



AN OVERLOOKED OVER LAP

By Emerson Johnston

“Anyone walking the streets is familiar with the problem of lost souls too disoriented to take care of themselves,”

Many people find themselves lost at one point or other in their lives. However, for most, this is an internal feeling and they still have a sense of stability when they are home. Five percent of the world population currently lives with some sort of mental illness and if we are naive enough to believe that that percentage doesn't, in the least bit, overlap with the percent of the people left homeless in our world, then we are truly ignoring the problem. Mental illness not only disrupts people's ability to carry out the essential aspects of daily life but it also prevents people from forming and maintaining stable relationships and causes people to act irrationally. This results in many things especially the pushing away of family, friends, and caregivers who might be the only savior for this person before being homeless

The Los Angeles Times editorial board wrote in an appeal for Laura's Law that “though many mental patients seek treatment, others refuse and wind up drifting on the streets, a risk to themselves and others”. Additionally, according to a research summary compiled by the Treatment Advocacy Center, approximately one-third of the total homeless population suffers from a serious and untreated mental illness.

The problem here isn't the people themselves but the others who are choosing to ignore or perpetuate the problem at hand. A study done by the governments of each respective state reported that in Massachusetts and Ohio, 27 and 36 percent of people released from mental institutions became homeless within 6 months. The reason for this is because we have yet to put a system into place that allows for people with mental illness to receive the care they need and deserve outside of a mental institution.

States are closing down more and more mental institutions as costs go up and the money is allocated elsewhere. In Seattle in 2013, the mayor called the number of untreated mentally ill people on the street "an emergency." If our policy makers and world leaders won't take the appropriate actions to protect and treat the mentally ill, this upward trend won't only grow, but will become an epidemic.