

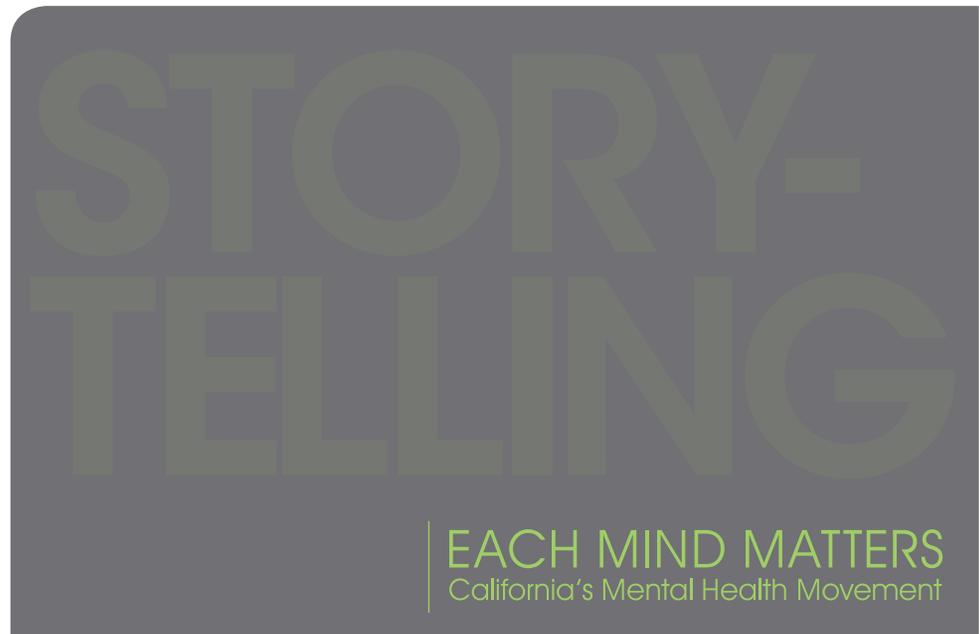
me about my problems. I've always felt lonely because I never met people who were like me. Now at 25, I've learned that sorrow cannot be cured with loneliness but by being with people. Sometimes being able to open up to people is the only cure to depression, such as mine.

To this day, I have tried to change my life and change the lives of others. I've found the best friend of my life, Ruthy Yang, who I met in my support group and helped me in my hard times. And I also helped her in her times of need. I learned how to be accepted in society by changing the way I act. Just one person in the world can help make a change in someone's life forever just like how Mr. Ward, Dr. Vang and my friends from my support group had helped me.

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CHANGE CAN MAKE CHANGE

by Chicheng Justin Vang

My name is Mia Vue, I'm Hmong and live in Sacramento, California. My life has been a story of struggle. When I was 10 years old, my dad shot and killed my mom and two brothers. This has scarred me for life, for I witnessed my lovely mother and brothers die right in front of me. I watched as their bodies fell to the ground, motionless. I screamed and ran out of the house to my neighbors. They called the police but when they arrived my dad had already shot himself. I was left with no family because my grandparents had just left us a year ago. I soon found that my dad was a

drug addict and my parents were running out of money. My dad got mad so he threatened my mom. My brothers tried to defend her but my dad was on drugs and he became ruthless to his surroundings.

When I entered high school I was looked down upon because of what happened with my family. I was adopted by another Hmong family. There were many problems between me and the kids of my foster parents. They never understood my pain and sorrow of losing parents. I've always tried to stay away from everyone because I was too insecure and scared of what they might think of me. It came to a point where my foster parents asked a shaman to look at me. The shaman explained that there was a ghost following me which was why I was always so depressed. My foster parents decided to "ua neeb," a ritual where the shaman calls good spirits

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to come heal me and scare away bad spirits. This never worked out for I was still alone and depressed. All of the Hmong elders within my foster parents' family clan tried over and over again to the point where they just gave up on me. They said that I was cursed and couldn't be healed.

I was now worst than ever, I was always alone now. I never tried to communicate or ask things that I need. It got to the point where I started failing my classes miserably and so my counselor, Mr. Ward, called me to his office. He was the first person who ever talked to me about my problems so openly. When I got there he went straight to the point and

I couldn't help but cry because of the memories of my family, corrupted and destroyed. He recommended western medication and sent me to a therapist.

My therapist, Dr. Kurtis Vang, tried to help me but I wouldn't let him through my gates of emotion for I didn't want to feel how I felt 5 years ago. Dr. Vang asked me many questions about depression. He tried many times to get through my line of defenses that I had built up over the years from my pain and misery. I left him empty handed in his attempt to find answers

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about me. He couldn't find anything so he sent me to a support group where I would learn about other people's problems. I soon found that I wasn't the only person who felt pain in my heart. I wasn't the only one who was discriminated by the community or failing in school because I was too afraid of people. I wasn't the only social outcast subjected to what happened in my past. I felt at least at home a few times while listening to other people's experiences. I have seen support groups in movies, but I never thought that it would work and it slowly healed me.

I am finally able to tell my story of the tragedy with my family: the four bodies, the tears in my eyes, the aches and emptiness in my heart, and the feeling of having no parents. People always say "It's tragic," but they never have the thought of even talking to me. People knew what happened to my family but they never attempted to confront and talk to