Cecilia, an inreach/outreach coordinator at Oregon State Hospital, said the following words during the 2019 Memorial Ceremony on Sept. 19, 2019:

The chemist, writer, and holocaust survivor Primo Levi said:

> "Monsters exist, but they are too few in number to be truly dangerous. More dangerous are the common men, the functionaries ready to believe and to act without asking questions."

I have five minutes in today's program to share my thoughts. I ask myself, as a person with mental health lived experience, "How can I best reach you in five minutes?"

Perhaps by issuing a challenge.

Let us shake the foundations of our beliefs about ourselves and about the people whose cremains we see displayed before us. As we gather here, in reverence, comforted by the artistic beauty of this magnificent memorial, let us reflect on the dissonance of the damaged and corroded cans that hold the ashes of the people who died on these, now consecrated, grounds.

Do we know the history of these corroded cans; the lives they represent? Dare we remember when these cans were rotting in a storage room, abandoned, and treated like refuse? Can we allow ourselves to imagine the abandonment many of these souls felt long before their earthly bodies were conflagrated into the ashes filling these canisters? Dare we consider the suffering, the abandonment, the trauma of the people housed behind these walls today? If so, what might we feel compelled to do? How might we transfer our compassion for the lost souls behind this glass wall to those who live behind these brick walls?

As a psychiatric survivor, I remember the shock, humiliation and anguish I felt when I saw photographs of an East Coast psychiatric hospital graveyard. Graves marked with stakes bearing numbers only. I asked myself, "Am I, too, just a number, a nonperson, something to be burned up, scooped into a can, and discarded?"

A quarter of a century ago at the age of 26, I was the mother of a beautiful 3-year-old boy. I went through a time of incredible euphoria, so spectacular that even the trees seemed to glisten. I was powerful, beautiful and artistically gifted. This surge of energy and expansiveness spiraled into a deep, dark, deadly psychosis as I believed my son's and my life would be ended slowly by my boyfriend. I believed that I had to end my boyfriend's life or lose my child in the most horrific way.

Because I could not find a weapon, my fate was suspended by the small hinge from which the pendulum swung between speaking to you now as an employee of the Oregon State Hospital as opposed to as a patient here for 25 years to life. Frequently, I feel survivor's guilt as I badge out to go home at night. "Why do I get to go home, and the others are left behind?" Sometimes, my mind envisions a phantom of myself endlessly pacing the halls back and forth.

I have had a full life. I was able to be a parent, I travelled throughout Europe, I received a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling. I have worked as a supported employment specialist, a vocational rehabilitation counselor, as a peer support specialist and now as an inreach/outreach coordinator. I believe myself to be a good person, a gentle person, a worthy person. I have had my challenges. But they pale in comparison to the near tragedy of being incarcerated for 25 years to life.

Can we, in this moment, imagine and open our hearts. Have you seen the small museum at the front of the hospital? Can you imagine that this entire hospital is a museum that no longer houses over 600 people? As you enter the museum, the cooing of the resident pigeons echoes off the walls, creating a whooping flutter as fine, downy feathers fall like a bizarre winter's snow. There are no working locks; the sally port doors are off their hinges and lie rusting on the floor.

Touring the corridors and the units where patients lived, you become deeply aware that these were people just like you. People who laughed, smiled and who also could cry out in anguish. You read the plaques that talk about the use of seclusion, restraints and forced medication. You realized that those people were born too early to be part of a new paradigm where people healed in the community, healed as people and not as labels like GEIs, 370s, civils and other dehumanizing terms. A new day where people's healing was woven into the

community with family, friends and, most significantly, as part of the greater human family.
Bring your families together in peace, but do not abandon their memories. Hear the call for civil rights and human dignity, which is deserving of all human beings. Psychiatric disability is the only disability where people are punished and incarcerated for symptoms of their disability.

Question: Where have we been. Question: Where are we now?  Question: What might the future be?

Thank you.

Oregonian Cremains Memorial article

“[Peter] Courtney said one special canister represents 1,566 people whose bodies were exhumed from the former Asylum Cemetery and cremated. The whereabouts of those cremains remains unknown. He told the audience that it should be considered similar to the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.” (from Statesman Journal article).