

# Stories From Colorado **UNION STATION** **TRAVEL** *by* **TRAIN** Edition



Union station. A place of comings and goings, reunions and departures. As a historical Denver landmark, the newly renovated transit center acts as a gathering point for people from all walks of life; from wealthy business people commuting to work, to homeless individuals seeking shelter. Union Station houses a diverse range of people, each with a unique story. Whether a pitstop or a final destination, The Lake set out to tell the stories of the people of Union Station.

\*The following is a series of interviews conducted by the Lake at Union Station; the statements made below are the opinions and stories of individuals. The Lake does not endorse the opinions of or vouch for the validity of claims made by any of the individuals interviewed.

| Jane Ababei | Ben Bird | Sejal Goud | Sarah Hesser | Jay Keodonexay | Maya Merta  
| Kiana Miska | Macy Mohlenkamp | Kylie Rold | Riley Ruff | Kaylynn Tran



# AMY JOE KEITH

Amy Joe Keith is a homeless female veteran who grew up outside of the United States. But despite struggles with homelessness, the first thing she wanted to say about herself was how she helped other people. Regardless of her own situation, she helps homeless children by making sure they have access to important necessities, like shoes and clothing. However, beyond her current situation she has lived an interesting life.

*How did you get here in life?*

“I take care of a lot of them, see what I mean, there’s a lot. And I take care of about 4 to 9 kids a day, usually there’s shoes, clothes, things like that, [that] I need. But I’m homeless too, that’s the thing. But, they take care of me and I take care of them.”

“I’ve been to all over the world, Russian full blood from Romania. Until I was 13 then we moved to New Zealand, I didn’t talk about it. I graduated when I was 16; autistic. I have a photographic memory.”

*So you said you were a Marine?*

“Yes, for two years. I was an E8 Sergeant for the first class. I was an E8 when I retired. There are not very many woman gunnies, not very many at all. And usually the ones that are don’t talk

to me, they’re not homeless that’s for sure. And you never hear about them, in passing or in reunion when we’re all together.”

*Do you have any advice for students?*

“Keep your sh\*t together. It doesn’t matter if you go to

“I used to be beautiful too. I had beautiful hands and everything else but life takes a toll.”

college or not. Because if you’re gonna f\*ck up you will. And stay away from drugs. That’s the main thing, stay away from harder drugs. It happens to more people than you think,” Keith said.

“Stay away from the people who do the harder drugs. And if you don’t and you love them and care for them, keep them at arm’s length, because if you don’t then they’ll do things you don’t understand. Because you can’t figure out why and then after a while you start thinking, ‘Why can’t I?’ and that’s it, and that’s when it begins. I used to be beautiful too. I had beautiful hands and everything else but life takes a toll. I don’t want those things for you, your life takes a toll.”



# FRANKLIN

When we asked Franklin to tell us his story, we realised that he did not speak English. The interview was originally conducted in Spanish and translated into English.

*What is your story?*

“I’m from Guatemala. I immigrated from Guatemala to here legally. I came here by train. There were a lot of abuses. I came in [to the country] asking for money and food and the mafia got ahold of me. When I arrived at the border, the mafia got ahold of me, the Mexican cartel. They made me pass drugs; It was a form of payment to cross the United States,” Franklin said.

Franklin went from working in Chicago, to Minneapolis, to Albuquerque and now to Denver, where he currently lives on the streets.

“I need a job in order to help my family who lives in Guatemala. My mom, my sister, and my brother. My dad died when I was seven years old. When I work, I help them because they’re the priority for me. That’s why I’m here: to look for a job and send money to them.”

*What do you want to accomplish?*

“My goal is to learn your language [English]. To learn your language to perfection and find a stable job. That’s the only thing.”





# TODD FLOYDE

When walking up the steps of Union Station, a man sitting anxiously with just a backpack over his shoulder and a longboard by his side caught our eye. There was no way of knowing he was about to fulfill a life-long dream.

*Where are you heading?*

“I’m going to Belize,” he explained. “I missed the ocean. I missed the smell of it. I miss everything about it.”

Floyde said he had been surfing since he was in eighth grade, growing up in the city of San Francisco.

Floyde moved to Colorado to build VA Hospitals, but realized his greater dream beyond the Rocky Mountains. He made the decision to pack up his bags and leave for Belize. His hometown of San Francisco had gotten too congested, and Colorado hadn’t brought him the same freedom that the salty waters of Belize could.

*What advice do you have for high school students?*

“My advice to high school students? Well, just to stick through it and be kind,” Floyde stated. “Be honest with yourself.”

# CATHY & TIM NEALE

Right outside the doors of Union Station, stood a sweet looking couple ready to set out on an excursion to the Rocky Mountains. From Cape Cod in Massachusetts, Cathy and Tim Neale visit Colorado annually to see their son and grandchildren.

*How did you meet?*

“Blind date, fifty-one years ago.” Cathy followed up. “Guess it worked,” she smiled.

*What do you guys like about Denver?*

“Denver is actually, I think, very similar to Boston where it’s a walkable city, it’s got a lot of history and young people and lots of things going on. So it’s interesting,” Tim answered.

*What advice would you give high school students?*

Cathy: “Know that failure is part of learning.”

Tim: “Don’t feel your first job that you get is going to be your one and only job.”



# MADLYN LANG

The bubbly spirit of Madlyn Lang illuminated Union Station’s lobby. A new adventure had brought her to Union Station that foggy morning.

*What brings you to Union Station today?*

“I am here from Dallas, Texas going to the X Games in Aspen! I feel very out of place right now,” she said. “[It’s] just a different culture than Texas and Dallas.”

“Dallas is more business [whereas] Colorado, I feel like, is more down to Earth and campy and like that’s like my life honestly... I’m going to Breck tonight and we’re driving up to Aspen either tonight or tomorrow. So... yeah. I’m excited. I’ve never been to winter sports,” Lang said. “I don’t know what it will be like, so it will be fun!”

*What advice do you have for high school students?*

**“Find your own happiness. Don’t listen to what everybody else is telling you what your happiness should be.”**



# ISRAEL GARCIA

Israel Garcia grew up in Mexico, but everything changed in 2016 when his brother got in an accident. He ended up moving to Colorado to be with his brother and he ended up staying. As someone living in a foreign country, Israel was faced with a variety of challenges; including trying to live and get an education in a place where he felt like a tourist.

*What made you seek out furthering your education?*

“My family, my brother went to school; so I was the next one, you know I’m the middle. I’m supposed to either get at his level or even you know, even be higher.”

**“Discover, keep discovering, learn new languages, and I think the most important thing is, live without fear; that’s what I’d tell myself.”**

*What would you like to do in the future?*

“Two big things, I want to help people for sure, and I want to be a pilot.” Israel said, continuing “I love to travel, that’s my main goal; and also it sounds so interesting to be paid for something that you love to do.”

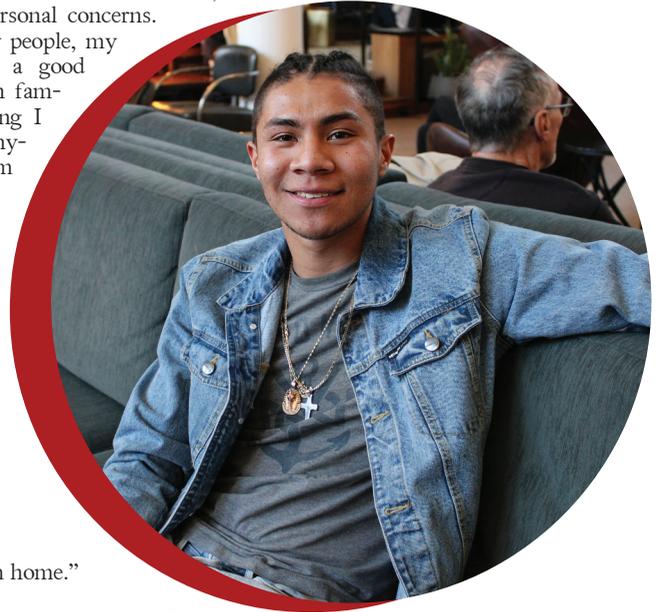
*What do you want to see happen in the world this year?*

“From my point of view I would like to see less classism... And also contamination. Contamination, that’s one of [my] personal concerns. And also, most of my people, my friends, [don’t] have a good structure in their own families. That is something I would like to see, anyway I could help them I would.

That’s something from home.”

*If you could tell your younger self something what would it be?*

“Discover, keep discovering, learn new languages, and I think the most important thing is, live without fear; that’s what I’d tell myself.”



# ANDREW BROWN

Andrew Brown grew up in Colorado and for the past two years has been homeless in Denver, fighting alcoholism and finding shelter in the confined quarters of his car. The long nights living out on the cold streets have motivated Brown to find work for a more stable path and to sustain himself by staying sober. Brown mentions how if he hadn’t been dealing with court cases, he’d have an idea as to what he plans to do with his life.

*What advice would you give to high school students?*

“I would say, always continue to learn. And I think it’s important to get an education. Even if you flunk out of high school, that’s what happened to me, go to college. Like go to college, get an education, never stop learning. Be good to yourself and just don’t give up.”

He continued with, “There’s just [some] things that I try to do; be good to myself, in a positive way. Because you can be good to yourself in a negative way so you want to make sure you make that distinction. Even when I’m feeling down and when the whole world is coming down on me, I just, I won’t give up... But you have to make the distinction between a positive and a negative because you can.”

*Where do you want to go when you leave?*

“I will go to California. Why not? It’s either that or New York, just one of the big cities, just really soak it in because like I’ve been homeless on the streets of Denver; but I also feel like I’ve been lucky out here. I’m kind of set on California right now, but I still don’t know just cause everything is so strange to me or what I want to do.”

“I don’t know. I don’t know now because I wanted to be a musician and I grew up as a drummer, but I am also a singer. I taught myself how to sing.”

Although Andrew has had his fair share of adversities, he still wants to expand his artistic abilities and defy the odds against him.

“Another thing I’ve thought about wanting to do, I think it would be cool to be an actor... I just want to do something artistic with my life because that’s just the type of person I am.”

**“There’s just [some] things that I try to do; be good to myself, in a positive way.”**



# KATE CHRISTIAN

Kate Christian is a sustainability coordinator for businesses around the United States. She went to college on the coast of Maine for sustainable food systems for her masters, and before that her bachelors in human ecology.

*What do you do?*

"I'm a sustainability coordinator for businesses."

"It sounds kind of gross to a lot of people, but I work with waste. So recycling, composting, hard to recycle materials... I go in and I kind of poke around, look in a lot of trash cans and recycling bins, see what they're doing, what they're creating."

*What got you into this field?*

"I was really curious, and real nosy, and have a lot of opinions. So I went to school for sustainable food systems for my masters, and before that my bachelors is in human ecology. For a little, I went to a little college off the coast of

Maine [The Atlantic]. I highly recommend it, it was the best experience of my entire life hands down."

When Christian was attending the College of the Atlantic as a master in sustainable food systems, she found many new opportunities and chances to better her career.

**"I was really curious, and real nosy, and have a lot of opinions."**

"The cold will get you for sure, but as niche as it is, the interdisciplinary program that they have, it allowed me to create. I was really into maternal health back then, so that was awesome, I traveled all over, interviewed people... like this, and that was great, but then I started realizing that there were other ways to approach it, so other aspects of health. Make it what you want it to be. Don't sell yourself. You'd be surprised how many doors you can open."



# GLENNIS MARSHALL & CHRISTIAN KUNHARTT

Waiting outside the doors of Union Station were Glennis Marshall and Christian Kunhardt. Marshall and Kunhardt are residents of Oklahoma City, but were excited to travel to Colorado to visit a friend and ski in Steamboat. Dressed in vibrantly colored jackets, the two appeared to possess a wisdom that could only come from a life of travel.

Boston for a little while, and then Pennsylvania, Mississippi, Oklahoma. Born in New York, lived in New York. I lived in Baltimore for a while. It's just kind of been all over." Christian said.

"And he's a geologist." Glennis interjected.

**"I wish people would listen to each other. It's okay to disagree, just stay open,"**

*How'd you get into geology?*

"Really, I just kind of found it interesting in school. Got to be outside a lot, which as a profession, doesn't

really happen a lot. That drew me to it."

*What rings you to Union Station?*

"We are waiting for a friend," Glennis said, continuing "We just got into town, so we're gonna stay in Denver and then we're gonna go to Steamboat and ski."

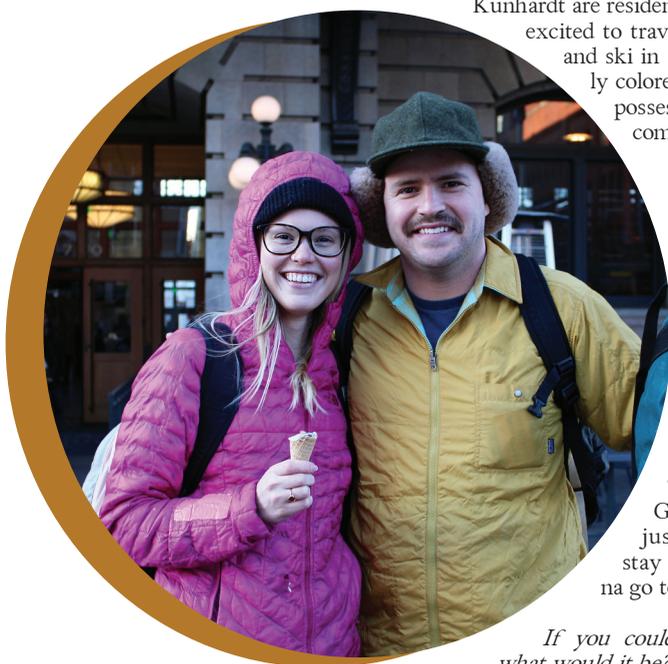
If you could change one thing about the world, what would it be?

"I wish people would listen to each other. It's okay to disagree, just stay open," Glennis shared.

*If you could summarize your life story, what would it be?*

Christian continued with, "I guess love? That's kind of generic but also respect. Be open-minded."

"I've been kind of all over, working-wise. I lived in



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