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The untold story of psychiatric institutionalization

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Stephanie Marie had her first bipolar episode at the age of 22. For the first sixteen years after this, she was able to successfully manage her mental health without daily medications. However, in 2001, her mental health situation changed drastically. In the midst of an episode that year, she inadvertently hit a police officer

while being taken to the hospital. Charged with a felony, she was found Not Guilty by Reason of Mental Disease or Defect (NGI) in the state of Wisconsin. Even though found not guilty. She was placed in a 5-year supervisory program, hospitalized in a state mental health facility for more than a year and then put in a group home for six months. During her stay at the state hospital, she was raped more than once by fellow patients. Later, out of the hospital, she was even required to wear an ankle monitor for several months. The NGI system in WI treated her like

a criminal and she was punished more severely than if she had been on probation or parole for a guilty offender. Despite this dark 5-year period of her life, she picked herself up and returned to her highly creative and productive life after leaving the supervisory program in WI. She then went on to work with horses in WI, ND, and ID and then pursued her dream of teaching French, Spanish and English as a Second Language to children and adults. She also started to produce and direct a WWII documentary about compassion and the battlefield.

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