



ALUMNI PROFILE:  
GREGG TYLER MILLIGAN

Gregg Tyler Milligan, M.Engin. '92, appears on the *Oprah Winfrey Show* in February 2010.

# soul survivor

Gregg Tyler Milligan shares his story in 'A Beautiful World'

BY LISA HOOK

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Although he originally titled his book *God Must Be Sleeping*, Gregg Tyler Milligan decided to change the name to *A Beautiful World* — a metamorphosis that is exactly the cathartic change that took place within Milligan, who shared his story on the *Oprah Winfrey Show* last year.

Milligan, M.Engin. '92, a spokesman for the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, spent 10 years writing and three years trying to find a publisher for his book, which book publishers deemed "non-mainstream." Driven by a force inside himself to help make a change in the world for the better, he self-published. His goal was simple, though certainly not easy.

"I wanted people to see that we can overcome the atrocities done unto us and become functioning members of society," he says. "I wanted them to realize that we could one day give back in our own way and become shining advocates of the possibilities of a beautiful world. At the very least, I wrote the book for no other reason than to save someone else and me in the process."

As a child, Milligan suffered extreme emotional abuse, neglect and constant beatings, and starting at age 8 he began being sexually abused by his mother.

While Milligan has won numerous writing awards, his career always has been about his best chances for financial stability, he says. Certainly, this is a reflection of his very humble upbringings in which it was a constant struggle for survival. When he and his little sister finally escaped the extreme horrors of his childhood home at age 11, and when he mustered the heroic courage to contact an estranged older sister for help, his life began to take a turn for the better. He recounts the story in *A Beautiful World*.

"I would be the last person to stake the claim that I was a gifted writer," Milligan says. "I have never kept a journal or diary. I chose to stay close to a technological field of study in order to increase my chances of a good income and financial stability. Growing up poor drove me to work very hard to ensure I did not end up poor ever again."

So neglected as a child, Milligan taught himself how to read and write, barely finishing high school. He eventually attended Sienna Heights University and later earned a master's degree from Wayne State in computer engineering, graduating with honors.

Milligan has spent the last 20 years in computer engineering positions and the last 12 in executive management. He served in the U.S. Air Force, achieving the rank of major and receiving an honorable discharge.

He says that education literally saved his life.

"Education was, for me, the very first opportunity I would be afforded to become a functional human being and contributing member of society," he says. "Education is molded around a foundation of instruction that gives each and every student a chance to control their own destiny, which was not different for me. I was provided both direction and purpose. It offers anyone the opportunity of advancement, dignity and hope. It is also without prejudice, bigotry or hatred. We get out of it what we put in — and the best part is that what we learn, we get to keep and take with us wherever we go. Education is founded on the fact that everyone deserves a chance if they are willing to work for it. I carry this message throughout my daily life."

Milligan took quite a gamble by appearing on the *Oprah Winfrey Show* to discuss such a personal subject matter, but it was a passion that paid off on many counts.

"Without a doubt it was worth it," he says of his appearance. "In so doing so, I perpetuate the absolute belief that you are not alone. We have each other. Those suffering for any reason are kindred spirits forged in anguish. Our hopes and dreams may have been unfulfilled at one time and seemingly passed us by, but they are replaced by another. Our faith twirls around in our souls and we give love to each other.

"Sometimes, this love returns to the same place and we pour it out again into the same heart for a lifetime, and the heart is never full. This is exactly why we are here. To save one another, and in doing so we allow for the possibilities of a beautiful world."

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**Lisa Hook is a freelance writer who resides in Rochester Hills.**



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