

David Reville -Audio Excerpt F

One of the good lucks I had was they decided I wasn't manic depressive. Or they decided I didn't have bipolar disorder. They decided I had a personality disorder and there is basically no treatment for that except behaviour mod. I didn't get any drugs, I wasn't all drugged up so what I did to keep my mind alive was I would observe what was going on and why different people were there. How come they were there when they didn't seem crazy to me, some did but many of them didn't seem crazy at all. So I began to believe, I began to get Foucaultian without ever having read Foucault. So I began to think this was about social control and for whatever reason we were people who were offensive to society so they put us in these places to get us out of the way.

And sometimes it was because we were old and alone. Sometimes it was because we had intellectual deficits. Sometimes it was because we had diseases like diabetes and our insulin didn't control our moods very well. Sometimes we were kids who were troubled. Sometimes we were people who otherwise would have been in jail, and this was kind of like a place that we were put to be out the way.

And sort of the primary objective of these places was custodial care. There wasn't much in the way of treatment except a lot of drugs. And some very old drugs. There was a lot of Haldol being dispensed and there was a thing called Paraldehyde that they gave us at night so we could sleep and it was mostly alcohol. And it had a terrible side-effect that you kinda smelled [undecipherable] if you took this.

And because of the way I was I got to have a good tour of the hospital so I started off on an admitting ward and then I ran away. And I was brought back by the cops because I wasn't very successful at hiding: I didn't have any street smarts. And so then they locked me up, and they locked me up for the first time on a geriatric ward and most of my fellow inmates there were people who had syphilis and had become asymptomatic and kinda became tertiary syphilis, which melts your brain. So they were really "gaga." And then some of the other people had epilepsy and had fallen on their head a lot of times so they were "gaga." And some people didn't speak at all, and some people paced, and some people hit their head, and some people should have been in a facility for people with developmental challenges, and some of them were First Nations people who were clearly being pressed by many systems.

So I'm kinda looking at all this and I'm starting to think this is not about cure at all this is about control. This whole place is about control and sort of controlling bad teenage girls who sleep around and controlling bad teenage boys who are violent or who steal stuff and its controlling old farmers who are a bit senile. So I started to get really kinda angry about that. So you could see that I'm sort of being an on-site anthropologist or sociologist or something trying to figure out why people are there, what they're like and why they maybe shouldn't be there at all, or they should be some other place. There were a number of people with down syndrome for

instance who were sweet people who got abused by the other patients, sexually abused usually or made fun of and they shouldn't have been there, and then there were people who had birth defects, and they shouldn't have been there, and none of the kids should have been there, they weren't crazy they were just troubled. So I sort of got radicalized when I was there.