**Q2 The Homeless and Mental Illness**

I swear sometimes these assignments are stories right out of my life. I can tell you that I have thought about this exact same question many times. While I do not believe that the majority of people who are mentally ill end up homeless, I know that some definitely do. Mental illness is starting to become more and more of an issue and it is being treated with a lot more care and diligence than it used to. For example according to Buzzle.com 2.4 million people suffer from Schitzophrenia, 5.7 people have been diagnosed with bo-polar, 3 million have panic disorders, 2.2 million have OCD and 7.7 million people suffer from PTSD. We all know that these seem staggering but we can tell that a very small percentage of this total number of 24 million people with some sort of mental illness are actually homeless. According to the National Alliance to end Homelessness, there are 633,782 homeless people living in america. If everyone one of those 633,782 people that are homeless were mentally ill, that would seem as though no other factors for homelessness would exist.

I personally understand a lot of reasons for being homeless. As a former drug addict, my ex-husband and I lived in and out of hotels for a couple months. We have lived in a one bedroom with 3 kids and we have lived with family and friends off and on. My ex husband is bipolar and OCD. He has also suffered from drug induced schizophrenia but the ONLY reason we were homeless was because we spent every penny we had at one time for drugs. He self medicated on drugs to help curve the mental illness issues and I followed suit with the drug use to cope with his issues. It was a toxic relationship none the less but we have both have recovered from our addiction and we are perfectly capable of working and supporting our families and he still has his mental illnesses.

In a subject very dear to my heart, the national Alliance for Homelessness also says

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| “Domestic violence is the immediate cause of homelessness for many women. Survivors of domestic violence are often isolated from support networks and financial resources by their abusers, which puts them at risk of becoming homeless. As a result, they may lack steady income, employment history, credit history, and landlord references. They also often suffer from anxiety, panic disorder, major depression, and substance abuse”These finding are 100 % accurate for my life. I have gone from job to job, ruined my credit, lost income, restricted help from family and friends and had substance abuse issues as a result of the violence in my home. The last couple days before I found a friend to help me afford the cost to move out of my abusive home, I was literally driving around in circles with no where to go. In Massachusetts they said that 92 % of the homeless women in their state had experienced extreme abuse both physically and sexually. I can completely and wholeheartedly agree with this. Mental illness can be controlled to an extent with medication. But often the debilitating effects of mental illness make it hard to be successful in life. There are a lot of treatment facilities out there for the mentally ill and a lot of state programs. We recognize a huge relationship between mentally ill and the justice system but honestly I feel here in America we have become a lot more aware of mental illness and have a lot more education as well. They now have vocational rehab, mental health courts, and inpatient treatment facilities and some do this without cost to the individual. It can sometimes take a homeless mentally ill person to get into legal trouble for their mental illness to even be identified but once someone is diagnosed and given the proper treatment and medications, their life can be tolerable. I think that those people who say that all homeless people are mentally ill are closed minded, and uneducated. Nothing we can do about ignorance but I am just thankful I am not one of these that think that way. I guess my life experience gives me enough proof. |

<http://www.endhomelessness.org/pages/domestic_violence>

<http://www.buzzle.com/articles/mental-illness-statistics.html>

<http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/the-state-of-homelessness-2013>