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1990

**NORTH AMERICAN SUPPORT-IN
TO CELEBRATE THE HUMAN SPIRIT**

Dear Friends,

May 4, 1990

We're looking forward to welcoming you to the first **North American Support-In to Celebrate the Human Spirit and Break the Silence About Psychiatric Oppression**. We'll be gathering soon in New York City for this historic event and the beginning of a new coalition against forced psychiatric procedures. About thirty people across the country worked together for many months to organize this event. There has been growing excitement among us as the time nears because this will be the first time groups **throughout the country** will have organized events supporting our movement's traditional protest at the APA convention. This will be the first time groups will form an ongoing coalition at the protest, the first time there will be a counter-conference of alternatives, and the first time groups besides ex-psychiatric inmates will be supporting our efforts.

We've checked out the locations of the conference and protests, and all are excellent, especially the American Youth Hostel with its newly remodeled rooms. There are food stores, shops, and restaurants right across the street in a multi-cultural neighborhood that's fun to walk around in and near both Central and Riverside Parks.

Plan to arrive by 5:00pm Friday to have time to register, settle in, take a walk, and grab a bite to eat. Welcome and opening circle will start at 7:00pm, and various activities will continue through 1:00pm Tuesday, May 15. We've added Monday afternoon workshops to the schedule. Those staying at the American Youth Hostel (AYH) must vacate their rooms by 11:00am Tuesday.

Travel directions to the AYH and information about the hostel and the neighborhood are enclosed. Bring comfortable warm and cool clothes, hope, walking shoes, common sense, rain gear, sense of humor, sunglasses, sunscreen, umbrella for shade at the protests, toiletries, and lots of love. At the AYH, you can rent sheets for \$3, buy a towel for \$2, and use blankets and pillows for free. You **can** bring your own sheets and towels to the hostel, but sleeping bags are not allowed due to health reasons. If you can, bring cloth banners **without** sticks for the demonstrations (these can be made from sheets), dance tapes for Saturday night, and literature to share. Other things you might consider bringing are musical instruments, tapes, song books, pillows to sit on at meetings, film & camera, drawing materials, and food to cook and/or share. **You will be responsible for protecting your own valuables.**

Please think about what caucus group(s) you'd like to create or join, such as survivors of involuntary commitment, sexual abuse, shock, attempted suicide, seclusion & restraint, or psychotropic drugs; criminally committed, mental health advocates and workers, psychiatry & spirituality, women, homelessness, people on SSI,

people institutionalized as young ones, elders, young adults, gays/lesbians/bisexuals, Blacks, Asians, Jews, Latinas & Latinos, Native Americans, physically disabled, etc. These groups will give reports to the conference, and the coalition will use this information to help us plan which issues we will address in 1990-91.

At registration, you will be asked to join an affinity group for the duration of the Support-In. This group will meet Friday evening to get acquainted and will keep in touch throughout the Support-In. Your affinity group could be your caucus group or a work group helping with registration, peacekeeping, sign-making, etc. Or it could just be a generic group. Think about what you'd like it to be. We'll also be asking all participants to sign up at registration for a small job. This will help the conference run smoothly and promote our vision of a cooperative, self-run coalition.

Those who'd like to be peacekeepers--keeping our protests peaceful and the conference disruption-free--should arrive at the AYH by 12:30pm Friday, May 11. David Oaks will train peacekeepers in nonviolence from 12:30 to 4:30pm in the room where he'll be sleeping.

We expect this conference to develop many new leaders of our movement and enhance the leadership of those already involved. We need all the leaders we can get in order to break the silence and spread the word about changes to be made. Leadership has traditionally been seen as a place to spread hierarchy and authoritarianism. But we need leaders who can do the opposite: model mutual support, giving **everyone** a chance to participate and be heard, respect each other, promote each other's best thinking, and end divisiveness. While this is no easy task, we are the ones best suited for it because we're sick of hierarchical styles. It's really not necessary to compete amongst ourselves for any leadership spots because there are so many groups and tasks needing cooperative leadership; we 'll all be needed as leaders in many places. We are a wonderful, spirited, creative group of people, each deserving great respect and appreciation. Let's give that to each other at the Support-In. And as the Beatles said:

"And in the end, the love you take is equal to the love you make."

Looking forward to seeing you soon!

Janet

Janet Foner
Co-coordinator, Support-In