

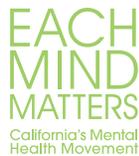
STORY-TELLING

EACH MIND MATTERS
California's Mental Health Movement

HIDING BEHIND A CLOUD

by Seth Moua

My name is Pangkou Her. I was born on May 20, 1976 in Laos. My family and I immigrated to the US when I was five years old. When I was a teenager, I had multiple convulsions while sleeping on the couch. My parents believed that mental illness was something that only happens to other people. They believed that a demon had entered my body therefore causing me to have convulsions. Since my parents were traditional Hmong believers and because they did not speak English, they turned to Shamanism hoping it would cure me. I was born by the name of Xou Her but because of Shamanism, my name was changed to Pangkou Her. At the age of 23, I became a Shaman hoping to cure my seizures. Throughout the years I became depressed. While seeking



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medical assistance from doctors and hospitals, I felt that my seizures were incurable. No matter how many times I performed the Shamanism rituals, I was losing hope of ever being cured. I started attending the Mental Health institute to help cope with my depression. As I attended the mental health sessions, the physicians prescribed stronger medication to help with my seizures and depression. As I continued to take the medication,

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my speech and thought process became slower. Although I am still struggling with depression and seizures, I feel like an outcast in my family as well as my friends. I am treated differently by others. Some family members believe that I am dangerous and should be avoided so I am not invited to join in family outings. I have learned to hide my depression in my own cloud so people will not be scared. I do not work because

I feel that people with mental illnesses should not be judged because they are just as smart and creative as anyone else.

I feel discriminated against due to my mental condition. I am currently married and have three boys. I hang out with my family members and try to talk about my condition and feelings. I enjoy life by playing volleyball, camping, fishing and taking my boys to the park. I feel that people with mental illnesses should not be judged because they are just as smart and creative as anyone else. Even though I have been through mental health counseling and traditional beliefs to help cure myself, I believe and have faith that one day I can be completely recovered.

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