

DR. BONNIE BURSTOW - OISE/UT, COALITION AGAINST PSYCHIATRIC ASSAULT
The Withering Away of Psychiatry: An Attrition Model for Antipsychiatry.

For decades antipsychiatry activists have called for an end to psychiatry but the movement has offered little vision of how to bring about that end. An unpopular movement such as antipsychiatry which is at odds with the state and prevailing hegemony begins at a serious disadvantage. It is further disadvantaged if it has no vision about how to move closer to the goal which it espouses. Drawing on principles gleaned from prison abolition, in this keynote, the speaker will take early steps in what she hoped will be a collective effort to fill the void. She articulated the bare bones of an attrition model for antipsychiatry. Central questions and how to use them were spelt out. Guidelines were also articulated which antipsychiatry activists can use to stay on course and make difficult choices. In the process, insight was provided into the questions: What do we do? What should we support? Not support? If we have limited energy, and we want to move closer to our goals, to what might we best devote the majority of our effort? How can we ensure that we are not spinning our wheels or undermining our own goals? Significantly, while these guidelines legitimate certain current activist trends, they also cast doubt on others. Moreover, they put antipsychiatry activists in a position to wholeheartedly support some initiatives from within the mad/survivor movement to which they currently give short shrift.

An antipsychiatry activist and feminist, the speaker, Dr. Bonnie Burstow, has been active in the antipsychiatry movement since the early 1980's, as a member of Phoenix Rising, as co-Chair of the Ontario Coalition Against Electroshock, as chair of Resistance Against Psychiatry, more currently, as chair of Coalition Against Psychiatric Assault. She is a prolific writer, whose works include Shrink-Resistant (co-edited with Don Weitz) and "Electroshock as a Form of Violence Against Women." She is a University of Toronto faculty member who teaches from an antipsychiatry perspective.