

“THEY ARE SPECIAL AND THEY ARE HERE!”



SHIRLEY LEVI'S AUTISM AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

MISSION STATEMENT:

"I have a very special place in my heart for autism. I've made it my mission to use the undeniable power of MUSIC and ART to reach out to all people and help raise awareness about autism. I've learned much by working with such special people and feel that music and art can best portray their special qualities and spirit. They deserve to have a voice. I choose to focus on their abundance of beauty and special qualities rather than focusing on their social disabilities because that is what shines through in my eyes. I've created a painting called, "MUSIC ON MY SHOULDER", based on a sketch of a dove made by a very special autistic and ARTISTIC woman I worked with named, Anne Marie. I wanted her to witness her talent manifested into a tangible reality. Her gifts inspired me to see way beyond her social disability. I also wrote a song about her special spirit. I believe that my song, "Anne Marie" will help others see the spirit of autism in the same light as I do. Music and art are a powerful tool in helping raise awareness of issues that surround us every day yet remain unseen. Personally, I also really believe that we must give special attention to those who are ALREADY HERE with autism and help them to nurture their special gifts instead of treating and seeing them from just a cold, technical, and medical perspective. THEY ARE SPECIAL AND THEY ARE HERE. Every one of them that I've worked with has had a very unique gift.

While it is great that we look for a cure and look at preventative measures, we must also give special attention to those who are ALREADY HERE and make sure that we nurture their special gifts and praise them with special and positive attention. Another part of this campaign is that we also help family members and others who are not in the autistic community the opportunity to recognize all the positive gifts these very special people can contribute to our society. I plan on exposing their talents, especially musicians, and believe that *their gift/work will speak for itself*. That is the goal of my campaign." - Shirley Levi

EXCERPTS FROM SHIRLEY LEVI'S EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

Question: *I've heard you are deeply involved with charity work? Which are you affiliated with?*

Shirley Levi: Any that cross my path and that are legitimately trying to help. I have a very special place in my heart for Autism. I have supported the homeless since a very young age. I've written songs for many causes. I have given away paintings for Autism, Aids, Cancer, Love... performed at charity events to help raise money for the arts and to help raise monies for children in low income housing. Check with me next year and I will have many more in my path. Virtually everything I do is to help. I believe this is my path in life as an artist. Everyone can give what they are the best at. Some have the money and others have other gifts to contribute. I am a writer, singer, musician, artist, director... and G-d knows what else and so I give away my work in paintings or songs to raise awareness or raise money for the cause.

Question: *Tell me more about Autism. I know your song "Anne Marie" is supposed to be about an Autistic woman. Is that true?*

Shirley Levi: Anne Marie is a very special Autistic woman I worked with. I witnessed the gift in the so called disability they call Autism. In my song you get to know the woman and her talent first before you even care to know she's autistic. I mention again right after that she is artistic. "Spirit fighting mind... spirit shine through"... These lyrics to me show their extraordinary and fascinating gifts which compliment their specialties in each and every one of them. They say G-d gives us in ten folds for that which he takes away. I believe that. Their social skills remain as children... untouched, untainted and very real and sincere... strong and pure instincts that can be guided and nurtured to develop their individual special gift instead of neglecting them. I would love for people to see what I see. To see them through that special place they are here to expose and not just from a medical perspective or stand point. Anne Marie is very special and she represents to me the spirit of Autism. "I see myself in her".