

Hong Kong Language Needs Assessment Project

The beginning of a solution

The HKLNA Project

<http://homepage.mac.com/moogoonghwa/earth/current/hklna/>

Ms. Chris Gregoire
Governor, State of Washington

Office of the Governor
<http://www.governor.wa.gov/>
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Olympia, Washington 98504-0002

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cc: Human Rights Commission, Seattle District Office; Telephone: 206 464 6500; Facsimile: 206 464 7463.
Downtown Emergency Service Center, Box 71278, 517 Third Avenue, Seattle, WA, 98104.
Telephone: 206 464 1570

Seattle, Monday, March 26, 2007

Reference No.: Personal Security in Seattle's shelters for the homeless.

Dear Ms. Gregoire,

I am a US citizen, registered voter in the State of Washington, former Seattle resident, and graduate of the University of Washington with an M.A. degree in economics. Early last week I arrived in Seattle as a repatriated refugee after a nearly unbroken 16-year sojourn in Japan and China. After a warm reception at the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport by two employees of the White Center Community Service Office I was taken to the Downtown Emergency Service Center at 517 Third Avenue where I spent the night at Washington State taxpayers' expense.

This letter is a somewhat unusual expression of gratitude and sympathy to those who work at both service centers.

With the understanding that I was entering a shelter for the homeless, I asked upon my arrival at Third Avenue location whether there was a place to secure my belongings. The staff pointed to a set of lockers along one of the walls, told me that they were full, but that my name could be placed on a waiting list. I was then instructed to keep my belongings with me at all times to insure their safety. As I had more belongings than I could reasonably carry everywhere I went, I

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was grateful that one of my escorts offered to retain a portion of my belongings in his car trunk over night. On the following morning I took my laptop into the shower room in order to insure that it would still be among my possessions after showering. During the night it had lain next to me in my top bunk.

While still at the shelter I had the opportunity to speak with both residents and staff. During these discussions I learned that the purpose of the shelter was to keep people from being *crushed* by the system. Although a noble cause worthy of community support, it would appear that the Third Avenue shelter is falling short of its goal. This is because protection of one's personal belongings is only afforded a fraction of the shelter's residents.

Indeed, if one is to raise oneself out of poverty, then one must be able to accumulate possessions without the constant fear of their being stolen. As there is no dearth of empty wall space in the shelter, the problem just described could easily be corrected by the addition of more lockers.

Please take this small, but important, matter into consideration when preparing the next State's budget.

A concerned US citizen and current Seattle resident,

R. A. Stegemann, A.B., M.A., M.A.

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