

THE BOSTON CONFERENCE DEMANDS

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On May 30, 1976 participants in the **North American Conference on Human Rights and Psychiatric Oppression** marched on the Massachusetts Mental Health Center and presented the following demands:

We demand the total abolition of psychiatric institutions, since the function they serve is to imprison, torture, and dehumanize people and not to help them. Until we can realize this goal, we make the following interim demands:

1. Mental patients demand the right to be informed in clear language of the effects of any "treatment" (drugs, electro-shock, psychosurgery, etc.) offered. We demand the right to refuse any "treatment", or to withdraw our consent at any time after we have given it, without reprisals.
2. We demand the right to uncensored communication by telephone, letter and in person, with whomever we wish and at any time. Telephones should be available on each ward.
3. We demand the right to be paid at the prevailing rate for non-mental patients for any work assignments performed while in the hospital - at a rate never to be less than the minimum wage. We demand an end to the practice of keeping psychiatric records of patients. Until such time, we demand the right to see our records at any time and the complete confidentiality of our records.
4. We demand an end to physical abuse of mental patients. We demand an end to the practices of seclusion and restraints to make us conform. We demand an end to sexual abuse of mental patients.
5. We demand the right to decent, humane living conditions while in the hospital.
6. We demand the right to a sexual life while in the hospital and the right to our sexual preference.
7. We demand the right to remain silent during the initial and subsequent psychiatric interviews and the right to have legal counsel or ex-patient advocates present, as anything we say might be used against us in future legal proceedings. We demand the right to have legal counsel who represent our interest as defined by us.
8. We demand the right to financial assistance while in the hospital. The state has an obligation to supply us with spending money for things that make life in the hospital bearable: cigarettes, food from the canteen, phone calls, writing materials and postage, transportation (especially for seeking housing and jobs), etc.
9. We demand the right to an alternative to incarceration in a mental hospital. If we decide we want a hospital, we demand the right to the hospital of our choice.
10. We demand an end to involuntary commitment and "conditional voluntary" commitment. We demand that all hospitalization be completely voluntary with no strings attached.
11. Until such time as commitment is abolished, we demand an automatic hearing outside the hospital for all patients facing commitment. We demand the automatic appointment of free legal counsel for the hearing, and the right to a number of interviews with the attorney before the hearing.
12. We demand an end to repercussions (such as kicking patients out of the hospital) when we exercise our right to refuse treatment or engage in political activity.
13. We demand the right to be adequately provided with income and housing when we leave the hospital. We demand jobs or easily-accessible vocational training of our choice for those who want it.
14. We demand the right to organize patients' rights groups in the hospital and to hold meetings from which staff is excluded. We demand that ex-patient advocates be freely allowed to attend these meetings and have free access to patients who want to see them.
15. We demand the right to immediate and adequate medical treatment from the doctor of our choice, when we request it.
16. We demand that all medical procedures be clearly explained to us. We demand the right to refuse sterilization and all other medical and surgical procedures.
17. We demand an end to the practice of "behavior modification".
18. We demand that hospitals provide nutritious food, including adequate food for vegetarians. We demand the right to choose what we eat and how much.
19. We demand the right to be involved in decision-making at all levels of the institution, including decisions about the making of hospital rules, the hiring and firing of staff, and the way in which money is used. We demand that mental patients make up 50% of any governing body.
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