

There is a problem in the world.
One among many.
Most people don't know about it.
The problem is that millions of people over the world are kept in big institutions.
Millions of people suffer.
Few people care.
It's because those who suffer have been labelled mentally handicapped.
They are people without voices.
They are still not recognised.

We think big institutions are like concentration- camps.
People are put in one and the same place of some dark reasons.
Then they are left to stay there.
With bad food and being kept in repression by hard rules and medication.

In Sweden we have had big institutions for over 100 years.
But the 1st of January 2000 it ended.
From that day big institutions are forbidden by law. In Sweden.
Not in the rest of the world.
We think it's important to fight against all kinds of institutions.

In Sweden it all started about 1895.
Sweden was still a poor country.
Life was hard for many people.
Especially for people with disabilities.
Some women started to collect charity money and started the first institutions.
1930 to 1960 were dark years for people with disabilities in Sweden and Europe.
Ideas of the perfect people and the perfect country lead to that people sorted out.

Abuse, assault, medical experiments and also horrible punishments and threats
were all part of everyday- life.

Then the first parents' organisations started.
It lead to a change as they showed the reality.
Later the first people could move out to group- homes.
Self advocacy started and people claimed for better conditions in the
institutions.
Like private rooms as one example.
Åke Johansson from Falkenberg in Sweden was a real fighter and advocate
against institutions.
He spent 32 years of his life in different institutions..

Around 1985 the great moving out period started.
1996 the last five persons moved out from the institution of Stretered outside Gotheburg.

Now we have our own organisation Grunden.
Through Grunden we have the chance to study and see how it was in history.
But also how things are now.
On our journeys in the world we have seen institutions.
In Japan, Germany and Chile as examples.
We have met people who are staying there.
They don't want to be there.

Many people think institutions don't exist in Sweden anylonger.
Because the big institutions have been closed people think institutions are gone.
The big institutions were closed. Not the institution- idea.
It's still there.
The institutions are just smaller.
They are still there.
They are in peoples' heads.
Still people are not free.
They are forced to stay according to rules and structures because some people still think that people with intellectual disabilities must have structure.
All people need structure.
But who decide that people labelled mentally handicapped need more structure than others?

Staff must act professional, we have been told.
They must learn to keep distance; no contact and relation. They have to have a special attitude.
But we say: How can anyone have a special attitude to someone at all without contact.
Then you have no one to have a special attitude to.
How is it possible to know how far or how close you want to get to another person before you have contact or a relation?
Without relations it's dangerous.
Anything could happen.
That is how the institution is: dangerous and without relations closeness.

Staff belong to the institutions.
Also the professional special attitude.
Also all the experts.
Also all rules and structures created by professionals.

Also to be labelled mentally handicapped.

A supported living is an institution.

A supported living client stays in an institution.

Often they stay without relations.

A client lives in structures only because he has been labelled mentally handicapped.

Because of that he is a supported living client.

We want to smash the institutions.

Institutions are horrible.

Institutions has to be smashed.

You have to smash the institutions in your heart.

You have to understand with your heart.

Welcome to reality!

Reality is I or you or we together were we are just now.

We are there and do what we do.

That's how it is. We can't do anything about it.

We are here.

I'm here.

We have to meet.

We have to come to agreement.

I live my life.

At home, in school, at work and in the spare time.

In Grunden we call it a process when we want to describe it nicely.

It is nice.

But basicly it's about life.

Many of us need help to fulfil our life.

But not help from staff.

“ the staff tell me to be home at 9. I have to ask the staff...I must not have these shoes say the staff...The staff say...”

In Grunden we talk about coaching.

In Grunden we have our own executive group of staff.

We have a Grunden-academy.

We have Grunden media making a nice calendar and nice films and magazines.

We have a cafeteria.

We have a webb design group.

We have cooperation and contacts in Sweden, Europe and the world.

We have coaches.

They coach us in our work with our ideas and to reach our goals.

Some people say: how stupid to use an English word. No one would understand!

We say: more people understand the word coach than the word habilitation-training assistant.

Besides we often work in English together with the friends from other countries.

People say we are the cocky ones from Gothenburg.

Do we disturb?

We are just here.

We just want to have right to be here and now.

Welcome to reality!

Now we are here at the congress in Mexico.

We wanted to take the chance to speak.

At the most we have 20 minutes to smash the institutions!

In Spanish it is Tritura las instituciones.

The organisers of the congress want self advocates to join the congress.

It's expensive and luxury here.

In our view another kind of institution.

Few self advocates can afford to be here and take part.

We can't afford it.

We stay 100 minutes by car from here. All inclusive.

But it's cheap.

Welcome to reality!

One of the most important issues at the congress is to fight poverty.

In luxury hotel!

We must indeed fight poverty.

That's great.

But we find the biggest institutions in the most rich countries.

We have been there: in Japan and Germany.

I was in a big institution in Japan, the Kongo colony.

On a big meeting later I said that I'm happy that I'm not born in Japan.

If so I would be staying in one of the institutions.

Now we are supporting a project in closing institutions in Japan.

We do it by telling about our experiences.

Rich or poor country; I think it's basically about attitudes to people's worth and rights.

I Tommy will start on a university course to study the Swedish disability history and how it is today. I will get 10 points.

But I have to ask for acceptance as I have studied in special school.
Welcome to reality!

We work in Gothenburg.
The name of our organisation is Grunden.
We are about 500 members.
In Sweden more and more groups want to work together with Grunden.
We have started a national cooperation- group.
In Europe we are working on starting an European alliance of self advocates. So far we Holland, Germany, Denmark, Norway and Scotland have cooperation.
More people are interested.
Because in Europe a lot of people stay in institutions.

So the cocky ones in Gothenburg are not only in Gothenburg.
Our organisation gives us strength and hope.

We don't think the institutions can be closed on conferences at luxury hotels.
Åke Johansson said on a congress in Haag in Holland 1998 that he had heard the same nice words over and over again since he joined his first congress in Nairobi 1982.

Not even I will see the day when institutions are closed.
But I will work hard so as many people as possible will have the chance to liberate themselves from the institution.
That is why we have started the European alliance.
That is why we have our campaign Smash the institutions- Welcome to reality!

We are now involved in two projects in Japan and Chile in which we do what we can to coach people to get a better life.
We want to meet people where they are to make up plans.
We think institutions must be closed in the institutions.
We must all smash the institutions in our hearts.

Welcome to reality!
You can't hide from it!
We are right here!

Tommy Andersson, member of the executive group in Grunden, Gothenburg, Sweden.

November 2006 at the Inclusion International congress in Acapulco, Mexico

