

Labeled “Incapable,” Woman with Down Syndrome Proves Naysayers Wrong

Two sisters challenge the system of “forced care” and stand up for the right to be free

VANCOUVER, BC, CANADA, December 4, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Ten years ago, Teresa Heartchild was rescued from an involuntary placement in a Toronto nursing home by her sister, Franke James.

Heartchild’s future had been written off when a social worker ticked a box in an assessment form, saying she was “not capable.” During the assessment, Heartchild, who has Down syndrome, objected to the incorrect health information used to describe her. But she was ignored and put into a nursing home.

Heartchild was trapped in a system that would not listen to her voice.

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Teresa was wrongly labelled ‘incapable’ in 2013 and put in a nursing home. Most people don’t get out alive—let alone become human rights champions.”

Franke James

“It was heartbreaking,” says James, an environmental activist. James challenged the placement and helped secure Heartchild’s discharge. However, another sibling opposed Heartchild’s release and called the police. So, the two sisters had to stand together against the police, the healthcare system, and their own family to defend Heartchild’s right to be free.

Forced care is a mechanism that helps society care for people who cannot care for themselves. It can be enacted through legal guardianships, police apprehensions, medical orders, or social worker’s assessments. But it can easily go wrong,



Teresa Heartchild in 2023 with her book, which tells how she lost—and regained—her freedom.

adversely affecting everyone from pop stars to football players, from the elderly to the disabled. People with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to this type of health inequality. UN Special Rapporteur, Catalina Devandas-Aguilar, said in 2019, "The deprivation of liberty on the basis of disability is a human rights violation on a massive global scale."

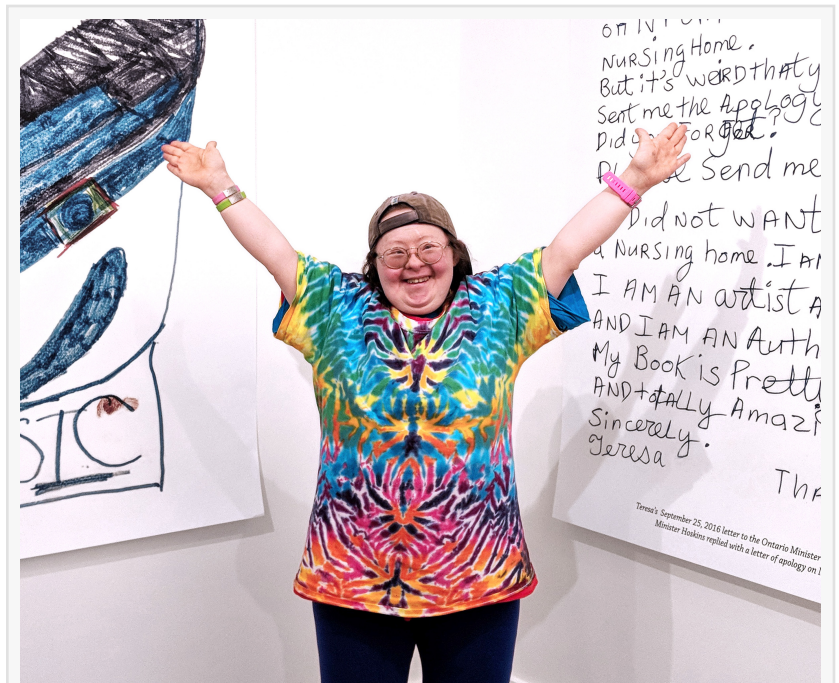
"I love my human rights," Heartchild says, "Please don't take them away just because I have Down syndrome." After she was released, the two sisters moved in together and Heartchild's decision-making rights were restored. They won a public apology from the Ontario Minister of Health. The B.C. Human Rights Commissioner named Heartchildst as a "Champion for Change."

Today, Heartchild and James are both thriving. Heartchild has authored two poetry books. They are celebrating their tenth anniversary with the launch of a new memoir written by James: *Freeing Teresa: A True Story about Fighting Ableism*. It tells their harrowing but ultimately redeeming story.

"It's shocking to realize that ableism—prejudice against people with disabilities—almost held Teresa back from fulfilling her true potential," James says. "We need to tell this story to bring about change."

"It's for all the people with disabilities," Heartchild says.

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Teresa Heartchild celebrates at her art exhibition in 2018



Franke James and Teresa Heartchild on the Terry Fox Run in 2012. One year before Teresa was put into the nursing home.

Book Title: Freeing Teresa: A True Story about Fighting Ableism
Authors: Franke James (with Teresa Heartchild and Billiam James)
ISBN: 978-1999406103 (Paperback). Also in eBook and Hardcover
Publisher: The James Gang Iconoclasts/Samizdat Health Writers

Note: Teresa Heartchild is a pen name which she is using since some of her family members do not want to be associated with this story.

The Book: FreeingTeresa.com
Teresa Heartchild: TeresaHeartchild.com
Franke James: FrankelJames.com
Samizdat Health: SamizdatHealth.org

Samizdat Health Writer's Co-operative is a member of the Independent Book Publishers Association.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities: #IDPwD #DisabilityRights #FreeingTeresa #DownSyndrome

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