

Protest on the Plinth: captions and description

Protest on the Plinth is a film made by Barry Seddon of Indefilms and charts Liz Crow's appearance on the Fourth Plinth in Trafalgar Square. The film is about the Nazi mass-murder of disabled people and the warning it holds for us today.

The film is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EfswOExefgw/>.

Thanks to Clair Lewis for this text version of subtitles and description of the film for those who can otherwise only access images or audio of this film.

SUBTITLE:

The gentle background hum of many people talking.

DESCRIPTION:

Red text on black screen: Late 1938/ early 1939. A chance letter from the father of a disabled child finds its way to Adolf Hitler. The letter is a request to have the child killed. Hitler gives his approval. Disabled children and adults were already being sterilised. Now a form was produced for doctors to fill in. Three crosses on the form signified that a disabled baby could be killed days after birth. Months after the form's introduction, the policy was extended to the killing of disabled children. Two years after its introduction, the form was discarded and staff in institutions made the choice of which children lived and which were to be killed.

Images are shown of several old black and white medical images of disabled children, including one who seems to be held by the throat.

Text continues: disabled adults then faced the same fate. Methods of extermination for disabled people included the first use of gas chambers. The killing continued after the development of concentration camps.

SUBTITLE:

The continued hum of people talking.

DESCRIPTION:

Background - a view of Fountain in Trafalgar Square. Voice begins as this message comes on screen:

"Trafalgar Square
Saturday Evening
8th August 2009"

SUBTITLE:

Voice of Liz Crow: I wanted to draw attention to a hidden history.

DESCRIPTION:

The plinth towering high above Trafalgar square. A figure is hidden under a pale shroud, motionless on the top of the plinth.

SUBTITLE:

Liz Crow: It's the 70th Anniversary of the Nazi's signing and setting up their first systematic program of mass murder and they started out by targeting disabled people.

DESCRIPTION:

Liz Crow giving interview to camera.

SUBTITLE:

Liz: It's a history that's been virtually written out of the record and yet it was the first stage of the final solution. It set the blueprint, literally the machinery of concentration camps and used to murder vast numbers of people.

DESCRIPTION:

Trafalgar Square with people gathered near the plinth, a crowd of disabled people is visible.

SUBTITLE:

Liz: Had people only spoken out at that very first stage when disabled people were murdered, had they thought that disabled people's lives were worth saving and speaking out for, then the rest of that history would also have been different.

DESCRIPTION:

The figure on the plinth begins to move under the shroud, throwing it off, and Liz Crow reveals herself in her wheelchair, dressed in a black Nazi uniform.

SUBTITLE:

Cheers from supporters and some clapping, then the murmur of people talking.

DESCRIPTION:

Liz smooths back her hair and places a peaked hat on her head then sits very still like a statue with hands in her lap and a firm look on her face. The uniform from various angles, so the swastika can be seen on the red armband.

Camera moves to a disabled leafletter in the square wearing a bandana, being interviewed.

Leafletter: That's why she's gone up there with such a controversial image. We have spent a lot of time recently trying to get our message out there to the press, and they, actually, the press only seems to want to talk to disabled people who want to die. And most of us are quite busy living.

DESCRIPTION:

The leafletter wheels towards a disabled person who has accepted a leaflet, people are moving around in the background staring up at the plinth.

SUBTITLE:

Leafletter (over background noise of many people talking): Thanks for taking that mate.

Disabled man: You're welcome. (some speech not picked up clearly)... the woman who got up there, that figure up there?

Leafletter: Can you say that again? Oh. Yes this is about the woman up there. OK. Can you read this? Would you like me to read it to you, would that help?

Onlooker: No I can read it.

Leafletter: Oh wicked, ok.

DESCRIPTION:

Liz on the plinth, opening a large red flag on a telescopic pole, until it is extended above her head. Flag reads, "They came for the sick, the so called incurables, but I did not speak out because I was not an incurable."

SUBTITLE:

Loud cheers, clapping and a horn honking.

DESCRIPTION:

Liz now giving her interview to camera.

Caption: Liz Crow, Artist, filmmaker and activist

SUBTITLE:

Liz Crow: When you look at the values that underpin that program of murder, they are still really contemporary. So they put across the idea of disabled people as suffering and deserving of mercy killing, in other words they're doing us a favour, by putting us out of our misery. Or where that doesn't work, they put us across as an economic burden and therefore it's in the interests of families and our nation and so on, to kill us. Three hundred and forty thousand people live in institutions in the UK, which is more than the population of Cardiff. Children are excluded from schools. Underlying all of that is still the same set of values, about us as other, and lesser.

DESCRIPTION:

Leafletter again, talking to people in the square.

SUBTITLE:

Leafletter: When we try and communicate with the press and with the government about this, to be honest, they don't really want to know.

Person off camera with deep voice: No, they don't, you're right there, they don't.

Leafletter: Well it would be cheaper to give us assisted suicide than independence, wouldn't it? It would be cheaper to give us that than to include us in education so that when disabled people grow up they have jobs and are part of their communities.

DESCRIPTION:

Liz gives interview to camera.

SUBTITLE:

Liz Crow: There's a move for assisted suicide legislation. But that move isn't being debated, our voices are not in the debate. It's.. the debates, what exists of them, all seem to start from the same premise that living with impairment is intolerable and when that is your starting point, how can you make safe legislation? That's my real fear about this, is that, if our lives are supposedly intolerable, then isn't it second nature that everybody will help us on our way, instead of actually looking at what makes our lives intolerable. Which can sometimes be impairment, but actually is generally about external factors. The fact that we can't actually access and participate in society fully. I think that while we as a society debate this at such a low level of understanding, whilst it is nondisabled people who are making decisions about the legislation, we cannot make safe legislation. There's no possibility of it being safe.

DESCRIPTION:

Liz shrugs.

Screen fades to black.

Text on screen: It is estimated that up to a quarter of a million disabled people (including children) were murdered by the Nazi's. First they came for the sick, the so called incurables, And I did not speak out because I was not incurable. Then they came for the Jews and I did not speak out, because I was not a Jew. Then they came for the Communists and I did not speak out because I was not a communist. Then they came for the Trades Unionists and I did not speak out because I was not a Trade Unionist. Then they came for me and there was no-one left to speak out for me. Pastor Neimoeller, victim of the Nazi's 1946.

Liz Crow, high above Trafalgar square, tears off her uniform jacket and casts it downward onto the plinth.

SUBTITLES:

The gentle humming of many people talking turns into clapping and whistling.

DESCRIPTION:

Liz lifts her hat above her, shakes her head and casts that down too, then holds her flag strongly and looks up to the words.

Text on screen: For further information go to www.roaring-girl.com (Resistance).