

Foreword (*Mary O'Hagan*)

Psychiatry Stripped Bare is a retrospective of the last 50 years of survivor activism through the pen and voice of Peter Lehmann.

Lehmann's advocacy was born, as it was for many of us, with his own harmful experience of psychiatry. Since the day he stopped taking neuroleptics in 1978, he has championed humanistic anti-psychiatry through his writing and publishing and through his local, national and international movement advocacy.

Psychiatry Stripped Bare interrogates the paternalistic and oppressive harms of psychiatry: especially psychiatric drugs and electroshock, but also institutionalisation and coercive treatment – both formal and informal. The collected papers in this book outline a world without psychiatric drugs and forced treatment. They explore alternatives grounded in human rights and mutuality, such as user/survivor-led support, advanced directives, support to withdraw from psychiatric drugs, community-based options for people in crisis, and holistic approaches from the Global South.

Psychiatry Stripped Bare weaves together all the main themes of the international user/survivor movement over the last 50-plus years. Lehmann has witnessed many conflicts and splits within the movement. He is clear that people in the movement agree much more than we disagree, and we need to respect each other as we navigate and learn from our differences. Lehmann has also successfully used the support of allies who share the critique and aims as the movement.

Like Lehmann, my participation in the movement spans several decades. This gives us a rich history to look back on. We would both like to have seen the world bend much more towards the vision of 'humanistic anti-psychiatry.' We have seen pockets of progress but there have also been setbacks. Sadly, there are signs of more setbacks in countries where populist authoritarianism is taking hold, with its hostility to difference, suppression of freedom and undermining of democratic norms. Our cause will not be completed in one lifetime, or even two, which is why we need to pass the baton to younger generations of users and survivors. Some younger people tell me the pioneers of the movement are their inspiration. I reply to them that they are our hope for the future.

In the words of Martin Luther King: "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice." I share Lehmann's view that the struggle will continue until justice, equality and a human-rights based system of support is fully realised for all people who experience mental distress.

If you want to better understand our stories and struggles and the values, standpoints and history of the movement, read this book. If you work in the psychosocial system or want to work there, read this book. If you or someone you care about is interacting with psychiatry, read this book; it will give you guidance, information, inspiration and encouragement.

Mary O'Hagan

Director of Lived Experience at Wellways, Australia

Author of 'Madness Made Me: A Memoir', winner of a silver medal in the international Independent Publisher Book Awards 2015

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