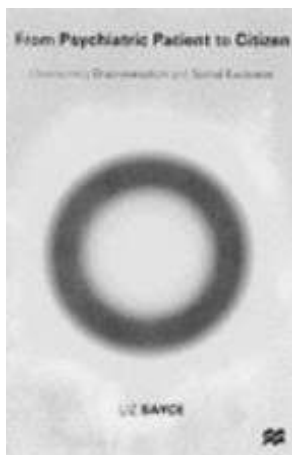**From Psychiatric Patient to Citizen**
(St. Martin's Press, 2000, 280 pages)
by Liz Sayce

Reviewed by Riley Olstead[1]

Since the 1970s deinstitutionalisation movement, researchers have been concerned with the discrimination faced by people diagnosed with mental health problems re-entering communities. Insurmountable data has shown that mentally ill people are continuously confronted with obstacles to full social and economic life, making the question of how to enable access and participation a serious and pressing matter. Sayce attempts to address this question by providing an assessment of the ways in which prejudice impacts upon the lives of mentally ill people, and the various tactics for challenging systemic forms of discrimination. Sayce assesses the successes and failures of past practices and engineers a vision of a new means by which oppressive attitudes, media representations, government legislation and institutional policies can be challenged. This book is based primarily on research undertaken in the United States and the United Kingdom in the late 1990s, however, it is argued that the text has relevance for organizing beyond these boundaries. The book is organized in two sections. The first section focuses on establishing a framework for understanding the ways in which discrimination and exclusion is experienced by persons considered mentally ill. Accompanying this discussion, Sayce presents four models currently utilized to combat discrimination; the brain disease model, the individual growth model, the libertarian model and the disability inclusion model. Assessments of these models include examples of local movements and the shortfalls linked with specific strategies. For instance, the American organization, The National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) has aggressively promoted a brain disease model, arguing that mental illness has a biological basis. Consequently, NAMI

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contends that mentally ill people should not be discriminated against as they have no control over what is a 'genetic problem'. However, as Sayce points out, this approach ignores the implications that the social environment may have in creating/sustaining mental illness, which may limit the possibilities for treatment and intervention. Although not without pointing out its problems, Sayce advocates for the disability inclusion model - a standpoint that emphasizes that mentally ill people have a right to equal citizenship based on fair opportunities and freedom from coercion.

The section second of the text elaborates on how the disability inclusion model might be operationalized in a disability rights movement through law reform, public debate, media representations, education movements and grassroots organizing. Some of the suggestions arising out of the analysis include the need for new skills training for mental health workers, alliance building with police services and disability activists, and less emphasis on the debate as to the causes of mental illness. This debate, Sayce argues, is divisive and detracts from the possibility of a collective effort against discrimination.

A number of concerns arise out of this text. While certainly useful in highlighting the implications of discrimination and efforts to discourage it, this book reproduces some of the problematic assumptions plaguing contemporary disability activism. For instance, the text advocates reformist strategies such as preparing educational campaigns to tackle discriminatory attitudes, lobbying governments to broaden current legislation protecting disabled peoples, and generating inclusive slogans during out-reach campaigns. At best these strategies have earned marginal gains for mentally ill people. At worst, they are mechanisms used to react to 'backsliding' - or the loss of certain gains made through social activism and organizing. Sayce, thus, operationalizes social change in a very limited way as she fails to make the connections between various forms of oppression and the fundamental ways in which society is socially organized. For example, suggesting that education campaigns could relieve individual forms of discrimination between bosses and employees neglects that employment for all 'citizens' is inimical to the ways in which capital operates and sustains itself. Thus, this text demonstrates the pitfalls of the disability inclusion model by revealing the ways in which a 'rights and responsibilities' approach neglects a critique of the ways in which social structure maintains inequality. It is not enough to suggest that we can tinker with the dials and 'fix' what is an inherently exclusionary social arrangement. We need to participate in radical forms of social challenge that disrupt the core of privilege and stop asking to be invited to eat at their table.