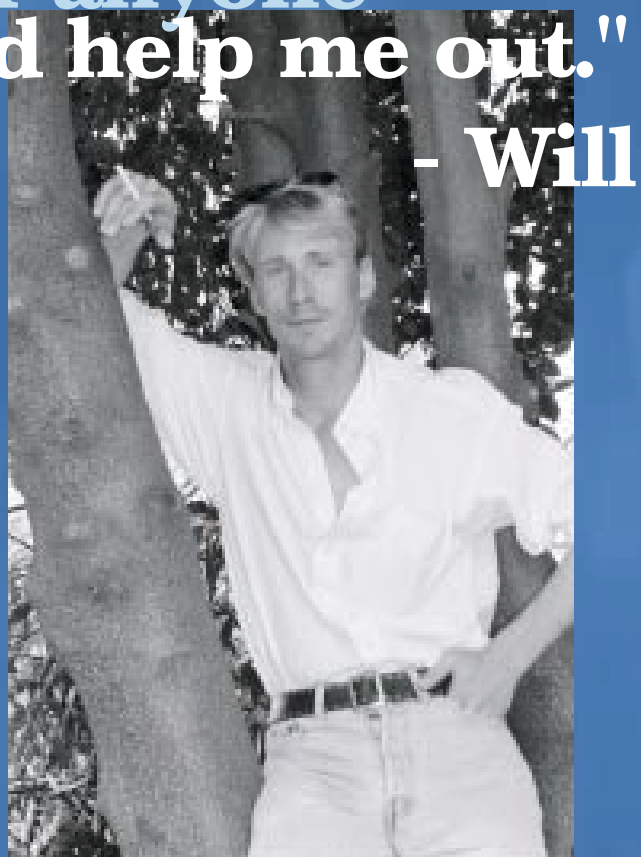


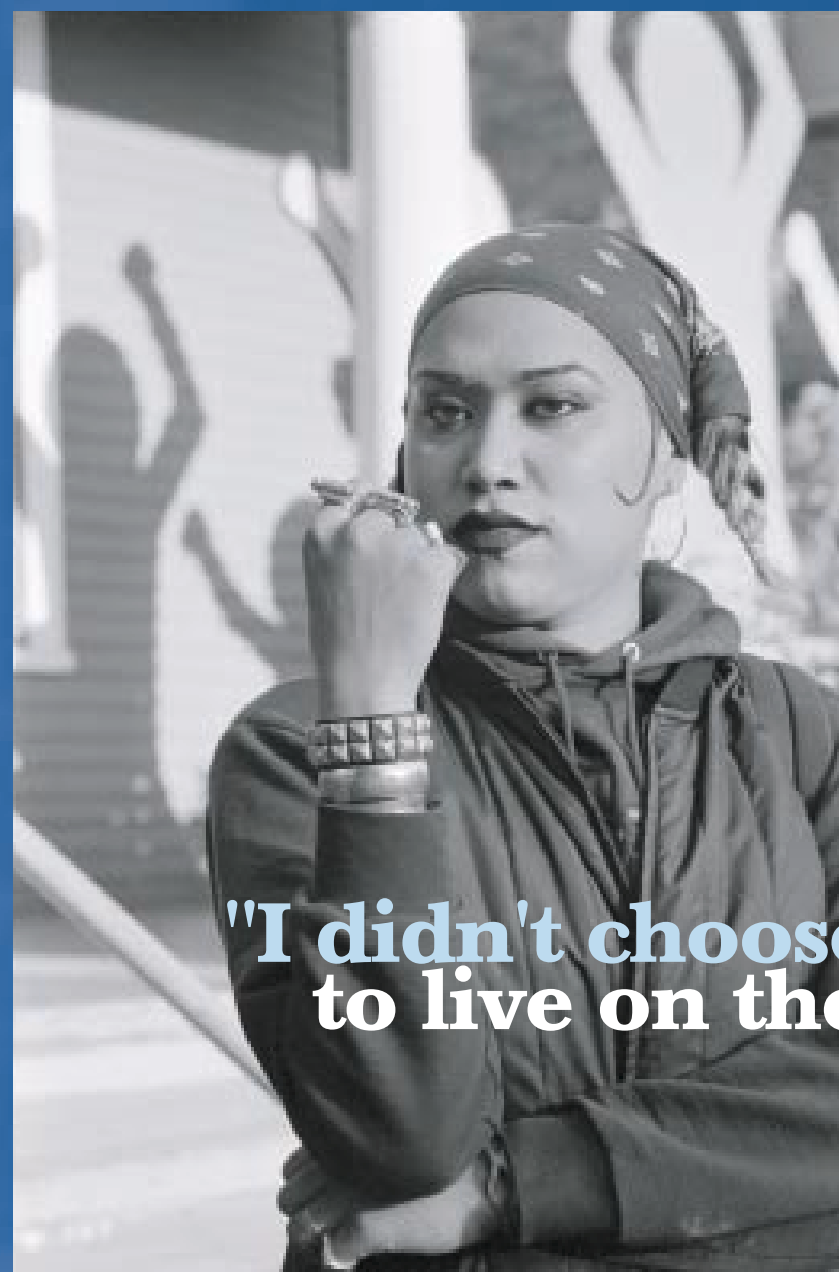
At 14 I ran away from home. That's when I found myself in Seattle, looking for anyone who could help me out. I found the bars and having sex for money and a place to stay. Some men were nice to me - some just raped me. The one's that helped me told me where to go like the Lambert House and the Orion Center. I've been to San Francisco and back to Seattle where I'm trying to get my life together and a job. I'm still homeless. Living on the streets is tough. I'm always worrying about where I will sleep and will I be raped and where can I get food.

I DREAM of being an astronaut or pilot and fly the friendly skies.

"That's when I found myself in Seattle, looking for anyone who could help me out."



- Will



"I didn't choose to live on the streets."

- Elizae

I didn't choose to live on the streets. It happened when both of my parents died - everything fell apart. On the streets I was beat up. I hopped buses all night and I would just ride and ride. Then I would sleep during the day. It's safer that way. I get burned out. Eventually, I found myself attracted to someone. He brought me to the Lambert House, where I came out as a transgender youth. If I could change something I would have a job and get some sleep. I'm really tired right now.

I DREAM of going to art school, designing clothes and being a hair stylist.

I'm really in transition now. I've lost a lot of friends to drugs, AIDS, and suicide. It's really affected me. I saw my friend die. I'm from the Philippines. I came out and was kicked out of my home by my dad. I was teased at school all the time - called "Earl the girl." It got so bad that I tried to kill myself. I've been on the streets since I was 14. The streets are places where I never relax, I'm constantly moving - constantly stressed out. It's like trampling on a festering wound and pouring salt and vinegar on it. On the streets I cannot heal. Sometimes I feel like I am standing on a railing looking down on cars wondering if I should jump off. Then I remember that the Lord gives me as much as I can handle and that which does not kill me only makes me stronger.



"The streets are a place where I can never relax. I'm constantly moving."

- Maria

I DREAM of having my own place - maybe a loft where I can be an artist. I'd like to work in multi-media using photographs and spoken word. I want to write a novel about the Philippines, circa 1945, when Spain handed us over to America: The Trials and Tribulations of Becoming a Nation.

OUT on the Streets

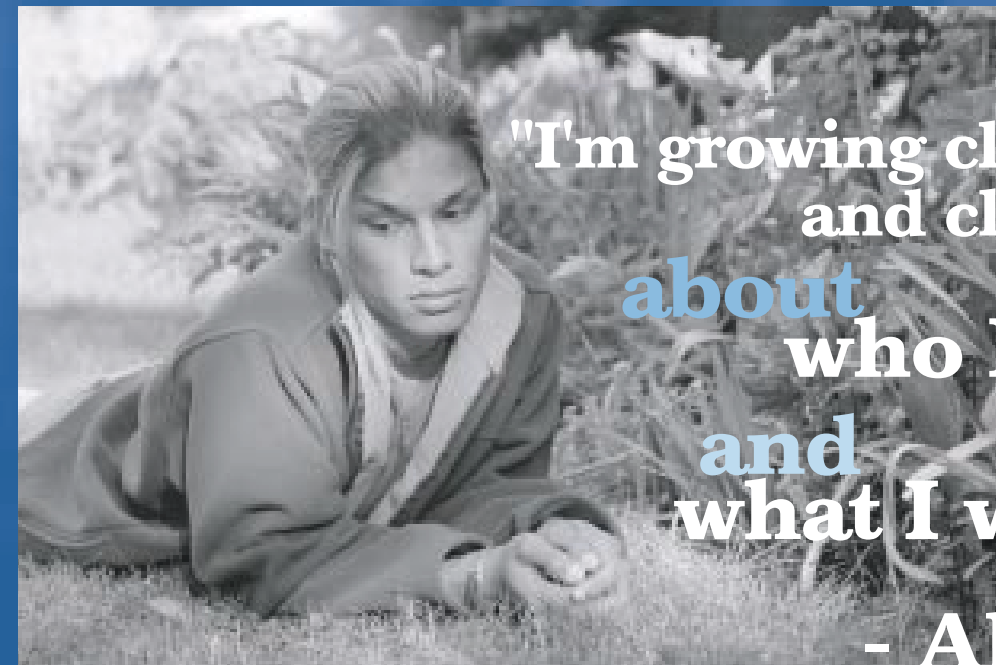
"I dream of opening a home for GLBT youth Youth who are open about who they are."



- Midnight

Growing up was a time of constant change for me. I left my adoptive parents and went from foster home to foster home and then to the streets. I have been on the streets for 10 years. At fourteen I had twins. They live in California and I talk to them weekly in the chat room. A friend told me that someone put something in my coke that night - I'm really not sure. I dropped out of high school in my senior year. Everyone always said that if I dropped out I would prove everyone right - so I did. Being homeless has its own challenges like getting from place to place and dealing with homophobic kids who think all our words are hitting on them. I was beat up twice - once just before the PRIDE Parade in '96. I was talking to a guy and when I mentioned my girlfriend, he punched me in my face. I was pregnant and didn't want to fight. Drugs have no hold on me. Tobacco is my drug of choice. I do believe that if I can't love myself, I can't love anyone else. And yet I still know that even if I can't love myself, there is still love waiting for me and a whole lot of people to love me to pieces.

I DREAM of opening a home for GLBT youth - youth who are open about who they are. I've been homeless and looked at transitional housing, I know that most shelters and housing have little or no understanding of what it means to be gay. I want to change that for other youth. I want to finish high school, go to college and become a psychiatric social worker.



"I'm growing clearer and clearer about who I am and what I want."

- Alexis

At an early age I knew I was different. I came out in the sixth grade when I was living in Guam. At 15, we moved to Whidbey Island. I attached myself to the popular girls in high school and that made the boys accept me as well. I think some people actually resented the fact that I was gay and happy. My step dad and I didn't get along. He told me to leave if I couldn't keep his rules. I dropped out of school in my sophomore year. I went back and graduated. Eventually, I met a friend, a transsexual. Though I knew very little about being transsexual, others considered me a "flaming fag!" I was very feminine. I never knew that I thought as a girl and a woman in so many ways. My friend would always ask me to do drag and I would say "No, I'm not a drag queen." But then my boy friend asked me to do drag for him and I put on a dress...and I haven't been out of one since. I am at home. When I am in drag, I feel like myself - even in public. I've attended meetings at the Ingersoll Center. Living on the streets and sleeping in the park or staying up most of the night is tough. I haven't dressed up lately. I miss it. The pressure is great and I've done crystal meth to cope. I've stayed away from it now and I'm doing well. I want to work, I don't want to sell myself for sleep and all. I'm growing clearer and clearer about who I am and what I want.

I DREAM of having my own place and being off the street. I want to work and get on with my life.

Coming out as a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning (LGBTQ) youth or being found out at home is often enough for a parent to say, "Not in my house." It is not uncommon for sexual minority youth to hear the words, spoken in a place called home, "Get out! We don't want you here."

An estimated 40% of homeless youth in Seattle are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth. Some are thrown away; others say they ran away because of the damaging effects of rejection, harassment, ridicule and physical abuse. Families, schools and churches often refuse to integrate and support LGBTQ youth in their homes or community.

OUT on the streets is a tough place to survive - especially for LGBTQ youth. Issues of gender identity and sexual orientation compound an already horrific existence. Shelters can be unsafe. Youth say that they have been physically and sexually abused there when someone found out they were gay. Most homeless youth have few employable skills, an interrupted education, damaged self-esteem, nowhere to go and are tired and hungry. They become easy prey.

Recent studies from the University of Washington and the Oregon Research Institute indicate that LGBTQ homeless youth are more easily and more often exploited for prostitution and rape; more frequent users of drugs and alcohol; more often physically and sexually victimized and are at greater risk for psychological conditions such as anxiety, stress, depression, suicidal tendencies and delinquency than are heterosexual homeless youth.

The project OUT on the Streets is both a tribute to the courage and integrity of LGBTQ homeless youth and a call to each of us to respond. We can make a difference.

What can we do to help?

1. Learn about the challenges and dangers facing LGBTQ youth **OUT on the streets.**
2. Work for safe schools to keep youth in school.
3. Advocate for counseling services to help families deal with adolescents' sexual identity.
4. Volunteer at a center or church serving LGBTQ homeless youth.
5. Contribute money to organizations and shelters serving LGBTQ homeless youth.
6. Make home a welcoming, safe place for your LGBTQ sons and daughters.
7. Pressure the city and county to fund counseling and reach out services to LGBTQ homeless youth.
8. Fight for health services and programs for LGBTQ homeless youth.
9. Use your voice - Speak out at church, work and in family circles. Let people know that you care about LGBTQ homeless youth.
10. Thank everyone you know committed to enhancing the quality of life for youth **OUT on the streets.** Begin with yourself. You'll be surprised what you can do.

OUT on the Streets is made possible through the PRIDE FOUNDATION, WALOP (Washington Lesbians' Organizing Project), AFSC (American Friends Service Committee), THE LAMBERT HOUSE and the generous contributions of friends.

To learn more, go to www.safeschoolscoalition.org/outonthestreets/