establishing Native religious rights in Canada's prisons. He has twice been awarded honorary doctorates from Canadian universities, is a member of the International World Council of Churches Speaking Committee, and a central figure in the International Prison Abolition movement.

4. Penal exchange columns were featured in most penal publications throughout the 1950s and 1960s. They served as a means of recognition, camaraderie and censorship, and as a way to convey information on internal disputes and to maintain contact.


6. Blacklock, Hjalmarsson and Reid have published commercial books on prisons and their lives, while Pringle has written the best historical pieces on prison life and its subculture that I have encountered in the pages of the penal press.

7. See for example, E.S. Gardner's articles in his columns "The Court of Last Resort" in Argosy magazine throughout the 1950s. His pieces such as "The Importance of the Penal Press" were reprinted by many of the Canadian penal press publications.

8. Note that institutional financial support, large paid subscribers lists, and advertisers allowed publications to be distributed free to many prison custodians and professionals working within the criminal justice system.


WORKS CITED


Phoenix Rising
Its Birth And Death

Phoenix Rising was a unique magazine, not simply because it was the only anti-psychiatric magazine in Canada, but also because it was published by former psychiatric inmates. Phoenix began publishing in March of 1980 only to die in July, 1990 due to lack of funding. During its decade of publishing, the magazine was a supporter of the international psychiatric inmates' liberation movement. Thirty-two issues were produced, including three double issues, exposing psychiatric abuses and challenging the tyranny of psychiatry over people's lives. We focused on a wide variety of social, political and human rights issues faced by psychiatric inmates and survivors, homelessness, electrolyte (ECT), forced drugging, and the abuse of the rights of women, children and elderly prisoners. We did our best to draw attention to the myth of "schizophrenia," to the deaths caused by psychiatric treatment, and to the psychiatric victimization of gays and lesbians. It is doubtful that another magazine will replace Phoenix in its fearless exposure of psychiatric abuses.

I founded Phoenix Rising with Carla McKague in 1979. We were both psychiatric survivors. We had read and been inspired by Madness Network News, the first inmates' liberation and anti-psychiatric magazine in the U.S., in a newsletter of the Mental Patient Association in Vancouver, "The Cookbook Next, a nondefiant Toronto newsletter, and the outreach critical writings of disident psychiatrist such as Thomas Szasz, Peter Breggin and R.D. Leing. Unfortunately there are still very few disident mental health professionals in Canada.

Inspired by these other publications, we believed that a magazine published by psychiatric survivors like ourselves could become a credible and powerful voice for psychiatric inmates and ex-inmates living in Canada and throughout the world. It could help to empower our brothers and sisters by publishing their personal stories, poems and artwork, by encouraging them to keep writing and speaking out, and by allowing them to establish contact with other groups and individuals. When Phoenix finally emerged, it became a creative outlet for many people who had been damaged and rendered voiceless by institutional psychiatry.

The first four issues were published in one year out of a two-bedroom apartment on Spadina Road in Toronto. A small, committed editorial collective gradually formed. The first collective consisted of Carla, Cathy McPherson, Mike Yale, Joanne Vale and myself. We held frequent meetings in the apartment, and one bedroom became the office where we did all the typing, editing and layout. At the time we had no word processor or computer. We began with very little funding, receiving a $3,400 grant from PLURA, a multi-demoninational Canadian church group which gives start-up grants to grassroots groups.

Our first issue came out in March 1980. The front cover featured an illustration of the mythic phoenix rising from its ashes, a symbol of the psychiatric survivor reborn after a kind of death by fire. In our first editorial we outlined our goals and philosophy and coined the term "psychiatric inmate" to replace "mental patient." A few excerpts from this editorial are worth quoting:

"We'd like Phoenix Rising to serve as a rallying point for inmates and ex-inmates who want to bring about changes in the "mental health" system that has failed more than helped people. We believe that public..."
Phoenix Rising was probably the first Canadian periodical to point out the close links between the psychiatric inmate and the regular prisoner.

That is all too often damaging rather than helpful, and oppressive rather than liberating. We want to educate the public about the shortcomings and injustices of the present system, and challenge the myths and stereotypes attached to "mental illness." We’ve chosen to use the term "psychiatric inmate" rather than the conventional one of "mental patient." We were there... against our will. We lost such basic rights as the right to choose our own therapists, the right to refuse treatment, the right to leave the institution — even the right to make phone calls or have visitors. These are all rights which medical patients take for granted. In short, we lost control over our lives, in the same way that inmates in prison do.

With these principles in mind we began several columns, one was called "Phoenix Pharmacy," in which we warned our readers of the numerous damaging and often deadly — not "side" — effects of many psychiatric drugs, effects like brain damage, tardive dyskinesia (a grotesque and permanent neurological disorder), and death. At first we focused on the "mood stabilizers" such as Valium, but we soon explored the damage of antide-pressants, lithium, and powerful neuroleptics — euphemistically called "major tranquilizers" or "anti-psychotics." We started a "Profile" column which highlighted psychiatric survivors and self-help groups doing outstanding advocacy, organizational or political work in the community. We also had a "Rights and Wrongs" section where we reported some key legal decisions directly affecting survivors.

Phoenix was probably the first Canadian periodical to point out the close links between the psychiatric inmate and the regular prisoner. In an effort to establish a common understanding of our oppression, as well as a basis for future solidarity, we used our second issue’s editorial to bring attention to the shared experiences of inmates and prisoners: sensory deprivation, forced treatment, and solitary confinement. The following are excerpts from that first editorial on psychiatric inmates and prisoners:

An inmate... is "a person who is..."

People in prison and psychiatric inmates are deprived of many of the same civil and human rights. These include freedom of movement, the right to vote, the right to communicate openly with anyone, the right to privacy and confidentiality, the right to wear one’s own clothes, the right to refuse any treatment or program, the right to be treated with dignity and respect, and the right to appeal any abuse or violation of these and other rights while locked up.

In addition, people judged to be suffering from a "mental illness" and about to be involuntarily committed to a psychiatric institution are automatically denied the right to due process. They’re denied the right to legal counsel before and during commitment procedures. Due process is the legal right to a trial or public hearing before loss of freedom. People accused of criminal acts are routinely given their day in court before imprisonment. However, people who have committed no crime but have been judged "insane," "psychotic," "suicidal" or "dangerous" by one or two psychiatrists are routinely denied the right to defend their sanity in court before being committed.

Prisoners are traditionally given a fixed, definite sentence; they know when they will be released. Involuntarily committed inmates generally do not know this...
Both prisoners and psychiatric inmates are victimized by forced "treatment." Unlike medical patients, inmates have no right to refuse any psychiatric treatments, many of which are dangerous and damaging. Refusal can easily be overridden by an appeal [by a patient] to a review board; it is often interpreted as just another symptom of the patient's "mental illness."

...Regular prisoners are often placed in "behaviour modification" programs. Sometimes prisoners, especially those judged to be belligerent, ringleaders, or trouble-makers, are used as guinea pigs in dangerous and even life-threatening psychiatric experiments... Drugs such as scopolamine and anesthetics, or "aversive conditioning."

...The inmate who is probably the most abused and discriminated against is the person who is committed to a psychiatric institution through the criminal process, either as "trust to stand trial" or as "not guilty by reason of insanity" under the M'Naghten rule. They share with the civilly committed psychiatric inmate the uncertainty about when, if ever, they'll be released, and with the regular prisoner the lack of protection against the routine use of damaging experimental psychiatric treatments.

To call people "patients" when they are locked up and treated against their will is not only insulting, but a lie. Euthanasia as "mental patient," "mental hospital," and "mental illness" obscure the facts that "mental hospitals" are in fact psychiatric prisons; that the institutional psychiatrist is actually a judge-jury-warden; that "psychiatric treatment" is a form of social control over unco-operative or non-conforming people whose lifestyles (usually working-class) are too different from or threatening to that of the upper class white psychiatric patients; that terms such as "diagnosis" and "treatment" are fraudulently applied to non-existent "mental illness"; and that psychiatric "treatment" is frequently experienced as punishment. We are not "patients." We share with our brothers and sisters in prison the experience of being an inmate—loss of freedom, loss of civil and human rights, loss of control over our own bodies and minds, and stigmatization for life.

In the early 80s we published our first women's issue, "Women and Psychiatry," in which we ran an interview with Phyllis Chesler, a prominent feminist psychologist, and the author of Women and Madness (1972), an examination of the abuses and sexism of traditional, male-dominated psychiatry. In our second women's issue we continued to highlight psychiatric sexism with the article "Mental Health and Violence Against Women," a powerful feminist statement written by seven women psychiatrists and psychiatric survivors. A feature article on psychiatric malpractice by Greta Hofmann Nennozoff described a woman's frustrating struggle to sue the psychiatrist who sexually abused her. In this issue we also reprinted a compelling piece on women and shock treatment written by medical social worker Paula Fine which documents psychiatry's excessive use of electroshock on women and contributes to psychiatric rape.

The most powerful statement on electroshock in Canada was published by Phoenix Rising in April of 1984. This issue was part of an ongoing critique of electroshock aimed at the abolition of this barbaric procedure, with its effects of permanent memory loss, difficulty in reading and concentration, and brain damage. Shock doctors and other physicians still try to sanitize this procedure by calling it "electroconvulsive therapy" or simply, "ECT."

In our Fall 1989 issue we ran a feature story on the tragic death of 19-year-old Aldo Alviani. Although there was an inquest into Alviani's death, the case simply served to whitewash a psychiatric crime. The Coroner's Jury decided the cause of Alviani's death was "deanasseriacal misconduct"—in other words, just a medical accident—after Alviani was forcibly subjected to roughly ten times the usual dose of Haldol in less than 24 hours. Phoenix Rising published a press release covering Alviani's death as well as a report on the demonstration sparked by the news of his demise. This was Toronto's first public protest against psychiatric druggery and institutional deaths.

Because legal rights have been central to our cause, over the years we took particular note of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In 1985, the government passed the Privy Council Order setting up the Canadian Health Care Commission. In 1983, the government passed the Criminal Code (section 24) against "physical or mental ability, or other reason, the Charter allows more individual rights to security of person..."
We believed that a magazine published by psychiatric survivors like ourselves could become a credible and powerful voice for psychiatric inmates and ex-inmates living in Canada and throughout the world.

Kids and Psychiatry issue / cover: Michael Steven

particular interest in the legal implications of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and "The Charter of Rights and Freedoms vs. the Psychiatric System" was the title of a double issue published in August 1985. We were awarded an grant from the federal Justice Department to produce this issue which was largely written by supportive civil rights lawyers. The Charter spells out many of our fundamental civil, legal and human rights. Section 15, the crucial equality section, is particularly relevant to psychiatric survivors since it legally prohibits discrimination against people with a "physical or mental disability." Section 7 of the Charter is of even more importance because it affirms the "right to life, liberty and security of the person..." These rights are violated every day in virtually every psychiatric institution or ward in Canada. Furthermore, Section 12 of the Charter affirms the right not to be subjected to cruel and unusual treatment or punishment." In our view, cruel punishment includes such things as forced drugging, electroshock and chemical or mechanical restraints such as four point restraints, which, we argued, should be declared unconstitutional. Lawyer Harvey Savage wrote an excellent piece on the Lieutenant Governor's Warrant (LGW) legislation, which authorizes indefinite detention for those declared "unfit to stand trial" or "not guilty by reason of insanity." He criticizes the LGW as unjust and unconstitutional, and cites the case of Emerson Bonnar, who was incarcerated for 17 years as unfit to stand trial for attempted purse-matching. Our "Charter" issue featured a reprint of the anti-psychiatry movement's historic "Declaration of Principles," probably the most concise and powerful antipsychiatry/liberation statement produced so far. We also reprinted "The People's Charter," a down-to-earth translation of the Charter's legislate which was first published in Fact Cause (a now-defunct disability rights journal). In September 1988, the board of directors of On Our Own, the original publisher of Phoenix, tried to evict us. The board claimed that the magazine rarely paid any rent, which was untrue. We first moved to a warehouse, then a year later to new office space at Euclid and College. By incorporating ourselves as "Voice of the Psychiatricized of Ontario, Inc." we separated the magazine from On Our Own. Despite the odds, we brought out two more issues which rank among our very best.

Our May 1989 issue focused on the psychiatric atorces suffered by prisoners. It scrutinized solitary confinement, forced drugging and the dangerous behavior modification "programs" which still exist in Oak Ridge, the notorious behaviour modification wing of Penetang. In it, we established a Prisoner Network which prisoners and ex-prisoners could use for advocacy, legal advice, support, and we identified over eighty prisoners' rights groups, newsletters and journals in the United States, Canada, and other countries, including thirty-seven in Canada. We made a special effort to reach out to more prisoners, to let them know that we care deeply about their issues and the injustices they, like us, have experienced.

Don Weitz, a psychiatric survivor, a freelance writer, a researcher and an outspoken critic of the psychiatric system. He is the co-editor, with Bonnie Burston, of Shrink Resistant: The Struggle Against Psychiatry in Canada (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1988).

As its subtitle announces, Phoenix Rising was a "Voice of the Psychiatricized" – and oh, what a strong, relentless voice it was! For hundreds of years the frightening knowledge of the psychiatric inmate had been silenced by the medical jaiifers who were the controller and invalidated. In issue after issue of Phoenix, inmates spoke out against the labelers, and every time the survivors spoke, the tyranny and the lies of psychiatry became clearer and clearer.

Like its sister, Madness Network News, Phoenix Rising allowed us to place anti-psychiatry out there so firmly it became something which stuck and would not go away. It was empowering for the survivors who read it, for it expressed loudly and clearly what many knew and still more suspected. It said, "Yes, the drugs are poisoning you. Yes, drugs and shock are making it harder to think." It said, "No, no, you are not alone; it happened to me too." It said, "No you are not crazy for thinking it; they really are stealing your life." It helped people have the courage of their convictions and break out of the system. It helped people reclaim their selves.

For me personally, Phoenix was an act of solidarity with our sisters and our brothers who are being and have been labelled, drugged, shocked, stigmatized, incarcerated, and lied to. It was a joining-with. It was education. It was love. It was also a hell of a lot of work. Year after year, I found myself writing articles, helping plan issues, speaking with funders and writing some more. There were a number of times when I was concerned with the amount of time being spent, and when I withdrew temporarily to address other issues and other parts of my life. Inevitably, however, after a very short retreat, I would think of the psychiatric holocaust, and I would think of Don blasting the system with every breath he drew and every word he spoke; and I would pick up my pen again. It was hard and demanding work all right. But it was also a great thing – a mitzvah. It is always a mitzvah to participate in a genuine awakening. I am proud to have been a part of Phoenix. And I know that whether it is being published or not, Phoenix remains a part of me.

Don Weitz drawing from 1990

Lesbian and Gay supplement