



Grassroots Leadership
Leadership in Recovery Retreat
October 7-9, 2008

We are following in the footsteps of some amazing leaders who came before us. Some of their stories recorded here. Join us in celebrating their sacrifice and strength. They changed the world for the rest of us!

Clifford Whittingham Beers was born in New Haven, Connecticut, studied at Yale University, and began a professional career in the insurance industry. In 1900 he was institutionalized for a mental breakdown after a suicide attempt and diagnosed as manic-depressive. Confined to both public and private institutions over a three-year period, Beers found the treatment of mental patients inhumane and ineffective.

When his efforts to complain directly to hospital administrators were ignored, Beers smuggled letters out to state officials, and his efforts met with some success. By 1903 Beers was able to return to his career, but continued to work on behalf of reforming the treatment of the mentally ill.

In 1908 Beers published *A Mind That Found Itself*, a popular autobiographical study of his confinement and recovery. After the publication of this work, and with the general support of the medical community, Beers became a leading figure in the movement to reform the treatment of, and attitudes toward, mental illness. In the same year his book was published, Beers founded the Connecticut Society for Mental Hygiene. This organization lobbied for improved treatment of mental patients and heightened public awareness of mental illness. In 1909, Beers organized the National Committee for Mental Hygiene and served as its secretary until 1939. He also helped establish the American Foundation for Mental Hygiene in 1928.

Beers's influence eventually spread beyond the United States. In 1918 he helped Clarence M. Hincks found a mental hygiene society in Canada, the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene. Beers was active in organizing the International Congress on Mental Health in 1930, and three years later received an award for his achievements in the mental health field from the National Institute of Social Science. Beers's autobiography remained popular and influential, having gone into 26 printings by the time of his death in 1943.



Clifford Whittingham Beers

Dorothea L. Dix (1802-1887) was a Maine-born schoolteacher who changed the way Canada and the U.S. cared for those who were mentally ill and poor. She wrote, lectured and informed the public and legislators in all the states east of the Mississippi River about the deplorable conditions in mental institutions whose inmates were treated more like criminals than patients.

In her biography of Dix, author Jenn Bumb writes that “in all she played a major role in founding 32 mental hospitals, 15 schools for the feeble-minded, a school for the blind and numerous training facilities for nurses.”

Dix became an advocate for mentally ill patients in March 1841 when, at the age of 39, she visited the East Cambridge Jail in the Boston area to teach a Sunday School class for women inmates. “Within the confines of this jail she observed prostitutes, drunks, criminals, retarded individuals and the mentally ill were all housed together in unheated, unfurnished and foul-smelling quarters.”

She successfully lobbied the Massachusetts legislature to support and fund care for mentally ill patients at Worcester State Hospital.



Dorothea L. Dix



Elizabeth Ware Packard

Elizabeth Ware was married to Reverend Packard and the couple had six children. The family resided in [Kankakee County, Illinois](#). For many years, the Packards appeared to have had a peaceful marriage.

After years of marriage, Elizabeth Packard began to question her husband's beliefs and began expressing opinions that were contrary to his. While the main subject of dispute was religion, the couple also disagreed on how their children should be raised, family finances, and the issue of slavery.

The law at the time stated that no person could be committed to an insane asylum without a public hearing. But there was one exception; a husband could have his wife committed without a public hearing or her consent. In 1860, Rev. Packard judged that his wife was "slightly insane" and considered having her committed. He had a doctor, J.W. Brown, speak with his wife (the doctor pretended to be a sewing machine salesman). During their conversation, Elizabeth complained about how her husband tried to dominate her and how he told other people she was insane. Dr Brown reported this conversation back to Theophilus (along with the observation that Mrs Packard "exhibited a great dislike to me"). Theophilus decided to have Elizabeth committed. She learned of this decision on June 18, 1860, when the county sheriff arrived at the Packard home to take her into custody.

Elizabeth Packard spent the next three years at the Illinois State Hospital at Jacksonville. She was regularly questioned by the doctors there but refused to agree that she was insane or to change her religious views. In 1863, in part due to pressure from her children who wished her released, the doctors declared that she was incurable and discharged her.

Theophilus still believed that his wife was insane. When she was returned to the family home, he took her clothes away and had her boarded up inside her room. However while the law allowed a husband to have his wife committed to an asylum, it was illegal for a husband to keep his wife locked up in her own home. Elizabeth was able to throw a letter to a friend out a window. A writ of [*habeas corpus*](#) was filed on her behalf.

Elizabeth's lawyers, Stephen Moore and John W. Orr, called witnesses from the neighbourhood who testified that they never saw Elizabeth exhibit any signs of insanity. The last witness was a doctor named Duncanson who interviewed Elizabeth Packard and testified that while he did not necessarily agree with all her religious beliefs "I do not call people insane because they differ with me...I pronounce her a sane woman and wish we had a nation of such women."

The jury took only seven minutes to find in Elizabeth Packard's favor. She was legally declared sane and Judge Charles Starr issued an order that she should not be confined. Elizabeth did not return to her home. While the Packards never formally divorced, they remained separated for the rest of their lives. Elizabeth did stay close to her children and retained their support.

Elizabeth realized how narrow her legal victory had been. While she had escaped confinement, it was largely a measure of luck and the underlying principles which had led to her commitment still existed. She founded the Anti-Insane Asylum Society and published several books, including *Marital Power Exemplified, or Three Years Imprisonment for Religious Belief* (1864), *Great Disclosure of Spiritual Wickedness in High Places* (1865), *The Mystic Key or the Asylum Secret Unlocked* (1866), and *The Prisoners' Hidden Life, Or Insane Asylums Unveiled* (1868) ^[1]. In 1867, Illinois passed a "Bill for the Protection of Personal Liberty" which guaranteed all people accused of insanity, including wives, the right to a public hearing. She also saw similar laws passed in three other states.



Alice Paul

Alice Paul of Moorestown, New Jersey, was appointed chairman of the Congressional Committee of the National American Woman Suffrage Association in 1913, and went on to head the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage and the NWP.

She served six prison terms for woman suffrage, including three in England and three in the United States. In October 1917, she was sentenced to seven months for picketing. This sentence was later known as the 'Night of Terror', Nov. 15, 1917 because the warden at the Occoquan Workhouse in Virginia ordered his guards to teach a lesson to the suffragists imprisoned there since they dared to picket Woodrow Wilson's White House for the right to vote. Forty prison guards wielding clubs and their warden's blessing went on a rampage against the 33 women wrongly convicted of 'obstructing sidewalk traffic.' Affidavits describe the guards grabbing, dragging, beating, choking, slamming, pinching, twisting and kicking the women.

When Alice Paul, embarked on a hunger strike, guards tied her to a chair, forced a tube down her throat and poured liquid into her. She was tortured like this for weeks until word was smuggled out to the press. She served five weeks before being released on account of her condition from hunger striking.

In August 1918 she was sentenced to 10 days for participation in Lafayette Square meeting, and in January 1919, to five days for lighting a watch fire.

President Woodrow Wilson and his cronies try to persuade a psychiatrist to declare Alice Paul insane so that she could be permanently institutionalized. Luckily, that doctor refused. Alice Paul was strong, he said, and brave. That didn't make her crazy. The doctor admonished Woodrow Wilson and his associates; he said that courage in women is often mistaken for insanity.

On Aug 18, 1920, Tennessee was the 36th state to ratify (for women's right to vote) and Alice Paul of the Woman's Party proclaimed the triumph of the cause for which the Woman's Party was founded--the national enfranchisement of the women of America.



Lois Curtis (on left)

L.C. and E.W. spent the majority of their lives in mental institutions. For several years, their treatment teams acknowledged that they no longer met the requirements for involuntary confinement, but refused to release them to a community-based program with appropriate services.

They filed suit under the Americans With Disabilities Act in 1995. Their lawyers stated that the State of Georgia could no longer provide disability services to a mentally or physically disabled person in an institutional setting if he or she could be served in a more integrated, community-based setting.

The State of Georgia appealed a favorable decision of the federal District Court granting summary judgment for LC and EW. Oral argument before the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals was in November 1997. The Eleventh Circuit ruled that the State's failure to provide

integrated community services under these circumstances violated the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The State appealed to the United States Supreme Court to reverse that ruling. Now known as *Olmstead v. L.C. and E.W.*, it was heard on April 21, 1999. This is the first U.S. Supreme Court case involving the "integration mandate" of the Americans With Disabilities Act. Although both plaintiffs were receiving community services in response to the lawsuit, the case continued because the State of Georgia had not changed its policies, and the situation could have arisen again.

After LC and EW moved from institutional life into the community, each progressed in ways that reveal the monotony of their former circumstances -- for example, LC likes long neighborhood walks and has (after many years) reconnected with her mom and sister. She visits the mall and picks out her own clothes. She has favorite meals and has learned to plan a menu. She quit a 3-pack a day cigarette habit. She speaks clearly and communicates well. She has two close friends at the group home. She loved her first airplane trip to Washington, and her meeting with a variety of media in connection with the Supreme Court consideration of her case.

Lois Curtis, is LC. She is one of the original *Olmstead* plaintiffs, and she has been busy since being freed from a lifetime of repeated institutionalizations. She enjoys living in her own home, with the aid of community based services; she has reconnected with her family, and she has made new friends.

Her own experiences with institutionalization, and the [Supreme Court case that freed her](#), have prompted a passion for advocacy. "I want to tell everybody, so people can get out."

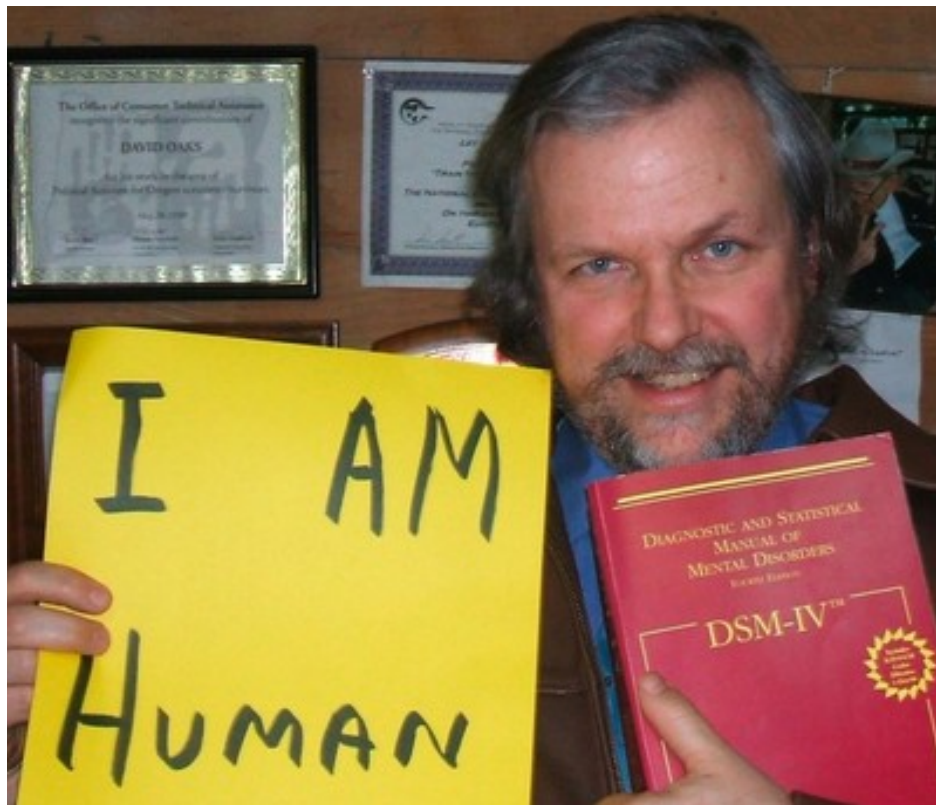
[The Tubman African American Museum](#) recognized Lois with the "Act of Courage Award" for "standing up and taking action during challenging circumstances to make a difference for yourself and the lives of others."

Lois has also found success as a folk artist, and has had several well received shows at several galleries, including Arts for All Gallery in the Healy Building in downtown Atlanta, the Temple Gallery in Decatur, and other galleries throughout the U.S.

David W. Oaks, director of MindFreedom International, has been a psychiatric survivor human rights activist since 1976. David was a working class student attending Harvard University on scholarship in the 1970's when he experienced psychiatric institutionalization five times.

He was diagnosed as schizophrenic and underwent forced psychiatric drugging and solitary confinement. Harvard's student volunteer agency Phillips Brooks House placed David with one of the early psychiatric survivor human rights organizations, Mental Patients Liberation Front. David wrote his senior paper about community organizing with psychiatric survivors, and graduated with honors in 1977.

As well as his activist work in the field of human rights in the mental health system, David has also worked in the environmental, peace and social justice movements. He lives with his wife Debra in Oregon and loves camping and gardening. David has presented on topics such as "community organizing for independent systems change in the mental health system" to a diverse range of participants including in Chile, Norway, Ireland, Turkey and throughout the USA.



David W. Oaks

Pat Deegan is a psychiatric survivor, having first been diagnosed with schizophrenia as a teenager. She received her doctorate in clinical psychology from Duquesne University in 1984. Pat coined the term "*Personal Medicine*" which she defines as "the things that give life meaning and make life worth living."

Pat is an activist in the consumer/survivor/ex-patient movement and a co-founder of the National Empowerment Center Inc., which was a federally funded, national technical assistance center run by consumer/survivors. Between 1992 and September of 2001 she held the position of Director of Training at the National Empowerment Center, Inc. In this capacity she developed many self-help tools and resources to support people in their recovery, including a booklet on coping with distressing voices and a training on working with people who appear unmotivated.

Since 1997, Pat has been involved in documenting ex-patient perspectives on the history of mental health services. She has made a film about that project called *The Politics of Memory*. She partnered with African American and Native American colleagues Vanessa Jackson and Pemina Yellow Bird to explore modern issues of racial disparity in healthcare through the exploration of historically segregated asylums in America. She has helped to collect the oral history of survivors of mental institutions and advocate for the inclusion of these voices in historical accounts of mental healthcare.

Pat has also successfully led a group of ex-patients in restoring forgotten cemeteries at Danvers State Hospital in Massachusetts and in securing \$4.26 million dollars in new housing through the sale of that hospital. Pat is now a leader of a national effort of people with psychiatric disabilities to properly restore and memorialize those buried at state hospitals. She has helped to establish cemetery restoration groups in 21 states and has co-produced a film about the effort titled *From Numbers To Names*. She has lectured about the importance of state hospital cemetery restoration before all of the mental health commissioners in the United States and has twice been invited to address the issue at national summit meetings of state hospital superintendents.



Pat Deegan

Dan Fisher is a person who has completely recovered from schizophrenia. He was hospitalized several times prior to becoming a psychiatrist. He is one of the few psychiatrists in the country who publicly discusses his recovery from mental illness. He is a role model for others who are struggling to recover, and his life dispels the myth that people do not recover from mental illness. His recovery and work in the field were recognized by his selection as a member of the White House Commission on Mental Health.

Dan received his AB. from Princeton University, his Ph.D. in biochemistry from the University of Wisconsin and his M.D. from George Washington University. He is a board-certified psychiatrist who completed his residency at Harvard Medical School. He is presently an Executive Director of the National Empowerment Center and a practicing psychiatrist at Riverside Outpatient Clinic, Wakefield, MA.

Dan travels to all parts of the country to conduct workshops, give keynote addresses, teach classes, and organize conferences for consumers/survivors, families, and mental health providers to promote recovery of people with labeled with mental illness by incorporating the principles of empowerment. He has been featured on many radio and television programs, including CNN Special Report. In addition he is a researcher having carried out research into neurotransmitters at the National Institute of Mental Health and on the ways that people recover. Along with Laurie Ahern, he developed the Empowerment Model of Recovery and the PACE/Recovery program to shift the system to a recovery orientation. He was recognized for this work by being selected to Clifford Beers, National Mental Health Association Award and the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law's advocacy award.



Dan Fisher (on right)