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... what they wanted were HOMES

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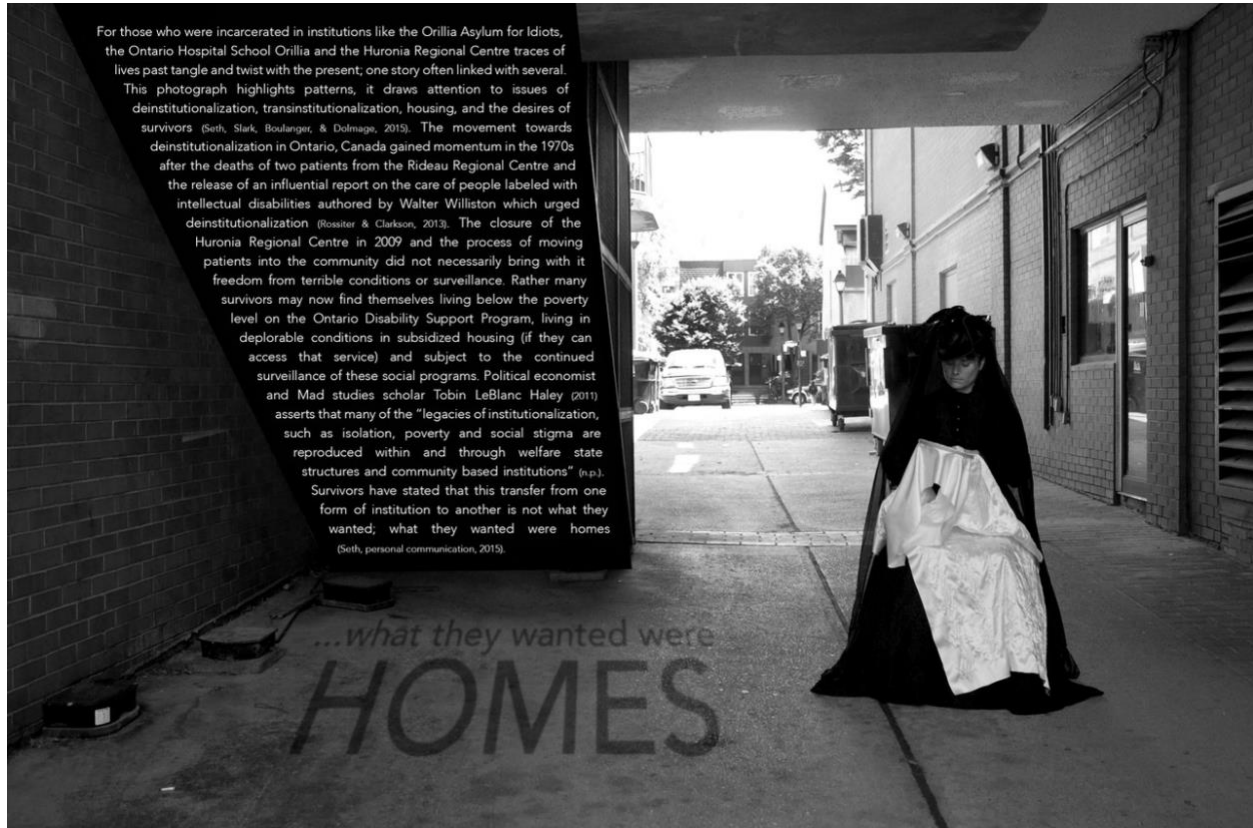


Image description:

A black and white horizontal photograph of a person wearing a long dark dress and a dark feathered hat. They are sitting on a chair in an alleyway beside the back view of a dark staircase, embroidering on shiny satin fabric. The white text is positioned and adjusts to the perspective of the stairway. At the bottom of the stairway on the concrete walkway, dark text reads: ...what they wanted was HOMES. The text in the image is the same as the text that follows.

... what they wanted were HOMES

For those who were incarcerated in institutions like the Orillia Asylum for Idiots, the Ontario Hospital School Orillia and the Huronia Regional Centre, traces of past lives tangle and twist with the present, one story often linked with several. This photograph highlights patterns, drawing attention to issues of deinstitutionalization, transinstitutionalization, housing, and the desires of survivors (Seth, Slark, Boulanger, & Dolmage, 2015). The movement towards deinstitutionalization in Ontario, Canada gained momentum in the 1970s after the deaths of two patients from the Rideau Regional Centre and the release of an influential report on the care of people labelled with intellectual disabilities authored by Walter Williston which urged deinstitutionalization (Rossiter & Clarkson, 2013). The closure of the Huronia Regional Centre in 2009 and the process of moving patients into the community did not necessarily bring with it freedom from terrible conditions or surveillance. Rather many survivors may now find themselves living below the poverty level on the Ontario Disability Support Program, living in deplorable conditions in subsidized housing (if they can access that service) and subject to the continued surveillance of these social programs. Political economist and Mad studies scholar Tobin LeBlanc Haley (2011) asserts that many of the “legacies of institutionalization, such as isolation, poverty and social stigma are reproduced within and through welfare state structures and community-based institutions” (n.p.). Survivors have stated that this transfer from one form of institution to another is not what they wanted; what they wanted were homes (Seth, personal communication, 2015).

References

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