

Writing a New Verse

Michael: The transition coming home, I didn't want to be where I was, ran into those people who looked down on us. I didn't talk to anybody about anything. Ruined all of my relationships, sent me into a depression. It got me thinking, "Well, I better go to the VA and see what this is all about."

My name is Michael. I was in the Navy with assignments to the Marines from 1969 to 1979. At the time, Vietnam was going on and the draft was still there, so I joined the Navy. When you're 18 and you go into that situation, you're lifted out of what's high school and college where you should be, and you're put over here. You miss all of this growing up that you used to do in between. My mother, when I came back, she said, "You're not the same person we knew." I thought, "I got a lot more living to do. Maybe I should be more careful with what I've got so I don't throw it away."

To work with a VA, that calms me down a great deal. I called up and I made the trip in here. They said, "We actually need to see you every day for a few weeks." It was therapy with my provider. There was a group that you would attend. The group one was interesting. I don't like groups of people. I never had. Fortunately, I managed to be able to understand that process.

Everybody's story is different. The therapy worked best for me, one on one, and just talking it out with my therapist. I wrote poetry as part of my therapy. I like poetry. The way I approach it is from my own experience. It puts something on paper that was more than just a thought. It was a real thing that I had to write.

I've gone back to school. I've got a double major and a double minor. I'm taking everything that I want to be. We've got a wildlife habitat. I got my chickens, I got my bees. I got the animals feeding in the yard. I'm Pueblo Indian. It's a whole different way of learning cultural beliefs, myths, and viewing the world.

We forget the connection we're supposed to have with each other and with the earth. Maybe I'm old fashioned, but I think there's a balance that should be held. It opens up something deeper inside a person that you don't realize is there. Now I can see what I'm living with. That enables me to balance it out because it's not a scary, unknown anymore. Through the VA, I've learned to know myself better than I had ever in the past. I've also learned how to look out for this in other people too. For me, that's therapeutic.



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

MAKE THE
CONNECTION