



Gayle King  
EDITOR-AT-LARGE

January 29, 2001

Ms. Sherrie Renee Tyler  
PO Box 417041  
Sacramento, CA 95841

Dear Sherrie:

I am in receipt of your letter, thank you for bringing "SHER" to our attention. You are doing such important work for the mentally ill and homeless in your area. Letters like yours remind us we are helping others reach their goals.

We encourage you to take time for yourself and to remember your own spirit with loving care.

Sincerely,



Gayle King  
Editor-at-Large



July 19, 2000  
Sherrie Raneer' Tyler  
PO Box 417041  
Sacramento, Ca. 95841

Dear Oprah:

My name is Sherrie Raneer' Tyler and every now and again I go insane (lose touch with reality). I am not ashamed that I have a mental illness, but the hospitals that turn me away, do not help me, and disrespect me should be. The next time I am turned away from a psychiatric hospital I may DIE! I have written the President and Tipper Gore several times regarding my story. Now that one of the major political concerns is mental health care, I must advocate for the mentally ill and encourage others to do the same. We deserve the right to be heard and respected. Oprah, here is my inspirational story on how I keep my spirit.

Help! I am lost again. Lost in San Francisco, running around barefoot in the cold rain not knowing who I am or thinking I am Janet Jackson. And I'm white.

I was 31/2 months premature at Iowa general hospital and weighed a little over two pounds. The doctor said, "If she survives the next hour we will be lucky." And lucky I was to have the Angels in my corner. I am now thirty-two and healthy if you do not count my mental illness.

I live by the motto "never give up". I have been in and out of over twenty psychiatric hospitals since I was nineteen. I have been tied to a bed, beaten, overdosed on Haldol, and sexually assaulted in these insane asylums.

Currently, I am a young college student studying for my Master's degree and plan on becoming a professor and advocate for the homeless and mentally ill. In between my hospitalizations, I find the strength to carry on and the courage to face my professors, peers, family, and friends after many embarrassing excursions.

My symptoms include becoming lost, losing track of time, forgetting who I am or thinking I am someone else. I also have grandiose ideas of feeling special and loved. Doctors have accused me of being on drugs (never) or not taking my medication. Neither is true. I think it is easier to put the blame on the "psychiatric patient" rather than a doctor or the mental health system.

This past year has been a real test for me and my faith in God. During the middle of my school semester I became mentally ill and had to be hospitalized on three separate occasions. I accidentally flooded my apartment, drove to San Francisco, forgot where I parked my car and filled out a job application as Meg Ryan. Subsequently, I lost my apartment, my car and did not get that job!

After I came out of the hospital, I found myself HOMELESS. I lived in a homeless shelter for five months. I was very angry and upset. Some of my family and friends were not very supportive. But God held out his hand to me and for the first time I reached out to Him. I am still holding on. I will never let go.

While I was in this homeless shelter, I was surrounded by people who were fresh off the streets, some were drug addicts and most had some kind of mental illness. These people became my family. We cooked together, prayed together and listened to one another.

I remember being a bit frightened about going back to school and they offered me support, encouragement...and love.

During my five months in this shelter, I saved up enough money to attend college, get my own apartment, and start my own non-profit organization- S.H.E.R.

I have become an advocate for the homeless and mentally ill. I have a B.A. degree in Psychology and my organization assists the homeless and mentally ill with writing letters to their constituents who lobby on behalf of their rights- Someone Hears Everybody's Rights (S.H.E.R).

When I was two years old I was hit by a car. During this time the doctors found out I had something terribly wrong with my heart. They fixed my heart, but told my mother I will never walk correctly. When I first became mentally ill in 1987, they told my mom it is a lifetime condition. Often through out my life doctors have been wrong. I think God has other plans for me.

My plan is to lead a happy, productive life and help others through compassion, understanding, and love.

When I'm lost in the rain and think I am all alone, the Angels take me by the hand and lead me to God.