

Obituary: Leonard Roy Frank (1932-2015)

Abstract

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Full-Text

Obituary

Leonard Roy Frank (1932–2015)

Leonard Roy Frank, a psychiatric survivor and activist in the patients' rights movement, was a beacon to psychiatric survivors. In 1962, he was committed to a psychiatric hospital after being diagnosed as 'paranoid schizophrenic' and given 50 insulin coma treatments and 35 ECT treatments. Later, he was on the staff of *Madness Network News*, a publication that was of great value in the early survivors' movement. In December 1973, he and Wade Hudson founded the Network Against Psychiatric Assault (NAPA), a patients' and survivors' advocacy group. That was an inspiration for the formation of MindFreedom. Leonard wrote multiple books such as *Webster's Quotationary*. His most famous book, *The History of Shock Treatment*, published in 1978, is the most detailed history of how and why ECT came to be; a must read for anyone interested in ECT. In it, he presents a completely documented history of this particular form of psychiatric assault. The Preface includes:

'Psychiatrists have written thousands of articles and books recording and purporting to explain the nature, techniques, and effects of shock treatment, and why and under what circumstances it is used. Most of these writings appear in professional journals and reflect a positive attitude toward the procedure. Someone reading them would get little sense of its seriously disabling effects and the horror and outrage experienced by many who have been shocked. Nor would it be apparent from these materials that there has emerged a small but growing number of professional and lay people who are highly critical of the procedure on moral, legal, and medical grounds.'

I met Leonard Frank at the second conference of the old International Centre for the Study of Psychiatry and Psychology formed in the early 1990s by Peter

Breggin; now the International Society for Ethical Psychiatry and Psychology. He was a guest speaker. When he got up and was introduced, he was a striking gentleman who was tall, thin, and angular with a long full beard down to his waist. He probably could have passed for John the Baptist. He was a powerful speaker and in his description of the 50 insulin shocks he underwent and the 35 ECT zaps he received, all I could think of was the time I was hit by lightning in Viet Nam, how that felt, and how this man was standing there in front of me talking about it. I have never cried listening to a lecture, but I sure did that time. A lot of us who knew him will miss him and his courage. Rest in peace Leonard.

Lloyd Ross