

**I Have a Dream
By Jacqueline Castine**

As we have all been inspired by the vision and sacrificial life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., many of us who have suffered the tragedy of mental illness in our own lives and/or that of a family member, also have dreams of a future when medical science and social attitudes will put an end to the discrimination in mental health care and in the public perception of people who are in recovery from mental illness and addictions. As a community mental health educator, a woman who is living with bipolar disorder and a mother who lost her son to suicide, I invite you to join me in the vision that I hold for the future of mental health understanding, funding and treatment.



Jackie Castine

- I have a dream that one day soon health care reform legislation in this country will cover mental illness, addictions and other behavioral diseases of the brain as fairly and equally as other biologically based physical illnesses. Any engine driving national health care reform without mental health parity is on an uneven track, discriminating against 1 in 4 U.S. citizens.
- I have a dream that Michigan will join the majority of its sister states in abolishing separate funding systems for substance use health issues and mental health. As it stands, our mental health system struggles to deal with the costly recidivism in our hospitals caused by lack of coordinated communication, clinical training and integrated treatment for persons with co-occurring substance use and mental illness.
- I have a dream that one day the Silver Ribbon, the symbol for brain disorders developed and disseminated by NARSAD, (National Alliance for Research on Schizophrenia and Depression) will be as well recognized and well-funded as the Pink ribbon, the symbol for breast cancer.
- I have a dream that when Joe Q. Public reads the ever occurring “shock and awe” headlines about mass murder, a mother drowning her babies, or a youth shooting his parents in their sleep, he will be able to go beyond the very natural and appropriate, moral, social and legal implications of such atrocities, to ask, “What about the medical issues in this situation? What is the mental health history of this individual and what proper medical treatment could have prevented this abominable tragedy?” The more the media, can assist mental health educators and advocates in always stressing the differences in thought, mood and behavior between treated and untreated brain disorders, the more millions of people in recovery from mental illness will be admired, not stigmatized.
- I have a dream that tax paying voters will, through education, convert righteous indignation into motivation to learn more and contribute more money to brain research and mental health care treatment and advocacy.
- As a parent who lost her first born son to suicide 2 years ago I am furious at the devastation of these diseases too! I will jump through hoops when medical science develops a one stop shop shot that will instantly rearrange the crazy chemistry in the broken brain with enough temporary sanity to convert a state of mind that self-talks “I’m not sick and I don’t need help,” to “I realize I have an illness that can be treated and I know where to go for help today.”

For help with mental health services in Oakland County please call our Resource and Crisis Helpline (800) 231-1127.

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