

Speech on May 16, 2015, International Day of Protest Against
Electroshock, Toronto
by Don Weitz

My name is Don Weitz. I'm a proud psychiatric survivor, antipsychiatry activist, survivor of insulin shock. Fortunately I didn't have electroshock and escaped brain damage. However, over 50 years ago I was forcibly subjected to 110 subcoma insulin shock treatments and 1 coma shock, administered against my will and protest. Like other shock survivors, I also suffered severe psychological and physical trauma.

This is a very historic and empowering day in growing worldwide resistance against electroshock, which began in the late 1970s in California and has since spread to many other states, provinces and countries. Today, hundreds if not thousands of shock survivors, psychiatric survivors, antipsychiatry and social justice activists are speaking out in other public protests happening in approximately 30 cities in at least 8 countries including Canada, the United States, Ireland, Scotland, New Zealand, Australia, and Uruguay. This protest on this day is a powerful legacy and tribute to the late Leonard Roy Frank, a shock survivor, a widely respected anti-shock activist, movement author, and good friend who died suddenly last January 15. In his honor, this International Day of Protest Against Electroshock is originally organized by three shock survivors: Ted Chabasinski (Berkeley, California), Deborah Schwartzkopff (Portland, Oregon), and Mary Maddock (Cork, Ireland)—let us give a huge thanks and much respect to all of them.

Since electroshock (ECT) was first introduced as a psychiatric treatment in the early 1940s, no state, province or country has officially banned electroshock, despite numerous rallies, protests, petitions and acts of nonviolent civil disobedience initiated by our brother and sister survivors, supporters and allies. After 75 years of ECT, it's time to ban this brain-damaging atrocity, it's time to

abolish this psychiatric assault, and it's time to stop this crime against humanity masquerading as "safe and effective treatment." As you will note in the Electroshock Facts handout, this psychiatric procedure is scientifically proved to cause harm especially brain damage. Shock promoters, including the APA and Canadian Psychiatric Association (CPA) keep admitting, "we don't know how it works", another lie, Shock promoters and most psychiatrists have always known, and many like psychiatrists Abraham Myerson, and APA shock promoters Max Fink and Richard Abrams have publicly acknowledged that ECT 'works' by causing brain damage – this is "brain-damaging therapeutics" that has been critically exposed and denounced as health-threatening and unethical by psychiatrist Peter Breggin, psychologist John Breeding, the late neurologist John Friedberg, and other dissident health professionals. As fully documented in Dr. Peter Breggin's outstanding books *Toxic Psychiatry* (1991) and *Brain-Disabling Treatments in Psychiatry* (2008), electroshock frequently causes a host of adverse health-threatening effects and serious disabilities including permanent memory loss, psychological trauma, and sometimes death; Leonard Frank has also documented numerous instances of brain damage and hundreds of ECT-related deaths in English language medical journals alone since 1942 (see *History of Shock Treatment*, 1978; *Electroshock Quotationary*, 2006). In virtually all ECT Consent Forms in general and psychiatric hospitals, these common health risks and disastrous effects including the possibility of death, and equally important non-medical alternatives to ECT, are never mentioned, with the rare exception of the Texas consent form. Consequently, fully informed consent to ECT is a sham, another psychiatric lie shamelessly and unethically promoted by the APA and psychiatry generally. (see Linda Andre's awesomely research book, *Doctors of Deception: What They Don't Want You to Know About Shock Treatment*, 2009)

I now want to take us through a brief history of survivor resistance against electroshock partly because the APA doesn't believe it exists and because the corporate media generally fail to cover or report our protests. In Canada, the struggle against electroshock started to become organized, more visible and vocal by the mid-1980s. However, in 1976 the Vancouver Mental Patient Association's newsletter *In a Nutshell* published a special shock issue featuring survivor testimony, personal stories and critical articles against shock. Four years later beginning in 1980, Toronto-based *Phoenix Rising* was the first Canadian antipsychiatry magazine to publish a regular anti-shock section or column ("Shock Waves") that profiled many personal stories, movement testimony and professional critiques about electroshock, *Phoenix* also published a "Shock Doctor List" that named those doctors and their hospital affiliations that administered and promoted electroshock, so did *Madness Network News* in San Francisco and Los Angeles. Berkeley was the first and only North American city to issue a ban on electroshock in its historic 1982 referendum ("Measure T") which was put on the city election ballot; 61% of the voters favoured a shock ban in their city – unfortunately quashed in court. During this time, the late shock and antipsychiatry activist Leonard Roy Frank inspired me and many other survivors and activists to get involved in the struggle against shock and the survivor liberation movement (e.g. International Conference For Human Rights and Against Psychiatric Oppression, MindFreedom International) that has publicly and repeatedly denounced electroshock and demanded abolition. In Fall 1983, the Ontario Coalition to Stop Electroshock (OCSE) was established; it held the first public hearings in Canada, and submitted a brief based largely on survivor testimony to the Ontario government's ECT Review Committee, which strongly recommended informed consent and other reforms, In January 1984, shock survivor-OCSE members persuaded the Toronto Board of Health to call a moratorium on electroshock, but the province overruled the Board's moratorium motion. In the summer

of 1984, three survivor members carried out 3 DAYS OF nonviolent civil disobedience, “a sit-in” in the Health Minister’s office - without arrest. Since the 1980s, several shock protests have been held almost yearly in Toronto, usually in front of ‘shock mills’ like the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry and Queen St. Mental Health Centre (currently both campuses of CAMH). Resistance Against Psychiatry (RAP) succeeded OCSE in 1988 and organized more protests. Since 2003 when the Coalition Against Psychiatric Assault (CAPA) was formed, CAPA organized around two major priorities: strategizing against electroshock and psychiatric drugs; for several years this political action organization successfully organized public rallies and protests against shock in Toronto, sister groups did the same in Montreal, Ottawa, and Cork, Ireland from 2008 to the present. Anti-shock protests during the last 5-6 years have exposed psychiatry’s sexist and ageist targeting of women and the elderly—2-3 times more women than men are shocked in Canada and the United States. CAPA’s protest theme “STOP SHOCKING OUR MOTHERS AND GRANDMOTHERS” was soon echoed in Montreal, Ottawa, and Cork, Ireland on Mother’s Day protests; it’s still relevant and timely.

A ban or moratorium on electroshock won’t happen soon because of the vested interests of psychiatry including the APA and CPA, transnational drug companies (Big Pharma) and the state; all are complicit in promoting lies and myths like “mental illness”, fraudulent DSM diagnoses like “ADHD”, “bipolar” and “schizophrenia”, as well as “safe and effective ECT” (an oxymoron) and “medication” (forced drugging). Survivors frequently experience such treatment as disempowerment, assault on personal identity, social control and torture. Given the fact that psychiatrists and other doctors constantly violate the legal-ethical principle of voluntary informed consent, it’s time to assert that there can be no informed consent to electroshock and psychiatric drugs (particularly in psychiatric facilities); informed consent in psychiatry is a cruel sham, a psychiatry-and-state sponsored lie

told to millions of vulnerable citizens, particularly women, children, people with disabilities, and the elderly, More specifically, we should challenge the psychiatric lie that an “ECT” grand mal seizure is “therapeutic” as medical nonsense; we should start demanding neurologists to break their unethical silence on shock. At the same time, let us organize against shock locally and globally, let us reach out to our brother and sister survivors, wherever they are, by re-dedicating and reactivating ourselves in the worldwide movement against electroshock, against all psychiatric oppression, and for human rights. Our health and lives are worth the struggle. Thank you.