

## RELEASE

### 2007 Szasz Award Winners Announced!

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### **VLADIMIR BUKOVKY, ROSS LEVATTER THOMAS SZASZ CIVIL LIBERTIES AWARDS**

Former Soviet dissident Vladimir Bukovsky, who spent years in psychiatric prisons for opposing the brutal communist regime, and Arizona physician and author Ross Levatter were named winners of the 2007 Thomas Szasz Awards for Outstanding Contributions to the Cause of Civil Liberties. Bukovsky won in the general category, Levatter in the professional category.

The Szasz Award, named for the prominent opponent of psychiatric coercion and other forms of oppression in the name of health, is a tribute conferred annually on persons or organizations, American or foreign, judged to have significantly advanced the cause of civil liberty. The award is intended to encourage civil libertarians to persevere in the battle to protect personal autonomy from state encroachment.

The general award is given to an author or activist who has done exceptional work to popularize the importance of civil liberties. The professional award is given to a specialist, such as a psychiatrist, physician, psychologist, sociologist, or economist, who has made advances in civil liberties on a theoretical level. The winners each receive a plaque and \$1,000.

According to *Wikipedia*, Bukovsky “was one of the first to expose the use of psychiatric imprisonment against political prisoners in the USSR. He spent a total of twelve years in Soviet prisons, labor camps and in psikhushkas, forced-treatment psychiatric hospitals used by the regime as special prisons.” Bukovsky was arrested and imprisoned several times for organizing events on behalf of persecuted dissents.

“In 1971,” according to *Wikipedia*, “Bukovsky managed to smuggle to the West over 150 pages documenting abuse of psychiatric institutions for political reasons in the USSR. The information galvanized human rights activists worldwide (including inside the country) and was a pretext for his subsequent arrest in the same year. At the trial in January 1972 Bukovsky was accused of slandering the Soviet psychiatry, contacts with foreign journalists and possession and distribution of samizdat (Article 70-1, 7 years of imprisonment plus 5 years in exile).”

While in confinement, he and an imprisoned psychiatrist wrote *A Manual on Psychiatry for Dissidents*.

In 1976 the Soviets authorities deported Bukovsky in a trade for a communist leader from Chile. Among his writings since gaining his freedom are *To Build a Castle* (1979), *Soviet Hypocrisy and Western Gullibility* (1987), and *To Choose Freedom* (1987).

One of his most recent writings is a *Washington Post* op-ed (<http://tinyurl.com/bcoew>), "Torture's Long Shadow," in which he criticized the Bush administration's use of torture on suspected terrorists because, among other reasons, it corrupts those who wield it. "[I]f Vice President Cheney is right and that some "cruel, inhumane or degrading" (CID) treatment of captives is a necessary tool for winning the war on terrorism, then the war is lost already," Bukovsky wrote.

In responding to Bukovsky's selection for the award, Thomas Szasz said:

Bukovsky, more than any other recipient of these Awards so far, has experienced first hand the brutality and injustice of psychiatric coercion. Moreover, he has denounced, with great courage and eloquence, what is usually called the "political abuse" of psychiatry, a practice I and many of us consider intrinsic to every and all use of psychiatric force, regardless of alleged "medical" justifications for it. I salute Vladimir Bukovsky for his enormous contribution to alerting the world to the dangers of psychiatric power.

As the allegiance of Church and State, justifying theological coercion, was and is, *eo ipso*, incompatible with a free society, so too is the alliance of Psychiatry and the State, justifying "therapeutic" coercion.

Ross Levatter, a radiologist in Arizona, has contributed a long list of articles and reviews discussing and elaborating Szasz's critique of the "therapeutic state," the government's use of coercion in the name of health. Levatter's work has appeared in *The Freeman* and *Liberty* magazines. He received his medical degree from the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine in 1982.

Past winners include economic historian Robert Higgs, psychologist and philosopher Robert Spillane, anti-affirmative-action activist Ward Connerly, First Amendment journalist Nat Hentoff, computer-privacy champion Phil Zimmermann, author James Bovard, William Mellor and Clint Bolick of the Institute for Justice, law professor Richard Epstein, development economist Peter Bauer, U.S. Rep. Ron Paul, Second Amendment scholar David Kopel, Paul Blackman for *No More Wacos*, Bettina Bien, Professor Irving Louis Horowitz, syndicated columnist Jacob Sullum, Robert D. Kephart, Karl Hess, libertarian-feminist author Joan Kennedy Taylor, economist Bryan Caplan, Professor George Alexander, psychiatrist Ron Leifer, Professor Keith Hoeller, psychotherapist Anthony Stadlen, Professor Richard Vatz, and Professor Jeffrey A. Schaler, and others.

For more than five decades, Szasz has distinguished himself as the preeminent defender of individual rights in the fields of psychiatry and psychology. He has remained a steadfast champion of the classical-liberal values of voluntary interaction, the rule of law, and

an open society. His struggle on behalf of civil liberties has been indefatigable, sustained despite intense opposition over a lifetime of brilliant intellectual accomplishment.

Emeritus professor of psychiatry at the State University of New York Health Science Center/Syracuse, Szasz is the author of some 25 books, hundreds of scholarly articles, and a regular column in *The Freeman: Ideas on Liberty*. His most recent books are *The Medicalization of Everyday Life: Selected Essays* and *Coercion as Cure: A Critical History of Psychiatry*.

Szasz's other books include *The Myth of Mental Illness*; *The Therapeutic State*; *Ceremonial Chemistry: The Ritual Persecution of Drugs, Addicts and Pushers*; *Insanity: The Idea and Its Consequences*; *Cruel Compassion: Psychiatric Control of Society's Unwanted*; *Fatal Freedom: The Ethics and Politics of Suicide*; *Pharmacocracy: Medicine and Politics in America*; *Liberation by Oppression: A Comparative Study of Slavery and Psychiatry*; and "My Madness Saved Me": *The Madness and Marriage of Virginia Woolf*.

The Thomas S. Szasz Award is a project of the Center for Independent Thought.