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The mental health crisis in America is a growing epidemic. A crisis most prevalent amongst the lower class due to their lack of resources such as therapy and medication. Therefore, the public is often shocked to learn that the nation's largest support for those who suffer from a mental health crisis is the jail system and mental health institutions. Mental health is an unforgiving battle for those who suffer from psychosis or mania, often those who struggle with the impact of insufficient support are financially struggling Americans. These people are faced with needing to make the difficult decision of choosing between treatments. They either have to put medication before therapy or vice versa due to the lack of health insurance or their insurance being unable to cover both. Additionally, it has been proven that in order for medical treatment to be successful for mental health it needs to be used in tandem with therapy. Therefore, many low income Americans can only gain access to treatments through the institutionalization of jails and prisons because of behavior caused by mania. This then leaves them to be more susceptible to becoming recurring offenders. Similar to the issues that are currently being dealt with by institutions, the same mediocre instances are being faced by the medical community. Medical treatment can be difficult to access and even more difficult to maintain, therefore, adding to the increase of mental health tragedies. Rachel Aviv illustrates the improper rehabilitation of institutionalized patients within her article *God Knows Where I am*. Along with Thomas Insel explaining the lack of medicinal support in his exposition *What American Mental-Health Care Is*

*Missing.* Together these two articles express the vast ways mentally ill people have been failed, allowing for the stigmatization of institutionalization and deinstitutionalization; along with the acknowledgement that society is not structured for the rehabilitation of these people.

Institutionalization has a dark past and this is not unknown to the general public. Most importantly its history is not unknown to those who suffer from mental illness and is unfortunately many people's reality. The negative stigmatization to institutionalization finds its origins in the past where patients were often constrained and forced to medicate or face treatment against their wishes. Those who faced these unwelcoming treatments of the past were more often than not low income citizens. These people had little to no protection from the healthcare system because they often had no one to advocate for them or willingly care for them because of the lack of income. Similarly to the past, mental health patients battle the same struggles of being able to advocate for themselves because they are often not taken seriously as they are deemed to not be in the right state of mind,". Patients now are given a choice on whether they wish to be institutionalized or medicated, however, despite this being the law throughout the United States it is often overlooked and seen as a second tier need. Institutionalization has always been traumatic and it is not a system that is meant to rehabilitate patients. Insel clearly acknowledges this, "Compounding problems of access are powerful forces of discrimination have criminalized mental illness" (Insel 5). The idea of fear and criminalization of mental health is also explored within Rachel Aviv's text.

Linda Bishop was a fifty one year old woman who suffered from a diagnosis of bipolar disorder with psychosis, however, she was a firm believer that her diagnosis was a mistake. The rejection of diagnoses led to her refusal of any form of treatment. Despite her institutionalization, which occurred because of a minor felony she was deemed unfit to stand trial. Causing her

institutionalization to the state ward. This proved to only be successful when she was in custody of the state, however, her denial and the institution's failure to help her accept her diagnosis led to her eventual death. As time progressed and she reached the end of her stay there was no effort to ensure further treatment upon her release. On the other hand, she was suggested to continue to seek help but as Bishop was so deep in denial she rejected and feared support for her mental health. Before she became manic Bishop was a caring mother and college graduate. Her institutionalization led to her losing many things in her life. Most importantly it quickly turned her into a second class citizen. Bishop lived a free life of four days after her institutionalization and during that short period of time she lost grasp of being a normal human and instead believed she needed to hide because of who she had become because of her illness.

Bishop was afraid to be rejected by society as she was abruptly introduced back into it, “She began to worry that her dirty clothes would attract attention if she walked back to town. ‘I look terrible...like a vagrant’” (Aviv 3). Additionally, her hidden existence supports that mentally ill patients who do go through institutionalization are not readily prepared for returning to living a daily life. Additionally, Bishop's actions of hiding away bids to the bigger issue which is that she was uncomfortable with returning to society because she was worried that she would be unwelcomed and be judged because of her appearance. This relates to the stigma of mentally ill people having a certain appearance such as disheveled and unaware of their surroundings.

Amongst the psychiatric community there is a disturbance on the topic of perspective on patients refusal for treatment and how it is treated as an unethical desire. However, there must be a circumstance created for how much a manic patient can be able to reject. Bishop is a prime example of this, her refusal begins when she refuses to accept that she is in fact mentally ill. Aviv further explains how the want of a patient has often been labeled as a delusion by caretakers and

even puts those in the medical field within a difficult position; “For Linda the validity of her diagnosis was the subtext of nearly all her encounters with her psychiatrists, whose attempt to teach her parts of her personality could be ‘constructed as a mental illness’.” Bishop strongly believed that what the world of medicine was doing to her was simply to alienate her and convince her that she was ill. Therefore, she chose to push help away in fear of being stigmatized more.

Linda has not been the one who has faced negative stigma due to their mental diagnosis and treatment. Many Americans and their families are battling this negative connotation for far too long. Unfortunately many of those who are receiving this ill treatment are less fortunate Americans and people of color. Thomas Insel acknowledges the reality of the country's lack of resources for those in a mental health crisis with his article *What American Mental-Health Care Is Missing*, The U.S. does not have a system that can help Americans heal and recover. More than half of U.S. counties have no psychiatrist. Nearly half of psychiatrists do not accept either public or private insurance” (Insel). Much like Bishop’s case when the American healthcare reaches its limits, it draws back available resources even if that means accessible care for its citizens.

Within Insel’s writing he describes the difference between two young men within the same age group and how their rehabilitation greatly differs from one another despite both being young and well rounded for the world around them. However, the main difference being that one succumbed to his illness while the other overcame his circumstances. Also, the loss of a loved one or being witness to the spiral is the reality for many. Medically as a society we understand that for a treatment to be successful it must be paired with both medication and therapy, however, due to many patients living a lifestyle that cannot afford to provide both this is where the

unfortunate decision on whether someone will be able to successfully reenter society or not. Insel states, “But these factors crucial for recovery, are often not paid for by health insurance and are usually not offered as part of care.” Additionally, the absence of available and affordable mental aid has created the approach for the jail and prison system to be the most abundant locations for help. When being institutionalized in these locations patients are receiving both medical and therapeutic treatments. However, patients are not being cared for in the system to later continue their treatment amongst release. Therefore, creating a vicious cycle.

Mental health is a tender subject for the American healthcare system because many citizens do not have the means of being able to provide for themselves the proper care. Many live without insurance that is able to provide the necessary means to rehabilitate themselves and, therefore, are forced to approach other means of care. Such as the example of Linda Bishop who felt that she needed to hide herself from society because of the detrimental fear of being rejected by society. Along with the horrendous reality that if a person does not have the financial resources to pay for treatment they will simply not receive any as explored by Insel. These circumstances amongst the American public create a pattern which seems unbreakable by patients. In order for those who experience psychosis to better themselves there must be other outlets for accessible treatment that does not require for them to write away their independence, such as needing to reside within an institution or prison.