

by David Bloomberg

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Braun is one of the most well-known doctors to believe in the validity of repressed memories, multiple personality disorder (MPD), and huge conspiracies of satanic cults. Indeed, he has taught a number of other therapists how to obtain and deal with "repressed memories." This complaint has a direct bearing on how those beliefs and teachings affected his patients. More

Illinois Tackles Repressed Memory Doctor

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Braun is one of the most well-known doctors to believe in the validity of repressed memories, multiple personality disorder (MPD), and huge conspiracies of satanic cults. Indeed, he has taught a number of other therapists how to obtain and deal with "repressed memories." This complaint has a direct bearing on how those beliefs and teachings affected his patients.

While Braun has been the target of at least five lawsuits (two settled, three in process, according to the False Memory Syndrome Foundation and Chicago Daily Law Bulletin), this is the first regulatory challenge to his claims; because mental health information is confidential, no charges could be filed until a patient came forward to waive that confidentiality. One of the lawsuits and the information leading to this complaint were filed by Patricia Burgus and her family. Her lawsuit was settled out of court for \$10.6 million in October (see "REALLity Check," Vol. 6, #2, February 1998), with no admission of guilt.

According to the Chicago Tribune (8/13/98), Burgus started seeing Braun due to depression. Within weeks, she was caught up in the strange world of repressed memories, MPD, and satanic cult claims, including the belief that "she suddenly possessed 300 personalities and remembered sexually abusing her children, eating meatloaf made of human flesh and serving as the high priestess of a satanic cult covering nine midwestern states." Even her children were caught up when Braun had them admitted to the hospital's psychiatric center at the ages of 4 and 5.

The complaint is 23 pages long, detailing scores of charges against Braun. Some of these are quoted below (P.B. is Patricia Burgus; J.B. and M.B. are her sons).

The first 45 allegations are listed as background and later incorporated as charges. Among them are:

The Respondent [Braun], without any appropriate or reasonable medical justification, confined J.B. and M.B. in Rush's mental institution for a continuous period of approximately three years.

The Respondent, without any appropriate or reasonable medical justification, confined P.B. in Rush's mental institution for a continuous period of approximately twenty-seven months.

During various therapy sessions with Respondent, the minor children and P.B. were instructed to and did discuss imaginary episodes of abuse that P.B. had come to believe that the minor children and she had participated in, individually and jointly, and in conjunction with other family members, and a supposed transgenerational, organized, satanic cult. These imaginary episodes allegedly consisted of sexual, physical, and emotional abuse, human sacrifice and human torture.

As a result of the therapy prescribed and administered to P.B. and the minor children, the minor children came to believe that they had participated in episodes of abuse at the hands of P.B., other family members, and a supposed transgenerational, organized, satanic cult, including repeated episodes of sexual, physical and emotional abuse, human sacrifice and human torture.

The complaint then details the nine counts filed against Braun, including "Gross Negligence" relating to P.B., J.B., and M.B., "Dishonorable, Unethical, and Unprofessional Conduct" dealing with all three, "Making a False or Misleading Statement Regarding the Skill or Efficacy or Value of the Medicine, Treatment, or Remedy Prescribed By Him at His Discretion in the Treatment of Any Disease or Other Condition of the Body or Mind," "Prescribing, Selling, Administering, Distributing, or Giving Any Drug Classified as a Controlled Substance or Narcotic for Other Than Medically Accepted Purposes," and "A Pattern of Practice or Other Behavior Which Demonstrates Incapacity or Incompetence to Practice Under This Act."

Some of the charges in the "Gross Negligence – P.B." section, allegation 46, are:

- (d) Established an unorthodox treatment regimen in assigning to P.B. various "personalities";
- (e) Improperly implemented the aforesaid treatment regimen, encouraging and assisting P.B. in developing "personalities" which the Respondent represented were "alter" personalities within P.B., when no such personalities existed;
- (f) Improperly implemented the aforesaid treatment regimen using suggestive and coercive techniques to encourage and assist P.B. to "remember" episodes of abuse.
- (j) Uncritically applied hypnotic techniques in the course of therapy;
- (x) Advised P.B. and her husband that "multiple personality disorder" is caused by extreme childhood abuse which is not remembered or "repressed";
- (y) Advised P.B. and her husband that individuals could repress or dissociate all knowledge of traumatic events so that a person can have suffered from extreme abuse for many years from early childhood through adulthood with no conscious knowledge that such events ever occurred;
- (aa) Advised P.B. and her husband that "repressed memories" being uncovered during the course of her treatment and her children's treatment represented real memories of actual historical events;
- (bb) Advised P.B. and her husband that organized, world-wide transgenerational satanic cults which engaged in mass murder, torture, satanic ritual abuse, human sacrifices and similar activities did in fact exist and that their existence and activities were well-known;
- (cc) Repeatedly advised and convinced P.B. and her husband, when either or both expressed doubt as to the existence of satanic ritual abuse or the validity of the memories of such abuse, that they were the only people questioning such concepts and beliefs;
- (ff) Advised P.B. that she had sexually abused her minor children;
- (hh) Advised P.B. and her husband that P.B. had caused their minor children to participate in various satanic ritual activities including human and animal sacrifice, cannibalism, and various acts of human torture;

(ii) Failed to adequately inform P.B. and her husband of the risk that the techniques used in treatment were capable of causing false memories of events which never occurred by which nevertheless seem real to the patient;

Thomas Glasgow, the chief of medical prosecutions who developed the complaint, was quoted by the Tribune as saying, "The purpose of this complaint and the purpose of this prosecution is not to go after multiple-personality disorder or repressed memory." However, several counts of the complaint specifically say Braun:

(jj) Failed to adequately inform P.B. and her husband of the risk that the diagnosis of multiple personality disorder was controversial and that the diagnosis was not widely accepted in the mental health community;

(kk) Failed to inform P.B. and her husband that there was further controversy in the mental health community as to whether or not multiple personality disorder was being overdiagnosed and often found in people who did not in fact have that disorder

(ll) Failed to inform P.B. and her husband of the risk that "multiple personality disorder" can be caused by improper therapy;

(mm) Failed to inform P.B. and her husband that the theory of repression lacked scientific validity and was not generally accepted in the scientific community;

While that sounds like they're "going after" MPD and repressed memory claims, Glasgow restated, in a phone interview, that they are not necessarily saying repressed memory therapy is faulty, but in this case they are alleging that Braun failed to take steps to assure he was treating the patients properly. It will be interesting to see what is said within the case itself about the lack of scientific validity for repressed memory therapy.

The preliminary hearing is only the first step in the process, which can involve all kinds of motions, discovery, hearings, the Medical Disciplinary Board, and an eventual recommendation that could range from no punishment to a reprimand to fines and suspension or revocation of his license to practice medicine in Illinois. REALL will continue to report on this case as news becomes available.