

**Lois Holzman** received her Ph.D. in developmental psychologist and psycholinguistics from Columbia University. She lives her life as an activist who uses her academic background and experience to organize people—as individuals and communities—to participate in creating their development and in so doing, to create hope and new possibilities. This involves her in building partnerships that bring the best of grassroots practices into conversation with the most innovative of academic scholarship, and giving support to community educators and activists worldwide in their efforts to make the world more humane through a variety of international programs.

Lois founded the East Side Institute for Group and Short Term Psychotherapy in the 1980s with philosopher, therapist and activist Fred Newman and is its current director. With Newman, Holzman developed Social Therapeutics as a methodology in which human development and community development are inseparable, and linked to play, performance and practical philosophy. The Institute has grown into an international educational, training and research center for Social Therapeutics and other alternatives to the natural science-medical model of psychology, psychotherapy and education, and to the ideologically-driven and reactive approaches to cultural change and social activism.

She is also a founder and the chair of the biennial [Performing the World](#) conferences, which supports the emerging social change approach known as performance activism. As a leading proponent of postmodern, activity-theoretic, cultural approaches to human learning and development, Lois has brought the ideas of Lev Vygotsky to the fields of

psychotherapy, organizational and community development, in addition to their traditional location with education.

Long a critic of the medical model of mental health and the development of a non-medicalized group approach known as Social Therapy, Lois participates in diverse national and international activities advocating for alternatives to current diagnostic systems of mental illness. She is also a voice in the current conversation about the failure of modernist epistemology (“the knowing paradigm”) and the development of alternative ways to be in and relate to the world.

Her teaching, research and writing have developed in tandem with and in service to her community organizing work. Over forty years Lois has built and led grassroots organizations that are engaging poverty and underdevelopment utilizing the transformative power of performance. She is mentor and coach to hundreds of scholars, educators, artists and community activists around the globe, and, along with them, she is helping to usher in performance activism as a new approach to community development and social change.

Lois is the author/editor of ten books and dozens of chapters and articles. Her blogs include: *A Psychology of Becoming*” at [loisholzman.org](http://loisholzman.org); *A Conceptual Revolution* at Psychology Today, and *How to Get Psychology Out of Our Lives* at Mad in America. She can be reached at [lholzman@eastsideinstitute.org](mailto:lholzman@eastsideinstitute.org).