

We can make a change!

There are so many atrocities in this world. So many causes, so much devastation and so much pain. Much of these issues are on a scope that has taken and will continue to take a world effort in order to even soften the impact these issues have on people. Coordination and diplomacy with third world governments can be difficult. Getting to the people that are actually in need, even more difficult, many people meet this challenge every day.

In the United States we have issues with homelessness, crime and disease and even hunger, yet within our own contained society, we fail to meet many of these needs. With some, it is very difficult, people that have addictions that are simply unwilling to be helped. If we look at the dynamics of those who are in these various positions in the United States we find a very common thread – the mentally ill.

With the mentally ill, in the United States, we are aware of the cause and we are aware of the treatment necessary to ultimately change one's life. Yet, we have left so much of this work to the tireless effort of non-profit organizations and charities, just as they do in the third world countries. In a country that stands on the principal of moral integrity and moral obligation, our governments have fallen short and turned a blind eye on the group called the "mentally ill". We have consistently and by alarming numbers, simply placed them out of our sight within the criminal justice systems and departments of corrections within our states and country.

We have the science and the understanding of how to treat mental illness. We, as a country that stands on such a principle of human rights have an obligation to treat the mentally ill rather than punish them, which is exactly what we have been doing. There are many parallels that I could make with this argument, but I will refrain from comparisons. The bottom line is – a group of people, the mentally ill, have without doubt and proven statistically, have been herded into the corrections facilities in the U.S. – facilities that do not even remotely meet their needs and ultimately worsen their illnesses. We house people that are ill, people that have a reason for their actions – actions that can be avoided by correct treatment with people that have intentionally and aggressively committed heinous crimes.

So if it ever crosses your mind, ‘there are so many things wrong with so many people, mentally illness and the criminal justice system is just not on my radar.’ I urge you to look at this situation through a new lens. This situation, the goal, is immediately attainable. We have all the components necessary to not only correct this system, but to enhance it, changing millions of lives in this country alone.

There should be no government barriers to such a human rights issue within the United States, in fact protection should be law. The fact that we have allowed this to transpire over the course of the past 30 years, to this extent, is an atrocity in itself. The most important and most influential thing any of us can do is make a conscious effort to remove stigma from mental illness, put a face on it and give it the attention and respect it deserves.

I am aware of the severity of other issues in this world and they are very important. I come from a unique perspective, I have seen a

lot of them throughout this world and challenge anyone to debate this issue with me, so I debate this with confidence and the realities that the stigma with mental illness is just as serious – it produces hunger, disease and homelessness along with torture. Yes, I used that word, “torture” – that is what I call be assaulted by inmates that I have been forced to live with and assaulted by with the permission of state employed corrections officers – I call that torture.

Daily, I watch the news channels; I see the countless lives lost in war and hate. I find it sad that so many of us have become numb to the numbers involved in the lives that are lost. More times than not, I hear, “what can I do about it – its out of my hands or realm of influence’ and this response is correct to a large extent. But the criminalization of the mentally ill is within any Americans ability to influence and I urge us all to take that stand – because I assure you many are dying and many are being tortured.