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## Imagine the world without them

How difficult would it be to imagine the world today without the influence of the art and sculptures of Michelangelo, the science and mathematics of Sir Isaac Newton, the literature of Virginia Wolf, or even the music of Ludwig Van Beethoven? Of course the answer is it would be very difficult. We ourselves are the result of all the ancestral stepping stones toward that pinnacle of civilization we must always persevere to attain. The problem is, there are nowhere near enough people aware that these people suffered from mental illness. Nor are there enough people aware of the hundreds and hundreds of famous people, past and present who have suffered from one form, or mental illness of another, and contributed such a large part to the cultures of our world. Famous leaders such as Abraham Lincoln, Mahatma Gandhi, Winston Churchill, and Theodore Roosevelt. Irreplaceable scientist like Benjamin Franklin, Michael Faraday, and Salvador Luria. The list of names goes on and on with literary giants like Mark Twain, Leo Tolstoy, Ernest Hemingway, and Mary Shelly whose story of Frankenstein has provided practically every person with endless hours of entertainment. Mary Shelly's husband Percy Bysshe Shelly was well known for the depression he suffered from, yet his poetry is considered some of the best of his time. There are far too many names to list them all. ( Web page addresses for the Internet where some of these names were researched and many more names can be found, are included at the end of this article. ) A few of the many other poets are John Keats, Walt Whitman, Sylvia Plath, Edgar Allan Poe, and Emily Dickenson. Some of the famous artist whom suffered mental illness are Vincent Van Gogh, Mark Rothko and Michelangelo as mentioned earlier. Of the many composers and musicians, George Fredrick Handel, Peter Tchaikovsky, Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, John Lennon, Tammy Wynette, and John Denver.

Though the people mentioned so far are deceased a list of people who are still living that suffer from one form of mental illness or another is lengthy and reads like a who's who of today's world. People like Buzz Aldrin (astronaut), Linda Hamilton (actress) Dimitri Mihalas (scientist), Charlie Pride (musician), Oksana Baiul (Olympic gold medalist figure skating), Marlon Brandon (actor), Barbra Bush (former first lady U. S.) Sheryl Crow (musician), Harrison Ford (actor), Boris Yeltsin (president Russia), Mike Wallace (journalist), Monica Seles (athlete tennis), Elton John (musician), Anthony Hopkins (actor), and Stephan Hawkins (physicist). These are not people we are ashamed of. They are respected and admired the world wide. Yet stigmas within our society, force literally millions of mentally ill people into isolation. There is no such thing as a contagious mental illness, but stigmas are contagious they perpetuate themselves into a boggy quagmire that forbids progress in a society. The budget cuts

for mental health past and presents, shows that as a nation we are refusing to reach out a hand to these people, and that we are unwilling to cultivate the untold treasures they poses. Can we afford to lose an Einstien, a Madame Curie, or a Mozart?

If a campaign to save the rain forest and the botanical wealth it contains receive national attention in its importance (of which it certainly warrants) then why not a national campaign to increase funding for mental health, and stamp out the stigmas associated with mental illness. Receiving counseling or therapy at a mental health center should be looked on as being no different then going to a gym to get your body in shape, a sound mind requires work. The tragedy is that individuals who need and want help for themselves, their children or another relative are faced with a two fold, dilemma, the cost of it and the fear of what society will think of them. Some people may argue that mental health such as therapy etc. is just coddling an individual. Nothing could be father from the truth. As mental illness can be considered the ultimate struggle, being that it is a persons thinking itself which is affected, and thus the need for help from trained individuals. Others might believe that it is the mentally ill who commit crimes. Again nothing could be father from the truth. As it is an extreamly small fraction of only one percent of the mentally ill, who commit crimes. While on the other hand it is a considerable percentage of people with mental illness, who contribute such a great wealth toward every aspect of our culture.

Each time violent actions take away so many of our loved ones, as in the bombing of the federal building in OK. City or the more recent events of Columbine High school in Colorado we are left frozen in fear, and confusion of what to do. Our hopes must be in our being united as a nation, for it is then that this nation is undefeatable, and indomitable. No one needs statistics to tell them the huge amounts of funding it requires to send mental health workers to these areas of such horrible violence. And no one applies stigmas to the survivors needing mental health workers or counselors to help them through their struggle of grief and terror. And no intelligent person would deny that had funding been made available beforehand and social stigmas were not there to prevent people from seeking help, we would have prevented most of these violent tragedies from happening. Can you imagine your world without them? Please inform your legislative representatives, your Govenor and Rochelle Chronister (or current director of S. R. S.) that you feel this to be a very important issue to this nation.

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Osawatomie State  
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