

### On Walkabout

The term "on walkabout," as I understand it, is an Australian term for an adventuring journey; upon release from prison, I will be going on walkabout in Seattle. This sounds like it could be a movie title. As a former Infantryman in the Army, we did a lot of walking. Arranging my release into Seattle, I have no friends, family, or connections in the city. I'm from a small town in Eastern Washington which hails a population of a mere 20,000 people. Compared to Seattle with a looming 600,000+ population, it's an adventurous, yet scary direction in my life.

The brusque changes from the penitentiary to one of the most well-known and cultured cities in America is jarring; I have never been homeless, now I am; I have always had a vehicle, now I must walk or bus to my locations; I have always had a career, now I must start over. However, I have options in Seattle, where as in Moses Lake, I will have few.

When I arrive in Seattle, I will report to Farestart, a famed culinary program of sixteen weeks; They provide food and housing while in training. I have never cooked for others in my life, but what better place than in Seattle! I've contacted the Department of Veteran's Administration to establish medical benefits and possible future housing, and reached out to various sources of help in King County that simply do not exist in Grant County, where Moses Lake is couched.

When I did visit Seattle in the past with my kids, we would always visit the International District and shop at the Japanese stores in the area. Our favorite: Uwajimaiya, which contains a grocery store and department store mix, with an attached Kinokuniya bookstore. As a man of Japanese descent, I enjoyed being around a community that embraced Asians versus a community that discriminates against Asians. From promotions, to jobs, to justice, the "bamboo ceiling" could never be overcome in Grant County. Thus, going from prison to Seattle will seem like being able to breathe and live for the first time in my 48 years!

From the decades of discrimination, it's difficult to feel confident about my chances in Seattle. The only other times I went on adventure was my first enlistment in the Army; what a strange world it was in Fort Benning, Georgia. The second adventure was a combat-duty in Iraq, leaving four children and a wife behind. This adventure ended poorly due to coming home to child neglect and spousal adultery. It also ended in my attempted suicide and going to prison.

So, I'm a little apprehensive about this walkabout in Seattle. In Infantry training, we had a saying during tough times, "It ain't nothing but a thing!" I never did find out exactly what that saying meant, but I think it applies here. One step to start; put one foot in front of the other; millions of more steps to go. As the Infantry motto goes, "Follow Me," on my walkabout in Seattle. Oh yes, wish me luck. I'll take what I can get!