

Reflections from New Hampshire's Niki Miller on her experiences as a 2008 Recovery Delegate

When I brought my daughter to NYC for the recovery march last year, I had been in touch with several of the delegates before hand and put the question to the group: is anyone else bringing a teenager? Would anyone like to go out and do something anyone over 40 could only enjoy vicariously? Every one was bringing significant others except one fellow from Kentucky, who wanted to bring his female pastor and asked if she could bunk with said teenage daughter and I. without even meeting her, I consented to share our room with a stranger.

That is the type of trust and unity that existed among the delegates before we even arrived. That night, we got together with the Kentucky delegate and walked down to Grimaldi's, under the Brooklyn Bridge, which everyone knows is the best pizza in NYC, came home and fell into bed.

Our flight was very late and the gathering time for the delegates the next morning was quite early. Perhaps that was the reason the following day took on such an other worldly and spiritual quality. The morning was foggy and rainy, and the march across Brooklyn Bridge looked like a pathway through the clouds. As my daughter and my sister and fellow delegates trudged on in an infinite line of purple and white shirts, recovering people from all over New York began to add their faces and voices to the crowd. As I looked above me at the suspensions and the wires that towered and pointed to the sky, I could not help but think of William Styron's novel *Sophie's Choice* and how the bridge and the city itself was so much of a character in the book. I was immensely grateful that my life no longer consisted of a series of Sophie's choices: to continue with the pain of continuing to use and drink, blotting out as best I could the pain of my existence, or move forward into the pain of recovery, letting go of what I felt was the only reason to live—drugs and alcohol.

When we reached to other side we were welcomed with cheers and chants. The rally was like a recovery amusement park; every where you looked someone was being amazing. My daughter connected with the youths in the band immediately, and I ran into old friends and cameras. One of the highlights of the morning was the interview with the TV crews. Not mine, but my daughter Stephany's, who began to speak with pride about having a mother in recovery and how it inspired her to become a leader in prevention. If that wasn't enough, the day in NYC and spontaneous evening dinner with other delegates lay ahead.

On Sunday we took the subway across the isle of Manhattan, deep into the Bronx to see the Henry Moore sculpture installation at the NYC Botanical Gardens. At the subway stop we saw a guy from the neighborhood in a purple T-shirt from the march, and it was on. He took us around the barrio and pointed us to Gardens. I had emails from him when we got home. I am still connected to the delegates and hope to know more of them personally over the years. I am so grateful for the outstanding opportunity I was given, and continue to be given each day I wake up sober.

Sincerely, Niki Miller