



Style Wise
Expressing Your Unique Self

LEAVING amazonville

Belonging is a state of mind,
but sometimes you just know it's time to leave.

by Skye Moody

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My apartment building is cheek to jowl with Amazon's main campus. When I peer out our bedroom window I look straight into Amazon offices. Just about anyone who lives in this neighborhood can say the same. One of Amazon's drone testing sites is so close to my windows that I've actually witnessed two experimental package delivery fly-overs and occasionally wonder what I'd do if a drone accidentally crashed on my balcony.

In Seattle's South Lake Union neighborhood, we're surrounded by Amazon's ever-expanding

campus; by default, we *are* Amazonville, a booming lakefront urban community where today you can't see the water for the cranes. This isn't a complaint but rather a somewhat woeful view of untethered commerce, fast-forward progress, and the failing sight of urban planners, which drives home the futility of the hollow threat "Not in My Backyard" lobbed at the goliaths of industry.

By virtue of Amazon's internationally stocked employee roster, the neighborhood gives off a lovely pastiche of racial and cultural diversity. Yet that vi-

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sual diversity is somewhat deceiving. What binds this community is the Amazon employees' unique lifestyle. About 90 percent of my neighbors are Millennials, under 30, and Amazon employees; 60 percent are males. In actual years, I'm old enough to be their mother. In attitude and spirit, I'm ageless and have formed solid friendships with several of my under-30 neighbors. Yet, these friends come from the 10 percent minority; none work at Amazon. Here's why:

We neither speak nor comprehend the main language spoken here. No matter which country they emigrated from, all Amazonians speak the same mysterious techie dialect, a sort of click language completely untranslatable by a lay-person. This produces awkward moments, for example, when I chance upon Amazonians in the elevator; hyper-texting, earbudded Millennials, parted from their work cubicle, forced to share a small space with a stranger. They didn't, after all, enter the elevator to converse with a neighbor, and, anyway, they lack the social lingo essential to greeting strangers.

However tempted I am to criticize the Amazonian way of life, their uniformly dull dress code, or their inability to grasp good grooming practices, these lemmings of technology comprise a genuine community of their own. To their great credit, when the call is raised to support a charitable cause, Millennials in general are often the first to dive in and contribute, either from their paychecks or volunteering to work a phone bank or holding events for the public good. Even Amazonians understand the universal language of human kindness and social responsibility.

Another Millennial residing in our building is self-employed, having no connection whatsoever to Amazon. He speaks a couple languages, but not Amazonian. He makes eye contact, and his

conversation is intellectually diverse. He's at ease socializing with all manner and ages of humans and pets. That he's buff, impeccably groomed and gorgeous cannot go unnoticed, but maybe it's because his earbuds aren't grafted to his head and that he's high-tech savvy yet doesn't escape into his Facebook page during elevator rides that we befriended each other.

I've lived in Amazonville for three years and in that time have watched an empire bulge at the seams, snap up nearly every available property, and still expand. Construction cranes and teeth-grinding drilling racket, with the attendant debris and choking clouds of dust, are everyday realities in Amazonville. This won't end anytime soon.

I'm in the minority population here. So far, nobody has thrown a brick through my window or shouted, "You don't belong here, lady!" Still, in so many subtle ways, I feel encouraged to leave. So, next month I'm moving out of Amazonville. I won't miss construction cranes and constant street closures, the near-death silence at night when Amazonville goes dark, the Amazonians tucked up in their apartments eating fast food while solo streaming or — they are job-addicted — working. I often wonder if they're lonely in numbers.

So it's off to Belltown, another Seattle neighborhood nearer to downtown's thriving nightlife, arts community and true cultural diversity. I'll miss my favorite resident Millennial, the buff non-Amazonian, and others in my old neighborhood. One thing is certain: My absence won't be noticed by 90% of my neighbors, and that's OK, because where I'm going is culturally and demographically diverse, buoyant with nightlife and buzzing with energy. It's a community where even the Millennials stop working long enough to enjoy life. ♦