kiss her, I can't do nothing, except for look at her. Which is cool. We always, every other two weeks when she gets paid, or she gets her tips on Wednesdays, we always go to a hotel room and spend quality time.

DMAE: THEY SIT—ARMS AROUND EACH OTHER. CARRIE HAS SHADOWS UNDER HER EYES AND SNIFFLES FROM A COLD. SHE TOO IS NOW CLEAN AND SOBER.

CARRIE: I'm living with Hep C for the rest of my life.

DMAE: I'm sorry, what's that?

CARRIE: Hepatitis C is a blood-transmitted disease that I got from shooting dope.

DMAE: And you got that forever?

CARRIE: Yeah.

DMAE: It doesn't go away at all?

CARRIE: you can take pills to help it sit on the back burner, but it's always going to be there. People do die from it every day. And that's pretty much why I'm sick a lot. Just because my body doesn't have the things that fight off the germs that a lot of people do. I get sick, I get real sick.

DMAE: CARRIE IS RETICENT TO TALK AT FIRST BUT AS SHE WARMS UP TO ME HER STORY BEGINS SPILLING OUT.

CARRIE: My mom gave me away when I was 13. So I lived in the state's custody for up until, from 13 to when I was 18 so I was always running away cuz I didn't like it. And I was always running right here to Portland cuz this was basically where the dope was and where the friends I was hanging out with back then.

DMAE: So you did drugs, you just didn't shoot up until you were 21.

CARRIE: Exactly. I started smoking pot when I was 5 years old. Started doing meth when I was eh, 16, 17. I've been raped 7 times, don't come down here. It's not fun. And when you come down here you don't have no money, no nothing, and the first thing that comes in your mind—okay, you see a lady standing at the corner, so you want to start doing it so you can make money so you can actually eat. And then probably end up feeding your habit. That's not fun. People get raped down here a lot and when I started selling myself for money and dope, I was making lots of money but it's not fun because you're laying, I basically just laid there and let the guy do whatever he wanted.

DMAE: Well, when you're gay. I mean, you're lesbian and you're selling...

CARRIE: I wasn't then...

MIRACLE: It's not like you're getting off. It's not. It's not like you're getting off from that. You're just doing it for something and that's all you're thinking of when you're laying down there. I know all I was thinking of was okay, so I'm going to get this and then I'm going to go talk to, wait a minute, who should I find next? Dude, I was not even there. You know, I'm thinking whom should I find, where am I going to go to find that dope? Is this drug dealer home? Ooh, wait, do I have that one drug dealer's number? And then I'm thinking how long is it going to take me to get back out here, I don't want any cops to be around. You know? And is it still going to... You're not thinking about whatever it is that's going on at all.

DMAE: Yeah, but you're...you're lesbian.

CARRIE: I wasn't. I was bi. So I was dating men and women at the time. I didn't start, I didn't go lesbian gay all the way up until I was like 20, 21, was when I finally came out and said fuck men.

DMAE: ...Or not.

MIRACLE: (LAUGHS) Yeah, that's exactly the way.

DMAE: Sorry.,,

MIRACLE: No, that's a very good light on that. Yeah, seriously. Yeah, I wasn't. Oh God no. It's not like I was attracted to him or anything. He didn't have to be cute, he didn't have to be skinny or whatever, and be big and buff. I wasn't looking at that. I'm only looking at your wallet. You know, and that's a really horrible woman to turn into.

DMAE: MIRACLE PAUSES. SHE AND CARRIE BOTH HAVE FELONY CONVICTIONS FROM DRUG USE. MIRACLE HAS A NEW JOB AT A LOCAL DELI. THE EMPLOYER GAVE HER A BREAK AND HIRED HER THROUGH SMYRC, THE SEXUAL MINORITY YOUTH RECREATION CENTER'S JOB PROGRAM. SHE'S BEEN APARTMENT HUNTING BUT AS SOON AS THEY FIND OUT ABOUT HER POLICE RECORD, SHE GETS TURNED DOWN. I LOOK AT CARRIE AND MIRACLE. DESPITE ALL THE MISERY, ALL THE REJECTIONS, THEY HAVE FOUND FAMILY AND LOVE.

CARRIE: I have a brick wall that has no windows or no doors. Well, ever since Miracle came into my life. She put a window there and then two days ago I finally opened the door and let her in. There's times where I just want to go back out and start using again. And it drives me up the wall because knowing that I have Miracle in my life now, she's my world. And I'm not going to lose that to dope. Or alcohol.

MIRACLE: My mother used to tell me this phrase, that if you tell the truth it shames the devil. I sincerely believe that no matter how bad it was, no matter how bad you still think it is, you know, or how horrible it's going to sound when it comes out your mouth, if you tell your truth, it will not...it will lose its power.

DMAE: Do you ever think that you'll be homeless again?

MIRACLE: Yeah, probably. I hope not. But realistically speaking it could happen any minute. You know.

DMAE: How?

MIRACLE: I know that I could get into my apartment, if I ever get an apartment, and I know that if I lost my job I could lose my house. I know that if I spent too much money I could lose my house. Thanks to living on the streets and stuff, I'm not worried about having electricity, you know, I'm really not. The shelter over the head is the most important thing. And I know that I could lose my job and not be able to do it. I could get hurt on the job, or get hurt anywhere, not be able to go to work, not be able to do anything, I'm losing that house. And that scares me. I know that you can get kicked out of apartments for getting in too much trouble with the buildings. I haven't experienced that, I hope I never do, but I know you can. And I know that, what's really sad is I know that when I get into my apartment, if I do, if and when I do get an apartment. I know that every night I go to sleep I'm going to wonder if I'm still going to wake up and be in that place. Or if I'm still going to be able to come back that night.

DMAE: THE PARK IS COLD AND CARRIE ISN'T FEELING WELL SO I OFFER TO TAKE SOME PHOTOS TO GIVE TO THEM LATER. THEY CHOOSE A SPOT UNDER A HUGE MAPLE TREE. MIRACLE HUGS CARRIE TIGHTLY. NEITHER SMILES BUT THERE IS A LOOK OF DETERMINATION.

MIRACLE: You know how you said it was hard and people died and stuff, I'm used to that now. I almost feel somewhat brainwashed at least, cuz I believe that when you're in a surrounding long enough, no matter how worse it is, how good it is, that will be what you get used to. You know, so when things get real bad I'm cool, you know, I'm cool as a cat. And then when things get good I'm a little nervous, you know, I get all funny. And I still do it after a year of not being down here I still do it. Cuz I got used to it here, I'll always be okay when it's bad and iffy when it's good. But now I got to learn that when it's good that can be okay too. At least it makes me way more adaptable. I know that

when it gets bad, I've seen worse. I lose my apartment now I know where to go. I lose my job now it's okay, I can get another one, relax, breathe, and get back up, cuz I've been there, I've seen worse.

MUSIC

DG: When we come back, Dmae Roberts talks with Miracle and her father and the story of Kevyn – reaching out to homeless gay men in Phoenix. We'll be back with more stories from street when Outright Radio continues pause from PRI Public Radio International.

Break

You're listening to Outright Radio, from PRI, Public Radio International, I'm David Gilmore. You can contact us at Comments@OutrightRadio.org or call us toll-free at 866-OUTRADIO. That's 866-688-7234.

Now back to Dmae Roberts' story of Miracle living on the streets of Portland.

DMAE: TWO MONTHS HAVE PASSED SINCE I'VE SEEN MIRACLE DRAVEN. WE LOST CONTACT OVER THE HOLIDAYS AND WAS GETTING WORRIED THAT SHE MIGHT BE BACK ON THE STREETS OR HOMELESS AGAIN. I CALLED HER OLD NUMBER AT TRANSITIONAL HOUSING AND THEY SAID THEY DIDN'T TAKE MESSSGES FOR HER ANYMORE. I FINALLY REACHED HER AT THE DELI. SHE WAS STILL WORKING. SHE HAD SOME EXCITING NEWS SHE SAID. SHE AND CARRIE FOUND AN APARTMENT. SORT OF.

MIRACLE: Okay, so we're in the basement now, and this is where me and Carrie stay. It's 300 dollars a month. And over here to your right is the playroom for the kids. They all play around here, it's a mess cuz they play all over the place. And my grandmother here is next to the furnace. And then as you go towards our room is the laundry room and then this is our little room. And we're in here in I guess what would be considered the boiler room. But we manage to make it look nice and lived-in. Yeah, we don't have a dresser so we got clothes over there and clean clothes over here and we got a little TV, radio, alarm clock, essentials.

FADE OVER NARRATION

DMAE: A COZY HOVEL OF A ROOM IN THE BASEMENT OF HER FATHER'S HOUSE. SEEMS THAT SHE AND CARRIE SPENT A LOT OF TIME HERE DURING CHRISTMAS.

End of the month rolled around, Daddy said that if we was going to be staying here too long we were going to have to be paying rent and I was like huh, how much? And he said, about 300. And I went down and talked to Carrie and she was like yeah, duh! So that's exactly what we did. I think it's like a step, actually. I'm going to use it like a big step. And here he comes.

TONY: I'm Tony.

DMAE: Hi, nice to meet you.

TONY: Nice to meet you.

DMAE: MIRACLE'S DAD, TONY DAVIS, A TALL, YOUTHFUL AFRICAN-AMERICAN MAN ENTERS THE BASEMENT.

SOUND OF INTROS FADE UNDER

DMAE: MIRACLE'S PETITE GRANDMOTHER PEEKS IN FROM HER ROOM.

SOUND OF GRANDMA

DMAE: I knew she answered the door the other day.

MIRACLE: She's kind of hiding...

GRANDMA: I was watching my Wheel of Fortune, I just heard voices.

TONY: Where do you want to do this at?

DMAE: We can go upstairs.

TONY: My area down here is improving, but it ain't here.

DMAE: WE CLIMB UP THE BASEMENT STAIRS TO THE LIVING ROOM. THE HOUSE IS LARGE AND LIVED IN.

SOUND OF WALKING UP THE STAIRS

DMAE: MIRACLE'S LITTLE BROTHER AND SISTER –AGES SEVEN AND FOUR ARE PLAYING ON THE COMPUTER. HER ELDEST SISTER IS IN ANOTHER ROOM WATCHING TV. WE SIT DOWN WITH CARRIE AND MIRACLE'S DAD WHO CALLS HER BY HER REAL NAME KEELY.

DMAE: How would you say your relationship is right now?

TONY: Right now it's great. One hundred percent better than it was four years ago.

DMAE: What was the relationship like then?

TONY: Deadly. Keely went from being a teenager to wanting to be a grown-up and that same time she didn't want the responsibilities that come along with it. You know. And I kind of felt most of that to the drugs. And her being one of my favorite kids, out of four kids she was my favorite. You know, where I went, she went. You know as a parent I didn't listen very much. I felt she was supposed to do all the listening. I was more of a do it or else type of dad at that time, you know, and at the same time I was learning too, because I really spent a lot of time getting high myself.

DMAE: A FAR CRY FROM THE DAD MIRACLE SAYS HIT HER AND HER GIRLFRIEND WHEN SHE CAME OUT.

TONY: When I first found out, I didn't like it. I hit the roof. I got angry, I yelled, you know. I went to kill 'em both. I just was angry, I didn't understand. I don't think I was ever too violent unless they made me violent. Unless I grabbed them probably a little more harder than most dads. You know, I was raised do as I say not as I do, type of dad. So it took me getting clean to really get a handle on that. And understand that that was wrong.

DMAE: So how long was it that you guys didn't have contact?

MIRACLE: It was about two years. My mom would talk to my sister and my sister would talk to dad or my mom would talk to dad and she'd be like, come back to me and be like your father misses you and why you act all so much like him and why don't you just call him and I'd be like no! Just to make us try to talk again. Cuz they were doing that the entire time.

TONY: What I had to do was just let it go. Because there was times that I wondered and I worried. I mean, I didn't expect this, her living with me now. Her being home, I just didn't expect that. I see a lot of growth in her.

DMAE: BUT HE SAYS PART OF THE GROWTH BESIDES HAVING A JOB AND BEING RESPONSIBLE IS MIRACLE'S CHOICE OF A PARTNER. DURING THE HOLIDAYS, CARRIE'S SENSE OF HUMOR HAD A LOT TO DO WITH BREAKING THE TENSION BETWEEN FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

MIRACLE: We're at Thanksgiving dinner and my dad tells Carrie that if she does something again he's going to spank her and Carrie sticks her butt in his face and says, "Ooh, daddy." I was like oh my god, and all my family just dead

silence all the way through the room. We're all like oh my god. And Daddy just cracks up laughing, it was so great. They've liked each other ever since.

DMAE: Why'd you do that?

CARRIE: I figured I need to break the ice in the room, cuz there was a little tension.

DMAE: TONY DOESN'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT MIRACLE'S LIFE AS A STREETKID. HE REALLY HASN'T ASKED HE SAYS. BUT HE KNOWS SHE HAD TO STRUGGLE OUT OF HER ADDICTION MUCH LIKE HAD TO KICK HIS THROUGH PRAYER.

TONY: I had to pray about being forgiven. Because what parents have to remember is we do things to kids when they're little that they remember when they get big. So they have to forgive us too. Today I'm a very patient man. I don't like it sometimes, but I am, you know. I have almost seven years clean. So at the time I first started getting clean, Keely was a kid that seen me do all my drug use. She seen me high, she seen me loaded, she seen me drunk. So with me getting clean she had a lot of hate from those years.

DMAE: Can I ask what kind of drugs?

TONY: Crack cocaine. And an alcoholic.

MIRACLE: We'd actually sit in the car and actually had a joking conversation about how it was funny that Daddy sat me down the day I told him, Daddy, I want to smoke cigarettes, and he said well, okay, don't mix it with weed, alcohol, or anything liquid. Just laid it out on the table. Did not say a single word about crystal meth, not a word. I didn't even know it existed. And that's the one I got stuck to.

DMAE: Well, it didn't exist.

TONY: It didn't exist when I was doing drugs.

MIRACLE: I want to be a counselor. I want to be a drug and alcohol counselor. I want to take everything that I ever had to go through and every last little time that I cried and put into something helpful. Period.

DMAE: CARRIE HUGS MIRACLE FROM BEHIND. THEY ARE VERY AFFECTIONATE IN FRONT OF HER FATHER. HE SAYS LIKES AND APOPROVES OF CARRIE. SHE IS PART OF THE FAMILY NOW.

TONY: My advice to the parents that thinks kids are different because they are gay would be, let that go and just love your kid for them being who they are. To me they, it do not change them being your kid. I don't think it changes who they are. It took me a couple of years to realize that they kept right on being the people that they want to be. They still grew up to be responsible. They're still loving, caring. Don't single out your kid just because of who they want to love.

SOUND: PIANO MUSIC

MIRACLE: (reads) Certificate of domestic partnership.

DMAE: MIRACLE AND CARRIE PROUDLY DISPLAY A CERTIFICATE THAT JOINS THEM LEGALLY TOGETHER IN THE STATE OF OREGON.

MIRACLE: (reads) We, the undersigned, declare that we are residing together and sharing the common necessities of life. Neither of us is married or registered as the domestic partner of another person in any jurisdiction. We are both at least eighteen years of age. We are not related by blood kinship closer than would bar marriage in the state of Oregon. We are each other's sole domestic partner and intend to remain so indefinitely and are responsible for each other's common welfare.

DMAE: So are you going to go to this wedding?

TONY: I will be in the wedding.

DMAE: What are you going to do?

TONY: What I'm supposed to do: give away the bride.

MIRACLE: He's going to walk me down the aisle. Oh my god, I'm daddy's little girl, dude, that's what I've always dreamed of. My dad walking me down the aisle. I didn't know it would be to a girl but hey, you know. It's not any different. Yeah. God, yeah.

MUSIC UP...

DMAE: MIRACLE AND CARRIE PLAN ON MOVING INTO THEIR OWN PLACE SHORTLY AFTER THEIR WEDDING. I SAY GOODBYE TO EVERYONE AND LEAVE THE HOUSE FEELING HOPEFUL THAT WITH HER FAMILY BEHIND HER NOW, MIRACLE HAS THE STRONGEST CHANCE POSSIBLE NOT TO EVER GO BACK TO BEING HOMELESS.

Music

DG: "Miracle on the Streets" was produced by Dmae Roberts of MediaRites Productions with assistance from Sara Kolbet and funding by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. For more information about Miracle, check out www.Stories1st.org.

In doing interviews for this show, one of the stark realities for queer homeless youth that I encountered is that there's a track, a fairly predictable set of events that often lead to homelessness and a fast downward spiral...

It usually starts with some sort of family trauma that shatters the child's self-esteem -- violence, sexual abuse, basic neglect, blatant queer bashing. The kid gets kicked out and quickly goes into survival mode. They often get entangled in drugs and prostitution. The drug of choice in the gay community is crystal meth which offers an escape from the harsh realities of being homeless. Of course, the drugs and prostitution are a deadly combo for HIV infection.

It's at this point, that there is a serious meltdown in the individual. And it's also at this point that Kevyn, the subject of our next story gets a call...

KH: uh Tiffany, this is Kevyn, did you page me? KH: He does have an appt. I'm about 30 seconds away from him, so just have him wait for me and I'll be right up. Thank you Tiffany.

DG: Now Kevyn has a remarkable past. Having overcome his own addiction to crystal, his subsequent unemployment, homelessness, hustling, his battle with AIDS, not to mention being hearing-impaired, Kevyn has had a complete life overhaul. Kevyn works as a counselor and mentor for a state-funded organization in Phoenix to assist homeless gay folks struggling with HIV. In addition he also has a private practice mentorship. I spent the day following him around in his truck as he met with a couple of clients...

DG: How did you meet this young man that we're going to see? KH: a couple people some are friends and they know each other and they knew this kid had gotten kicked out and was homeless was suicidal and having unsafe sex doesn't know much about HIV, doesn't know the resources, can't handle being gay and felt that I was the best person to help him get back on his feet cuz that's what I know for here -- Rescuer as you could say -- but I don't consider myself as a rescuer -- I believe in people doing their own work, but I definitely see myself as a guide or a mentor b/c I been homeless, I been in this situation -- abandoned by my family and experienced a lot of the things that this kid's going through and I just want to make it easier for him and let him know that he's not alone and maybe share with him some of the situations that this kid is going through -- I just want to make it easier for him knowing that he's not alone and maybe share some of the skills that I learned on how I got out of the situation he's in now and hopefully be able to share some of that with him and he'll be able to do something and be able to change his life.

Music

(Sounds of walking up stairs into the lobby and meeting the boy waiting. Introductions.)

DG: we make our way into Kevyn's office and the young man, a 19 year old Asian American boy, whose name is also Kevin begins his counseling session with Kevin. The boy was brave enough to allow me to sit in on the intake conversation. Kevin later explained that this is a fairly typical counseling session.

KH: OK, Kevin, what's your situation now? K: It's kinda weird. It's really, really weird umm. I was working one day and I was watching a video, a porno basically. And one day my Dad decided to come into my room and he turned on the tv set and when it turned on, the video came on and he found out. My mother called me I was working and she called me on my cell and said "Don't come home tonight, your father's gonna kill you. He's really upset. He's really mad at you." And my mom told me "tell me what you have you done?" KH: and you didn't even know at this point K: correct and I was like what is she doing? I was working on my lunch break. I called her again and said, what's going on. She said, "don't come home and take the car, I don't need it. Just don't come home tonight, forever, basically." And so I was like what do I do? I had no place to go. I called all my friends and no one picked up. I had one friend who said, "Oh, I'm sorry, I'm not going to be home...I can't invite you over." He's an older friend.

DG: Kevin explained that he managed to find a place to spend the night – a connection from the internet. Next day he needed to get to work but didn't have any clothes...

D1 T31 4:15 so I went home that morning. It was like 7:30 am. I just ran home. And I packed all my stuff – packed some shirts, wore something I had to work. Had all my clothes in the trunk. Had almost everything I needed in the car. I worked that day didn't tell anyone about it I was scared. Pretended nothing happened. And when I got off work I was like, "I don't where to go."

DG: On the kindness of this stranger from the internet, Kevin managed to get a roof over his head at least temporarily. But then another obstacle appeared.

D1 T31 6:36 K: I got a schedule from work – a holiday schedule and after Christmas my name was all gone. I was out. They gave me no more hours. I thought I would be getting money. I thought I'd have enough money b/c I was getting a big paycheck that day. When I was getting my schedule I had no hours. And they told me that's the time of the season when we let people go. And I was considered seasonal help. I thought it was full time. It was full time. Then my hours were cut and they told me thank you very much but we don't need your help anymore.

D1 T31 7:53 K: Ever since now I been jobless. Been looking for a job forever. I applied everywhere. No one want to hire me.

Music

DG: So here it is – a classic case of queer homelessness. A parent cannot accept their son's sexuality and have cast him out. In this case, the boy was fortunate enough to have his mother's car and a temporary place to stay, but his job wasn't terribly reliable. And if his temporary housing – based on someone's generosity should dry up – then he will be on the street. So this is the point where many homeless kids turn to the one thing they know they can do for instant cash...I think because I was sitting in the session holding a microphone to his face, Kevin was kind of shy about confessing what he was actually doing for money, he stumbled around a bit not wanting to declare it and finally just said it...

D2 T1 :38 I was escorting – let's say that. KH: that's a very real situation for most people facing homelessness. I did that. For several years. Escorting. B/C I needed to eat. I needed to figure out how to get from point A to point B. It didn't really help me a lot as far as my self-esteem or feeling good about myself waking up the next morning and going oh, my god, what have I done? Gee I feel really dirty and all those things. And I focused so much on that that I just was tearing my immune system up – not my immune system – my self-esteem and my confidence. I was just dragging it down even further which kept me in that lifestyle for too long. So, no judgments from me – so you turned some tricks or you did some escorting. My main concern is that 1. you're being safe that you're not putting yourself at risk for HIV or other diseases and 2 is that escorting is a very dangerous profession. You might have met some gentlemen who are nice enough and pay you and are good to you and maybe you've done some things you're not proud of but the money talks – those are some things that bring you down but if it brings you down more, you could end up in a cycle where you don't

think you're worth anything anymore – that's what happens to a lot of people. They lose sight of getting a house, getting a job and apartment and get on their feet and that's what happened to me. B/c first they turn a trick b/c they need a bed. Then they turn a trick b/c they need a meal and maybe they'll sleep in that bed tonight, too. Pretty soon you turn a trick so that you can have a meal and a hotel room. And it's not that far down the line pretty soon to where he says "do drugs with me and I'll feed you and you can sleep here and stay here for 3 days." Next thing you know you're doing drugs. And it becomes another form of prostitution where you're doing drugs in order to get food, money or a place to sleep. (skip to...)

D2 T1 KH: 4:45 Does that make sense at all? K: yeah it does. KH: So you turned a trick! So you got some money. I'm glad you're having some reaction to it. Is it bad? Well, no not if you need to eat. SO I don't want to bring you down that way. Are there alternatives? Is there something you should be doing better? Well, probably. You know.

Music

KH: 5:38 What about safe sex? Are you having safe sex? Do you understand about safe sex? K: I do understand it yeah. K: I had like 4 encounters escorting and 2 of those were using condoms and the other 2 were bareback. They told me, "you do bareback, we'll give you more money." You're right money talk – I ended up doing it that way. I mean I was not proud of myself. I was not happy. I want to do it b/c guess what? I want the money. I want money in my pocket. KH: I remember getting tricks where they say, "hey I'll give you \$100 if you'll have sex with me." OK. "I'll give you \$150 if you don't use a condom." OK. Done that. But at the end what are you doing to yourself? You know. You don't want to get HIV. I have HIV, Kevin. And you DON'T want HIV. I've had it for 10 years turning tricks and prostitution – somebody paid me to get infected basically. You have to think about that next time they're paying you and you want to do bareback w/o a condom. Do you want to be paid to have a disease? K: No. KH: so think about it in those terms – here I'm going to give you \$50 and here's an STD to go with that \$50. you know.

K: A few weeks prior to this I felt I was nothing. I ended up maybe if I have sex with this guy... I felt wanted and I guess why I did it. KH: And then afterward you're not wanted anymore. That's hard isn't it? K: It hurts. KH: Yes it does. K: every time he do it, I feel like dying b/c I don't want to do it. I'm forced to do it. Does that make sense? KH: Yes...

K: I guess I was nervous and scared to tell you. But since you told me I feel like you've been through that and you understand me now. I just tell you. KH: I do understand you and the challenges you face right now. And I understand the feelings you have about yourself right now...some of the things you're doing. I understand everything you're going through and I've been through it myself.. KH: And you'll be OK. You will be OK. I'm OK and if I'm OK you can be OK. And I'm insane. I'm crazy, so if I can do it, you can do it. OK? K: OK. KH: If you're OK enough now for us to stop and you're in a good space, I'd like to wrap up if that's OK with you. Why don't we set up a time where we get together on Sunday? If that works for you. I'd like to meet with you and have you come out to my office and we'll sit and talk some more. KH: OK? Alright? K: Thank you very much for talking to me. KH: You're very welcome. (Hugs) You'll be OK. DG: Thank you for sharing your story.

Music

DG: Kevyn and I debriefed the session after the boy left. He sees about 2-3 new clients like young Kevin each week. I asked him what he thought about the boy's unsafe sexual experiences and what his chances for survival are...

D2 T9 3:00 KH: As far as him having safe sex, I'm not real confident in that area, especially when they're that young. B/c as you heard, he wants to be wanted, he wants to be touched. He wants to be OK and money talks. And when you're 19 and you don't have money and no place to call your own, you're not going to be thinking about condoms and safe sex, you're gonna be thinking of money and food and how do I have fun. My fear is he's gonna become positive.

D2 T11 DG: It starts to feel to me like there's not much hope for a young gay man who's trying to survive, having survival sex...there's not much hope to stay HIV negative. KH: No. There isn't. skip to 1:45 KH: I feel very blessed that I'm able to offer my story and my support to many of the young adolescents I meet, b/c as you heard, they Wow, you do understand. And that is where the hope comes in. That's why I do what I do. I feel like I want to provide hope for people who have been in my situation the same or a little bit like the same and that it can be different and doesn't

have to be this way all the time and a lot of good can come of this and it's not the end of the road as much as it feels like it is.

Music

DG: Kevyn and I leave his office and head over to check up on a client - Randall, a young man who has just been set up in transitional housing by Kevyn. On the way, I asked Kevin how someone finds him.

KH: There's probably 15-20 different housing programs here and SW is just one of those. Usually I get referrals - case workers doctors, nurses find out that someone is homeless and they call me or the case manager calls me and they're being referred out of the housing coordinator.

D1 T6

KH: What we're doing here at the apt. complex is uh, I manage 12 units for homeless individuals suffering from HIV and AIDS. 85% of our clientele are gay men who are in homeless, coming out rehab, out of jail, or from domestic abuse and require the services of our program.

D1 T7 [Getting out of car noises]

D1 T9 [Knocking on door. opens door] KH: Hi Randall, this is David. DG: Hi. R: Come on in. KH: just showing him around. Giving him a tour of transitional housing. Thanks for letting us come in. R: Sure. KH: This is the living room basic furniture. Couch, loveseat, coffee table. Full kitchen. Spacious. About 1300 square feet...[fade out]

DG: It's Kevyn's job to keep tabs on the clients and make sure they've got all they need to keep their feet on the ground.

D1 T11 KH: So how's the apartment? R: uh the smoke detector is not working. Needs a battery. KH: any other things that are need to be tended to? R: No. Not that I know of. KH: appliances working OK? R: yup. KH: been able to get the heat on? R: yep. Got the heat on. KH: you figured it out? R: there's 2 separate controls. I froze the first night but I called maintenance and it's like.

DG: Randall sat and talked about his situation and his history of wandering from place to place.

D1 T13 R: I'm originally from the Midwest and I'm part gypsy, because I move around a lot. Sometimes I move to a place and have a place to stay and sometimes I wouldn't like when I moved to NYC, I absolutely knew no one in NYC but I'd gotten laid off from a job in Denver and I was like OK, I'll try NYC. And basically I slept all day in Central Park and I would stay up all night and hang out in the Village or whatever.

DG: Randall spoke about how he wandered from NY to Kansas City and then Atlanta, taking odd jobs and then finally ending up at Kevyn's agency in Phoenix, having sero converted to HIV+ somewhere along the way...

D1 T12 1:18 DG: you know Kevyn's background? R: Yes. DG: Has that made it easier for you getting services from him knowing he's been in a situation similar to yours? R: we actually discussed our backgrounds and I mean, we have very similar backgrounds, pretty scary. Ummm.

DG: Instead of just being the housing coordinator, Kevyn sort of naturally assumes the role of mentor to these young men. He offers them warmth and a bit of hope that if he was able to overcome his situation, then perhaps they can as well.

DG: Well thanks for the tour. (hugging noises) KH: Let me know if anything comes up and I'll talk to you probably next week.

Music

DG: do you find that the clients that you see, these young men, that they're more receptive to advice on how to get their lives together b/c they know you've been through it? KH: Oh definitely, not everyone can relate to everything I do. Some people can relate to some of what I do. So generally when I come in and I'm doing an intake for someone and I

say, here's my story – I was homeless, I was a prostitute I was a drug runner I was heavy into crack and cocaine. I did the gang thing. I had my run in with the law. Having all those variations coming off the street – being rejected by your family - I've dealt with that. Having to be homeless and figure out what to do with your life b/c your family doesn't want anything to do with you and you're a young teenager with no skills and don't know how to be on your own. I've dealt with THAT. I've been given a gift – the higher power or something... for some reason people just open up to me and tell me everything and some cases I don't have to say anything. I guess I have that presence of feeling safe or they can tell me anything..umm...so I've had the most luck with people not having successful with client having to get them on their feet or whatever and they send 'em my way and I'm able to crack 'em or get 'em going and then send 'em back to the person.

DG: Closing narration: Kevyn, counseling homeless queer youth and folks with HIV and AIDS in Phoenix.

Music

That's all for today's show.

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This is David Gilmore - thanks for joining us.

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