

HUMAN RIGHTS

ALERT

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ISSUE #8

A Psychiatric Survival Broadsheet



OTTAWA, CANADA Researchers claim discovery of 'suicide gene' 'Study' opens moral Pandora's Box

In what could have the most staggering moral and human rights implications since the Holocaust ended, researchers at the Royal Ottawa Hospital have announced the discovery of a supposed genetic flaw that predisposes certain individual to suicidal behavior.

What is especially alarming is the unquestioning manner in which the mainstream media has accepted this particular dubious information.

As it now stands, suicidal ideas or attempts stand as one of those few situations where psychiatry actually bases its interventions upon overt acts or verbal statements rather than pure supposition, although the reasoning behind the medical definition of these acts, and the nature of psychiatry's interventions still generally defies logic.

Impossible to prove

As this new school of genetic-oriented belief becomes more thoroughly entrenched, however, psychiatrists will claim the right to presume the nature of our thought processes on the basis of an impossible to prove genetic link - and as a result could also have at their disposal a whole new arsenal of thoroughly unpleasant and possibly lethal interventions.

As usual, shrinks are ignoring the fact that as a rule happy people do not kill themselves. Current social/political climates create a lot of *unhappy* people. Far from harboring a compassionate desire to keep people alive, one must consider the reality that shrinks have the role of medicalizing all feelings as a means of covering the butts of those whose actions create such widespread unhappiness and despair.



Experiments with gene therapies have already illustrated how potentially hazardous this form of medical tinkering can be. Recently in Pennsylvania an eighteen-year old youth died as a result of an experimental therapy for an enzyme deficiency that was compromising his liver function.

The therapy, which involved the delivery of a genetic payload through the introduction of a mutated virus, was supposed to correct the defective gene that

resulted in this deficiency. (Virus function by supplanting a cell's genetic structure with that of the virus).

Instead, it caused his whole immune system to crash.

Psychiatrists have never shown a great deal of concern for either the potentially dangerous character of their meddlings, or the expressed wishes of their 'patients'. It is alarming enough that the kind of hazards associated with such 'therapies' have been revealed in a supposedly consensual application to a bona fide medical condition.

Rape of soul

The difference is that psychiatrists would be attempting genetic tinkering with our very thought processes - something which are impossible to quantify medically and which are also so intrinsic to our identity as individual human beings that any notion of meddling with such at a genetic level can only be viewed as being in the realm of total social control. Any direct application of this 'research' can only be construed as being the deliberate rape of the human soul itself.

How long will it be before any socially 'deviant' behavior, lifestyle choice or belief system gets similarly attributed to a supposed genetic defect, with a new breed of bioshrinks claiming the right to make horrific and potentially deadly incursions into our lives on this basis?

Be afraid... Be very, **very** afraid.

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SURVIVORS' RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS!

Elderly siblings lose bid for freedom

In what is sure to have substantial implications for the rights of elderly persons and others affected by the Public Guardian's office, an Ottawa judge has upheld an order that will see Edwin and Mary Field institutionalized in a Catholic Church-run nursing home and force them to relinquish all control over their property.

88-year old Edwin Field and his 90-year old sister Mary had repeatedly asserted their desire to live independently in their own home with assistance from friends. They even went into hiding for a period last autumn in a bid to evade the guardianship order.

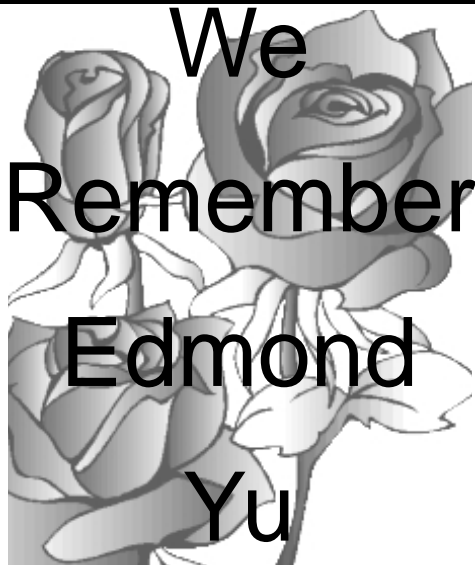
The Fields eventually represented themselves in court after at least a dozen lawyers refused to handle their appeal. (Earlier, a lawyer appointed by the court to represent them had **consented** to the guardianship order.)

In a ruling made last fall, another judge had already stripped the Fields' friends Leila Tremblay and Jack Miller of the power of attorney they had held over the Fields' affairs. (Unlike a public guardianship, a power of attorney is an undertaking which is entered into voluntarily, with a person or persons chosen by the subject individual(s)).

This case stands as one of the more outrageous examples of the tremendous paternalistic powers wielded by the Public Guardian's office, which can strip innocent persons of all their rights as adults, on the basis of totally subjective opinions and without due process. Under the terms of such an order (known as a 'Committee of the Person') one is not allowed to act independently in any matter concerning their own lives. (The law requires that under such an order all such matters be brokered by the P.G.).

What would make far greater sense in such cases would be a scenario where vulnerable persons could receive non-coerced assistance from attendants or personal friends which would allow them to continue living independently.

Unfortunately, as long as the Public Guardian continues to wield these kind of dictatorial powers people will still face losing control over their affairs, and frequently even their physical liberty. It is a proven fact that this kind of power concedes nothing without a struggle - even though it has been shown to be of no true benefit to anyone.



Friday, February 18 saw about thirty people gather in Toronto's Grange Park in an effort to keep Edmond Yu's spirit alive through poetry, song and the spoken word, on the third anniversary of the day when he was murdered by the Toronto police.

On Feb. 20 1997, the cops were called in response to what was described as a 'minor assault' on a female passenger waiting for a street-car at the transit loop at the foot of Spadina Ave. Upon their arrival the police encountered Edmond on board an empty bus, and apparently tried to take him into custody under the Mental Health Act. Edmond objected to this and produced what was described as a 'small hammer' from under his coat, holding it in the air near his body. The three cops on the bus pulled their guns and one of them opened fire, killing Edmond instantly.

Even though they were subsequently cleared of wrongdoing by the Special Investigations Unit, the contention by the police that Edmond acted in a 'threatening manner' towards them was totally discredited by the testimony of several civilian eyewitnesses at the inquest into his death. For the first time, a Psychiatric Survivor group was granted standing at an inquest when the Queen Street Patient's Council was granted the right to present evidence and cross-examine witnesses.

Currently, a fundraising initiative is underway to establish a Survivor-run 'safe house' that will bear Edmond's name. Similarly, a new meeting room at the Parkdale Activity & Recreation Centre (P.A.R.C.) is to be named in his honor.

The inquest jury made a total of twenty-four recommendations including the 'safe house' idea. The complete list of inquest recommendations can be viewed on the Internet at www.tao.ca/~pact/inquest2.html

Psychiatric Survivor Resources in Toronto

People Against Coercive Treatment

P: 760-2795 F: 368-5984

Internet: pact@tao.ca

www.tao.ca/~pact

Queen Street Patient's Council

Room 2059, 1001 Queen St. W.

Toronto, Ontario M6J 1H4

P: 535-8501x2018 F: 325-9749

patientsco@icomm.ca

www.icomm.ca/patientsco

No Force! Coalition

(c/o Queen Street Patient's Council)

www.tao.ca/~pact/noforce.html

Sound Times Support Services

96 Granby St.

Toronto, Ontario

P: 979-1700 F: 979 5863

E-mail: stimes@icomm.ca

www.icomm.ca/stimes

C/S Information Resource Centre

c/o Day Centre

252 College St. 3rd Floor

Toronto, Ontario M5T 1R8

P: 595-2882 F: 595-0291

E-mail: csinfo@icomm.ca

www.icomm.ca/csinfo

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Contributions welcome!

(Contributions may be edited for space)

