

Mental health scandals signal Harvard role in 'mind control' experiments

by Ira Liebowitz

A flurry of lawsuits this year prompted by the "suspicious or unexplained" deaths of approximately 10 inmates at the Bridgewater State Maximum Security Mental Hospital in Belton, Massachusetts, has challenged longstanding conditions of patient neglect in the mental health system of Gov. Michael Dukakis and his predecessors in Massachusetts.

The cases have focused attention on a network of forensic psychiatric institutions in Massachusetts, centered at Harvard Medical School, including a Harvard-run teaching-hospital called McLean Hospital in Belton, which runs Bridgewater, and a "Program on Psychiatry and the Law" at McLean that is run from Boston's Massachusetts Mental Hospital.

Studies have long ranked the Massachusetts system 42nd among all 50 states, but according to one attorney, the problem is not underfunding. There's something else systematically wrong that must account for notorious staffing and administration abuses. In addition to documented abuse and unexplained death, two of the lawsuits cite a practice of substituting psychotropic medication for meaningful therapy programs.

According to one intelligence specialist, Bridgewater has been suspected of running "mind control" experiments on its approximately 450 patients. This may even date back to the notorious intelligence community-funded MK-Ultra experiments in "mind control" in the late 1950s, which sought to create "Manchurian candidate" assassins with drugs and behavior modification. MK-Ultra also had a lot to do with launching drug use and cults in the youth ferment and Counterculture Project of the 1960s. According to Senate investigations by the "Kennedy" and "Church" Committees, which only concentrated on the earliest phases of the project, Dr. Richard Hyde of Harvard was one of the recipients of CIA funding grants for this research.

Genesis of a crisis

The Massachusetts Mental System was studied in 1979 by a Select State Senate Investigative Committee, which found that systematically, "seclusion and restraint practices [on patients], were often used illegally and with no justification." The committee investigation led to a reform bill which passed the legislature but was vetoed by then-Gov. Edward King. In 1984, Dukakis was reelected governor, in part on a

pledge to reform the mental health system.

Then something happened at Bridgewater. In 1985 a private company, Goldberg Associates of Salem, Mass., won the contract to run Bridgewater from McLean Hospital, and patient suicides and related "unexplained deaths" began to rise.

After six patients died in March-April 1986, the union representing corrections officers at the facility, AFSCME 503, decided to file class action grievances against the hospital for its systematic understaffing. This was done in November.

Civil liberties suit

In July 1986, attorneys McLeish and Landau, along with Marjorie Heins of the Massachusetts Civil Liberties Union, brought a class action suit before Superior Court Justice James J. Lynch, in behalf of Bridgewater inmates Shawn P. O'Sullivan and James McKellar, as well as O'Sullivan's mother, Maureen Hoyt of Hyannis, and all other inmates. It charged violation of state statutes and patients' constitutional rights, and a failure "to provide even minimally adequate care and treatment. The majority of patients receive psychotropic medication rather than any group or individual therapy or treatment program."

Defendants are Dukakis and the two cabinet officials who administer the hospital: Philip Johnston, Secretary of Human Services, and Michael Fair, the state Commissioner of Corrections. Also involved are State Attorney General Tim Shannon, medical directors (under Johnston), Dr. Mel Goodstein and Dr. Jorge Veliz, and the Correction Superintendent (under Fair), Charles W. Gaughan.

Bridgewater is a maximum security facility, and is run by the state prison system. Its 450 inmates divide into one-third who are criminally insane and are transferred from prisons, one-third who are charged with crimes but who require psychiatric evaluation of competency to stand trial, and one-third who are civilly committed mental patients who are considered violent. The hospital mixes the three categories of inmates. Gross violations, usually in the instances of deaths, involve prisoners confined naked in "seclusion rooms," of which there are 20.

A second suit against Bridgewater followed. Defendants

include former Massachusetts Attorney General Elliott Richardson, who was involved in a fight over Bridgewater in 1967.

Fred Wiseman, a Harvard lawyer turned filmmaker, had received support from Richardson, and then Bridgewater administrators Dr. Ames Robey, Dr. Ross, and others, to enter the facility and produce a documentary that, it was hoped, would prompt reform. After producing "Ticut Follies," suddenly, inexplicably, Richardson turned around in 1967 and brought suit before Superior Court where he got an order to suppress showing the film to anyone except psychiatrists.

The powerful film is banned to this day. The argument was, and is, that "rights to privacy" of these sad, brutalized victims would be violated by publicly showing the film!

A third suit has now also been brought by Department of Justice Civil Rights Division attorney Steven Schwartz, against Worcester Mental Hospital for failure to meet state standards, and its practice of "irresponsible dispersal of psychotropic drugs."

Somehow, a bootleg version of the "Ticut" film was obtained and excerpted Aug. 25 on a Ted Koppel "Nightline" special on Bridgewater, titled "Ticut Follies." Commentators included Elliott Richardson, Wiseman, the MCLU lawyers, a former patient, and a Dr. Thomas Gutheil of Harvard's "Program on Psychiatry and the Law," which helped, or helps handle legal matters for McLean Hospital and Bridgewater, and who argued for continued suppression of the film.

The devastating film shows inmates (as of 1967) walking about completely naked. Wiseman's attorney, Blair Perry, described some of it on the "Nightline" show, "You see guards abusing patients. You see one inmate who is slapped by a guard." The excerpt is shown. He goes on, "You see death—well not the actual death, but you see someone being fed with a tube down his throat, and as I recall, he died the same day." This portion is shown.

On the Koppel broadcast, the following exchange between Wiseman and Richardson occurred:

Richardson: "I thought it was a tough call, but I thought that on balance it was a bad thing to assume that the 'right to know,' [view the film], outweighed the rights of these individuals" [to privacy].

Wiseman replied: "The state then used the privacy argument as a way of suppressing the film. . . . They were upset by the criticism, thought their political careers would be damaged, particularly Elliott Richardson." Richardson, who went on to be the U.S. Attorney General under Richard Nixon, replied "That's nonsense."

The Harvard nexus

In part as a result of evidence in the lawsuits, a network of facilities linked to Bridgewater, but centered on Harvard Medical School, is coming under scrutiny. The possibility of

the MK-Ultra experiments having been continued, even to the present day, is also under scrutiny.

For example, it is known that the notorious Harvard professor turned LSD-guru of mass druggings, Timothy Leary, was linked to later phases as the broader "Counterculture's Rock-Drug Project" got under way. According to one student who studied under Leary, and opposed his druggings, by the middle to late 1960s, Leary was running drug-laced "group therapy" sessions at Concord Hospital for his Harvard students. These "groups" turned out many of the cadre for the counterculture operation.

The network includes:

- A Harvard Medical teaching-hospital in Belton, Mass., McLean Hospital, which hired and managed all staff at Bridgewater until 1985.

- Dr. John Clark of Harvard, who has held high staff positions at the spooky McLean Hospital since 1959. Clark currently runs an allegedly anti-cult and terrorism intelligence center, the American Family Foundation (AFF) in Lexington, Mass., which also involves Dr. Louis Jollyon West of UCLA (a recipient of MK-Ultra funding during the late 1950s), Dr. Margaret Singer of Berkeley University, and Father James LeBar of New York.

AFF purports to oppose mind-control practices of the cults spawned out of the "Counterculture Project." It is currently known to specialize in mercenary operations oriented to gaining court-awarded control of "family inheritances" on the basis of high-priced psychiatric testimony attesting "incompetence" of individuals who are allegedly in cults and who are heirs of prominent families. This is conducted in conjunction with AFF affiliates across the country, such as the Chicago-based "Cult Awareness Network."

The AFF's involvement in these "Man in the Iron Mask"-style operations, also suggests that this type of operation within the mental hospitals may also be part of the secret concealed within the "Ticut Follies" enigma.

Psychiatry and the law

The networks active in and around Harvard and Bridgewater have spread out across the country: Dr. Ames Robey, director of Bridgewater in 1967, went on to administer the state forensic psychiatric system in New Hampshire, and also ran the Michigan and Maine systems.

Another forensic director at McLean Hospital, and associate of Gutheil's Program on Psychiatry and the Law from 1978-80, was Dr. Park Elliott Dietz. Dietz was an expert witness in the trial of John Hinckley, who attempted to assassinate President Reagan.

An associate of John Norton Moore, a consultant to the Intelligence Oversight Board, Dietz now runs the Institute on Terrorism and the Law at the University of Virginia. He is also reported to be a top consultant on terrorism and suspected Manchurian candidates for the FBI's Behavioral Sciences Division at Quantico, Virginia.