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Recalling the Kent State Killings

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Recalling the Kent State Killings

Joseph J. Lewis

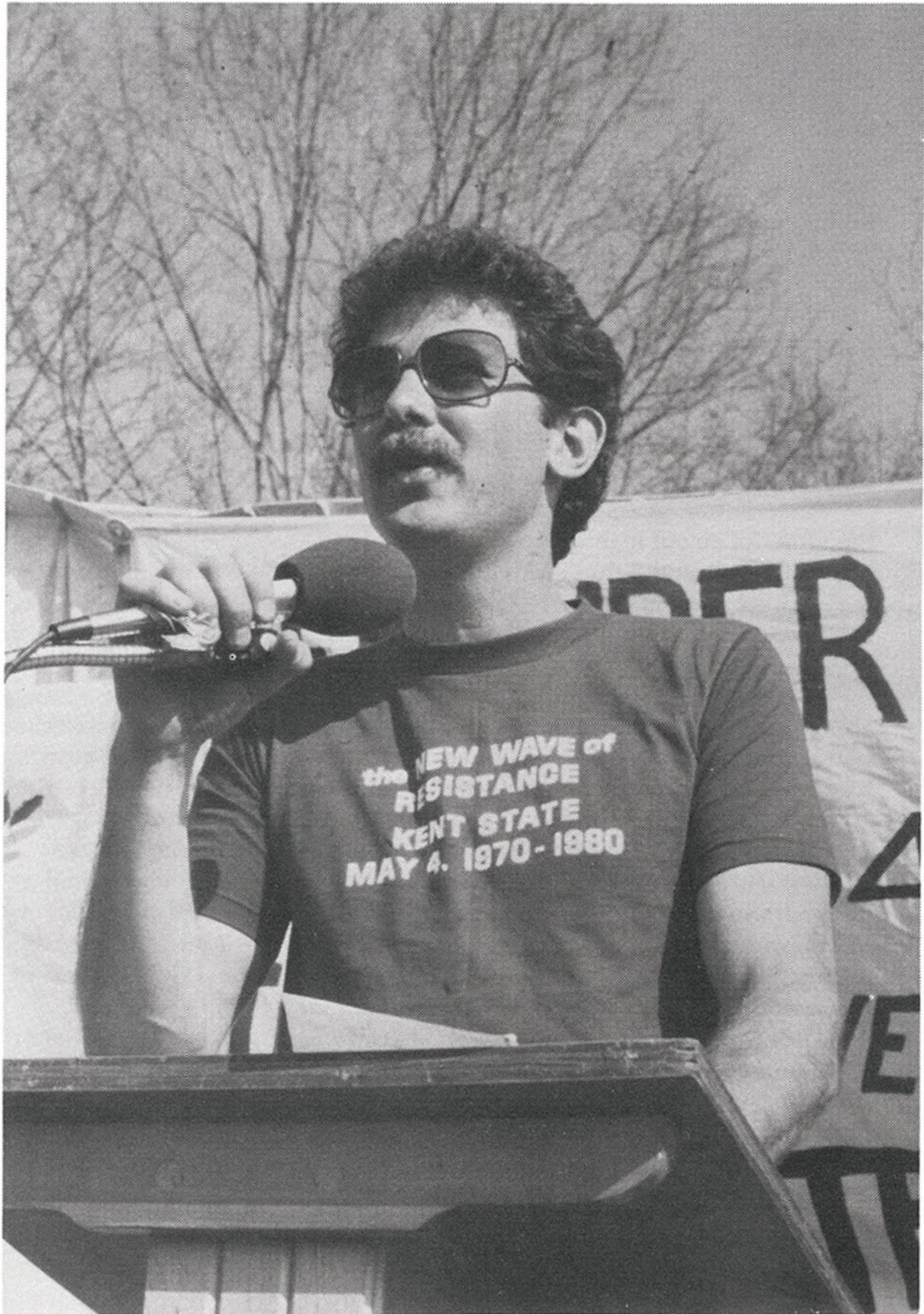
Three or four years after the killing of Allison and Jeff, Sandy and Bill, the father of an old high school friend asked me how long I intended to go on dwelling on things that had happened in the past. I replied, indignantly maybe, that I would always remember that day. I never dreamed it could ever lose any of its profound impact on my life. It is important to remember that terrible tragedy to prevent forever its recurrence.

Twenty years is a significant time block in a human lifetime. Long enough that vision toward the past is refocused. It seems from here that the issues then were more clearly defined. But the basic issues remain through history—freedom versus responsibility, respect for human rights, the common good. Recent months' happenings throughout the world prove the universal desire for people to be free. Tiananmen Square, the Balkans....

One can only marvel at the patience of Nelson Mandela, who waited in prison these many years for the privilege of leading his people to freedom.

Individual freedom was the issue twenty years ago as we protested the occupation of the Kent State campus by the Ohio National Guard. Nine of us were wounded and survived. Four gave up their lives.

They would be forty now, with half-grown kids, perhaps.... We honor them for what they were and what they believed in and we miss what they might have become.



Greg Rambo speaks at the tenth anniversary commemoration of the Kent State shootings, May 4, 1980. Photo © by John P. Rowe.