

HUMAN

RIGHTS

ALERT

Sept. 13, 2000

ISSUE # 12

A Psychiatric Survival Broadsheet



CTO/IOC UPDATES

Victory in California!

Bill AB-1800, which would have essentially wiped out basic human rights for anyone with a psychiatric diagnosis, went down to defeat when it failed to clear the appropriations committee of the California State Assembly prior to the end of the session on August 31.

Had it been passed, this legislation would have doubled the periods for which a person could be incarcerated at each stage of the civil commitment process. It also would have made the criteria for commitment so loose that potentially anyone could qualify, and would have made it virtually impossible to win release from a psychiatric facility without first 'consenting' to a closely monitored regime of ongoing community 'treatment.'

Two strikes - you're out!

This represented the second failed attempt by Assembly member (and former psychiatric nurse) Helen Thomson to introduce restrictive legislation targeting persons with a psychiatric diagnosis. She introduced a similar bill in January 2000 but subsequently withdrew it due to evidence of lack of sufficient support in the Assembly to ensure its passage.

At one stage in the proceedings, NAMI members rallying in support of this repressive law found themselves surrounded by Survivors and others

opposing this bill. As it turned out, this time the Survivors' message wound up carrying the day in the media.

In addition to AB-1800 going down to defeat, legislation was approved which allocates substantial funding to more 'user-friendly' community-based resources in California.

Refused legislation

Other states that have said 'NO!' to IOC/CTO legislation are Iowa, where legislation was introduced but subsequently failed to pass (this fight is far from over as apparently even stronger legislation is now in the works), and Connecticut, which thus far has refused to consider statutes of this kind. The State of Vermont passed an outpatient committal bill in July last year but a subsequent court ruling upheld an earlier statute that will severely restrict its application.



At this point in time thirty-seven U.S. states and four Canadian provinces (B.C, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario) have laws on the books that allow for coerced outpatient 'treatment' ('Brian's Law' is to be proclaimed in Ontario on December 1). The Canadian province of New Brunswick has joined with Connecticut in refusing to consider introducing such legislation at this time.

EDUCATION

Survivors offer courses through 'free U. of T.'

In the summer of 1999, a group of students and faculty members at the University of Toronto along with community members who were appalled at soaring tuition rates, lack of relevant content and the rapid corporatization of post-secondary institutions began exploring the concept of a 'free university', where people could offer courses of their own design in order to freely share knowledge in a non-hierarchical setting.

In January 2000 the 'Free U of T' was launched, offering more than a score of courses on a wide range of topics ranging from computer programming to anti-racism, histories of area communities (such as Kensington Market) - and perspectives from the Psychiatric Survivor community.

As of this month the Free U of T will be going into its third term. The fall 2000 session offers more than thirty courses, *<Free U of T - next page>*

SURVIVORS' RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS!

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<Free U of T - continued>

including two major offerings from members of the Survivor community.

Mad Peoples History

Thursdays, 6 - 8pm

Oct 5 - Nov 23, 2000

Geoffrey Reaume,

<geoffrey.reaume@utoronto.ca>

An overview of the history of madness from ancient times to the present from the point of view of those considered mentally disturbed. This course will examine accounts by mad people from a variety of sources. There will also be references to depictions of madness in the arts and popular culture as well as how gender, race, class and disability influence experiences of mental disorder. The purpose of this course is to ask the question: how has madness been viewed by mad people over the centuries?

Week 1. Folly and Fools: Madness in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds

Week 2. Madhouses and Mad People: Early First-Person Accounts, 17th and 18th Centuries

Week 3. The Rise of Public Insane Asylums and First-Person Accounts during the 19th Century

Week 4. Race, Class, Gender and Disability in First-Person Accounts of Madness

Week 5. Eugenics and the Persecution of People Labeled "Mentally Defective" in Europe and North America, 1880-1972

Week 6. Psychiatric Patient Activism, 1845-2000

Week 7. Butterfly Wards and Soul Survivors: First Person Accounts of Madness in Canada since the 1970s

Week 8. Creating Our Own Past: Mad People's History into the 21st Century

Anti-psychiatry -

Survivor Perspectives

Mondays, 7 - 9pm

September 25 - December 18

Don Weitz, <dweitz@interlog.com>
(416) 760-2795

This is a 14-week course on antipsychiatry from the perspectives of psychiatric survivors offered by the Free University of Toronto. The course is expanded from the 8-week course first held last Spring. Classes will be held every Monday evening, 7-9pm (loc-

tion to be announced). This unique course seeks to educate and empower psychiatric survivors and other marginalized people about the psychiatric survivor liberation movement - its history, major issues, struggles, victories and challenges. The course also provides important information about the psychiatric system and survivor-run alternatives in Canada and the United States. The course also features guest speakers, community activists and panelists who are psychiatric survivors, as well as film and video presentations. Open and free to psychiatric survivors Course consultants: Bonnie Burstow, Ph.D and Geoffrey Reaume, Ph.D

Week 1: Sept.25 -INTRODUCTION & IDEOLOGY

Why antipsychiatry? Medical model & biological psychiatry: basic assumptions & principles, fascist elements video(s)/lecture/open discussion - D.Weitz

Week 2: Oct.2 - SURVIVOR HISTORY

Economic exploitation of psychiatric patients in Ontario - G.Reaume Movement highlights in Canada & USA - M.Starkman

Week 3: Oct. 9 NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING

Week 4: Oct.16 - SEXISM & WOMEN SURVIVOR ISSUES IN PSYCHIATRY

panel: AJ Rhomer, L.Samarasinha

Week 5: Oct.23 - RACISM IN PSYCHIATRY

Personal Experiences & scientific literature - audio tape & panel: Peggy-Gail, M.Odongo

Week 6: Oct. 30 - FORCED DRUGGING

medical-legal-ethical issues video & panel: A.Szigeti et al

Week 7: Nov. 6 - ELEC-TROSHOCK("ECT")

Treatment or Torture? video & open discussion - D.Weitz

Week 8: Nov.13 - PHYSICAL RESTRAINTS

Cruel and Unusual video or film, panel: A.Rosenbloom, M.Starkman

Week 9: Nov.20 - INVOLUNTARY COMMITMENT/COMMUNITY TREATMENT ORDERS/RESISTANCE

video/film & panel: A.Szigeti, J.Chambers, L.Frado, E.Fabris

Week 10: Nov.27 - MEDIA BIAS-CENSORSHIP-LIES

How mainstream corporate media

promote psychiatry & social control/ How alternative media can empower survivors - video/film, panel: G.Bacque, B.Cattle, L.Samarasinha

Week 11:Dec.4 - DRAMA AND THEATRE IN THE MOVEMENT video/film: "Marked:Living With a Stigma"/Ruth-Ruth & other members of Puzzle Factory-Friendly Spike Theatre Troupe

Week 12:Dec.11 - MOVEMENT MEDIA

Newsletters-magazines-books-radio programs-videos & their impact on the movement & public - video(s) & panel TBA

Week 13:Dec.18 - SELF-HELP/ ADVOCACY/NETWORKING/RESISTANCE

Reaching out/connecting/fighting back - panel: S.Collis, M.Coward, E.Fabris, L.Frado, D.Weitz

***Note: Some speakers & panelists to be confirmed. Contact the course facilitators for details on location.**

<www.utoronto.ca/acc/freeu/>

JUSTICE FOR



Ottó Atilla Vass
Killed by Toronto
Police

August 9, 2000
<www.OttoVass.org>

HUMAN RIGHTS ALERT

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Contributions welcome!

(Contributions may be edited for space)

<http://bacque.graeme.tripod.com/HRA/HRA.html>

