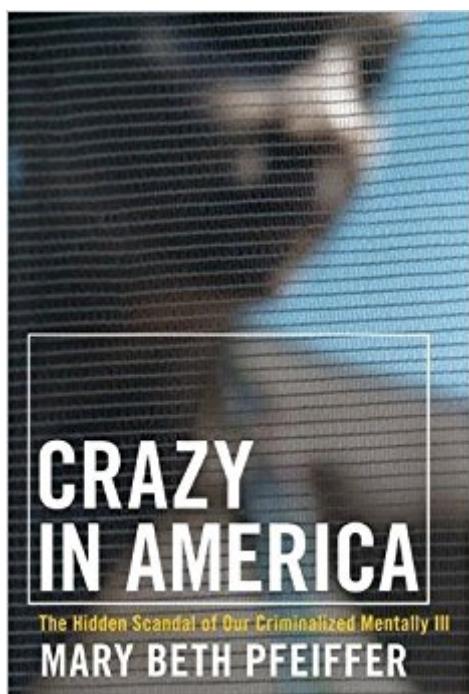


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# Crazy In America: The Hidden Tragedy Of Our Criminalized Mentally Ill



## **Synopsis**

Crazy in America shows how people suffering from schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, clinical depression, and other serious psychological illnesses are regularly incarcerated because alternative care is not available. Once behind bars, they are frequently punished again for behavior that is psychotic, not criminal. A compelling and important examination of a shocking human rights abuse in our midst, Crazy in America is an indictment of a society that incarcerates its weakest and most vulnerable citizens; causing them to emerge sicker and more damaged.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Investigative reporter Pfeiffer takes a critical look at the lack of treatment for the mentally ill that often lands them in prison, where their behavior is misinterpreted and they are vulnerable to abuse by other prisoners. Profiling six such people, Pfeiffer examines the circumstances that led to their incarceration, the inadequacy of plans upon their release, and the strains on their families. Among her subjects is Shayne, a schizophrenic who has been institutionalized since the age of 14 for mental illness and drug addiction and was jailed for a time for stabbing the local sheriff; she eventually blinds herself by plucking out her eyes. Luke, who suffers bipolar disorder, lands in a Texas prison after his behavior escalates into violence and drug abuse. Pfeiffer intersperses her reports of the facts of her subjects' lives with communications from them to their families, highlighting the growing confusion and pleas for help. Pfeiffer puts her subjects in the broader context of the nation's woeful lack of concern for treating the mentally ill. Bush, Vanessa

Mary Beth Pfeiffer is a Soros Justice Media Fellow who has written articles on prison conditions and the treatment of mentally ill inmates for numerous publications. A journalist for twenty-five years, she has been an investigative writer and editor for the Poughkeepsie Journal for the last decade. Her prison reporting has won her two National Headliners Awards, an Outstanding Achievement Award, a national Council on Crime and Celinquency citation, and six awards from the state Associated Press and state Publishers Association. In 2004 she was awarded a fellowship from the Open Society Institute to research articles on the imprisoned mentally ill.

First, this book is well written and is a page turner. Second, conservative or not if this book doesn't make you re-think your faith, you could be six feet under and not know it. Third, why do we treat our most vulnerable worst than animals?. Fourth, the word tolerance refers to diversity in good, NOT evil. Fifth, Vampires and Zombies metaphorically speaking are real, just look in the mirror and if you're that vain that you take this comment personally, then it's probably true. Sixth, whether you burn a witch at the stake or you torture and kill it slowly, your still doing the same thing, demonizing an innocent and satisfying your blood-lust. Finally, the sad truth is that over 99.99% of our country will never read this book; arrogance is ignorance is bliss is villainy. Also check out: A Surviving Justice: America's Wrongfully Convicted and Exonerated.

Awesome book! I actually got to meet one of the people in the book, so it was even more of an interesting read, but very well-written and informative overall. Highly recommend!

For decades we have been talking about the tragic decision that was made in the 1960's when thousands of mentally ill people were turned out of America's institutions and left with no where to go for basic everyday services and mental health care. In her new book, "Crazy in America," Mary Beth Pfeiffer tells us the heart breaking stories of what happened as a result of that decision. We did not build facilities in our communities to care for these people, we did not train people who were capable of working with them and their families and providing the services they needed. What we did do was build more and more prisons where they were locked up for years, often in isolation and treated like criminals of the worst kind. Pfeiffer gives us in depth case studies of six people with mental illness and their tragic encounters with the criminal justice system. Only one, Shayne Eagan of Iowa, is still alive. She gouged her eyes out while under care of state. Over and over Pfeiffer

demonstrates how deadly the use of isolation is, not only for the mentally ill, but also for all human beings. Yet this is the response of choice of those in corrections. The author gives us her list of 10 things that must be done to address this tragic situation. Reading her book should motivate many of us to contact our legislators and urge them to take the steps that are needed to address this scourge on our land and to personally monitor what is happening regarding mental health services and criminal justice in our own states and communities. If you do nothing else: speak out against the building of more prisons.

Crazy in America: The Hidden Tragedy of Our Criminalized Mentally IllÂ As a long time staff advocate for the National Alliance on Mental illness (NAMI), I found the book and its multiple story accounts very accurate and heart rendering. For the uninformed, the stories may be so impactful that they will find it hard to understand that a society could mistreat its citizens so badly. Good book.

For years, I have watched the homeless people walk up and down the main streets in the city closest to where I live, the thought crossing my mind that these are the result of budget cuts which closed the nearby psychiatric center. While I'd read about the crisis for this same population, (Many of the articles were written by the same author as Crazy in America, Mary Beth Pfeiffer, an advocate for these people for many years.) the extent and the consequences of this institution's closing, and others across America, was never as clear as they have become as a result of reading this book. Pfeiffer's heartbreakingly case studies document the problem the mentally ill confront within the penal system, a system never intended to deal with this personnel. Through these tragic case studies, the author demonstrates that a system that punishes the mentally ill in the same ways it treats other prisoners is a set-up for these victims. At the same time that her book focuses on and evokes sympathy and compassion for the mentally ill, it also causes the reader to question how our prisons function for anyone in America. While this book may hold particular interest for workers in the mental health field, it is of importance for employees in our schools, judicial system, and for anyone who has a mentally ill person in his/her family. It seems this book reaches out to everyone, and hopefully, will encourage people to work toward the changes in a system that is broken for a large percentage of the people involved in it. We must watch over those incapable of caring for themselves. This is a must read for any socially responsible person in America. As for the author, a superb example of investigative reporting! Well done!!!

True journalism informs and educates. This well researched book does both. A must read for all who

are concerned about an America gone mad and the industrial prison complexes that grow rich off the backs of human misery. This effects every household in America don't wait until it hits your door to read it. A grieving mother

Pfeiffer does an excellent job of putting a face on the maddening criminalization of mental illness in the US.

A must read!

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