

What Happens to Women In Institutions?

- o In 2011 the Toronto Star reported the rape of a 71 year old woman with advanced dementia who could not speak or move.
- o She was named Danae Chambers, and had formerly been a gifted Canadian portrait artist.
- o In this case police laid a sex assault charge against a male registered practical nurse.
- o Most instances of sexual assault and other forms of assault go unreported.
- o Inspection reports are full of residents sustaining injuries in “unexplained falls”, rough handling, lack of adherence to care plans, call bells not being answered etc



Reference: Welsh & McLean, November 17, 2011. Abuse, rape uncovered in Ontario nursing homes.

https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2011/11/17/nursing_home_residents_abused.html

Numerous Press Investigations Have Resulted in Little Change

TORONTO STAR
 WEATHER HIGH 3C | CLOUDY AND WINDY | MAP 5/2 THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2011

STAR INVESTIGATION
Abuse, rape uncovered in nursing homes

Danae Chambers, 71, was raped in her bed — one of at least 125 abusive incidents recently probed in Ontario

MORA WELSH AND JESSIE MCLEAN
 Over 100 women in Ontario nursing homes are being beaten, neglected and even raped by the people hired to care for them, a Star investigation has found.

In one case, a helples 71-year-old Toronto woman with advanced dementia was raped in her bed, although by multiple names identified months earlier by other staff at the home as someone who regularly disappeared on duty. "Without explicit instructions,"

A staff member discovered the rape victim in Danae Chambers' room in the middle of the night. Chambers, a well-known portrait artist, lay sideways on her bed and the rape pads dropped to the floor, several metres from her bedposts, according to a provincial inspection report.

"I found it hard to take care of her," said Chambers' close friend and guardian, Anna Schindler. "I tried so hard to find the right home for her and everyone said this was the best."

In another case, this one in a North York nursing home, a staff member first physically assaulted a resident, then wanted a witness "not to tell anyone," a provincial inspector found. This staff member who were aware of the abuse didn't report it.

ANNA SCHINDLER
 A worker in North York nursing home "was a resident on the

"I trusted them to take care of her. I tried so hard to find the right home for her and everyone said this was the best."

Danae Chambers, above, as a younger woman in front of her portrait of Canadian politician Tim Murray in her bed at Centennial



The Military Report

- o Found extensive neglect and abuse in Ontario's nursing homes.
- o Military report found here: <https://www.macleans.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/JTFC-Observations-in-LTCF-in-ON.pdf>



Why Institutionalization is a Feminist Issue

- o Frail, elderly women are exploited for profit by predominantly White, wealthy men who benefit from their frailty, lack of control, and neglect
- o Female immigrant and visible minority staff are exploited for their labour, paid very little, and often required to work short-staffed, without benefits or full-time hours
- o They are devalued as human beings and workers, and as often happens in systems of exploitation, turn on each other
- o Instances of abuse of residents by staff have been widely documented and instances of residents fighting back aggressively and injuring staff have also been widely documented (Pedersen et al, 2018 -

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/elderly-care-violence-marketplace-investigates-1.4493215>

Flanagan, 2019 <https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/violence-in-long-term-care-homes-prompts-fears-of-staffing-crisis-1.4351965?cache=a+href>

Who Is To Blame?

- o This is what happens when members of society do not advocate for alternatives to total institutions which, by their nature, cause the dehumanization and objectification of those forced to live in them, often by those who work in them, and who are also exploited
- o Powerful men in senior positions in long-term care corporations with close relationships with powerful men in government create, benefit from, and sustain this oppressive system, while women are victimized and exploited for profit

What Are The Alternatives? A Feminist Perspective

- o Stop exploiting predominantly female caregivers and start paying them to keep loved ones at home as part of one Home Care option – See Newfoundland and Labrador’s Paid Family Caregiver Program - <https://www.gov.nl.ca/hcs/long-term-care/family-caregiving/>
- o Open the Family Managed Home Care Program (direct funding) up to people with dementia and their caregivers and stop excluding them <https://healthcareathome.ca/home-care/family-managed-home-care/>

What Are The Alternatives? A Feminist Perspective

- o Fund a Money Follows the Person Program as exists in the U.S. and has returned tens of thousands of people from institutions to the community -
<https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/long-term-services-supports/money-follows-person/index.html>
- o Redefine the role of PSWs to Community Care Workers, locate them in community-based non-profit agencies, pay them a decent wage, and register them with a professional college to raise the professional level of their work – See Seniors for Social Action Ontario’s research paper on Community Care Workers and Israel’s program

Ben-Harush, A., Avalon, L., Shinan-Altman, S. (August 13, 2020). Turning community elder care into a profession: Insights from trainees, developers, employers and supervisors.
https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7459524/?fbclid=IwAR2_SULBG6rq6meMsDOvEpLdTgu4ur1eXliGlu2LiO4n7teDI2jSypu9uc#B5-ijerph-17-05867

What Are The Alternatives?

- o Fund residential alternatives to institutions – **small, non-profit memory care homes** in every community
- o Fund **Hub and Spoke models** with empowerment oriented case management support built in to naturally occurring retirement communities - https://peelseniorlink.com/_content/uploads/2018/08/Board-Orientation-version.pdf
- o **Direct funding from institutions to Intensive In-Home Support Services** – imagine what could have been created with \$6 billion dollars!

Women Need to Speak Up!

- o Seniors for Social Action Ontario is comprised of volunteers – men and women – speaking up for alternatives to mass institutionalization
- o This dark period of Ontario's history needs to be replaced with a more progressive vision of aging that rejects the tragedy narrative that old age automatically means segregation and exclusion from one's community in an institution when one becomes old and infirm
- o There are a range of progressive alternatives – but we need to advocate for them

A Brighter Future Awaits – But We Need to Demand It



We Want This, Not This!

Women may be the one group that grows more radical with age
(Gloria Steinem)

Freedom is fragile and must be protected. To sacrifice it, even as a temporary
measure, is to betray it. (Germaine Greer)



The Time For Action Is Now

- o “There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest.” (Elie Wiesel)

