

**PROFILES OF HOPE 2015: MICHELLE ENFIELD**  
By Karen Zarsadiaz-Ige, LACDMH Public Information Officer



The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health's (LACDMH) Public Information Office (PIO) has taped another segment of its Emmy Award-winning series, *Profiles of Hope*. This segment of the upcoming, long-awaited series will spotlight Michelle Enfield, a transgender woman who is a program coordinator/health educator with APLA and an advocate for the LGBTQ community in Los Angeles.

The *Profiles of Hope* series is made up of 10-minute inspirational stories, featuring individuals who share how they overcame stigma and various obstacles to eventually lead them to a road of *Hope, Wellness and Recovery*. This latest round is part of a large anti-stigma and social inclusion campaign to create awareness, education and discussion about mental health. Our campaign partners include Fraser Communications and Showreel Productions.

Michelle Enfield was born on the Navajo reservation in Fort Defiance, Arizona. She is a member of the Navajo Nation. At a young age, Enfield identified herself more as a female than as the male she was born. "I knew I was feminine – and there is a stigma attached to a person born male and feminine. I was ashamed. I was confused," she said. While her family didn't treat her badly, they did make comments about the LGBTQ community. She knew being part of the LGBTQ community wasn't something her family considered a good thing.

"I was in the sixth grade and got into my cousin's makeup. It put it on lightly... I liked to look feminine and pretty," she explained. From that point on, Enfield unknowingly began the transition from male to female. "When I transitioned, I didn't know I did. I was putting my foot in front of the other. I think it was a long process."



The process of transitioning involved many different stages, including taking hormones and legally changing names to Michelle. “Name change is empowering. It’s for you and how you want to view yourself,” stated Enfield.

Transitioning meant sharing her new name and gaining the acceptance she had been seeking from her mother. After fully transitioning to Michelle as an adult, she heard the words she always wanted to hear from her mother. “She told me, ‘I’ve always been proud of you.’ When she said it, it reaffirmed what I knew.”

Throughout her life, Enfield witnessed discrimination and hatred toward the transgender community. “Being trans is very challenging,” she said. “They are discriminated to the point that they are killed.” Enfield had to overcome her own personal obstacles and battles. “Growing up I had to deal with a lot of experiences. I’ve had to deal with depression, anxiety and sleeplessness. I’ve gone to therapy for years. I’m an advocate for therapy,” she stated.

Besides therapy, Enfield finds keeping busy helps her stay focused. She reads, goes to school and is learning to play the cello. It’s all part of her routine for happiness, health and wellness. You’ll hear more about her story in the upcoming *Profiles of Hope*.

Michelle Enfield not only taped a *Profiles of Hope* segment but also a public service announcement (PSA) for LACDMH. The *Profiles of Hope* segment and the PSA, both featuring her, are the second of three that will debut soon.