

Rampe? Reicht! Season 2, Episode 7: Structural state violence against disabled people

SR: ramp

tier: enough

SR: 20 minute podcast about

tier: state structural violence against disabled people

SR: we are sitting here today and I'm struggling a bit .. structural violence against disabled people is a topic again and again and is currently very urgent for us. at the end of april four people were killed in potsdam by one person who provided care for them. we thought about how to deal with it.

tier: yes, it's not easy. do we want to record an episode where we talk about the whole thing?

SR: do we want to consider what the motives were?

tier: ugh, no.

SR: Everything would somehow be a justification for what we feel or that we are allowed to feel at all and that's why we thought no, we'll try to outline in an episode that may not quite meet our 20 minute limit, why this event left us feeling a certain way.

tier: yes exactly: what it does to us. So how we approach things and how we feel is not happening in a vacuum, but we are also products of history.

SR: yes exactly, history shapes us, continuities shape us and pain is different if you have experienced it again and again, or people like you have experienced it again and again and that's why this is not an attempt to go in the direction of true crime, or to dissolve anything, but something else. Exactly and you brought something with you about an abbreviation with which I had relatively little to do so far, the abbreviation T4.

tier: many are familiar with the systematic murder of disabled people under the nazis, but then again many do not know this abbreviation. T4 is the abbreviation of, quite banally, an address:

Tiergartenstrasse 4. there was a bureaucracy building of the nazis, which was a bit more "secret".

there these systematic murders were planned. that was then carried out between 1939 and 45. the order came directly from hitler himself. But it must be said that this time, these six years, it didn't just happen then! That was when the systematic murders happened, but before that there was that already happening under the Nazis, and even before that. people with disabilities were locked up in various institutions, were relocated, were abducted from their families, and it was also systematic that the people were relocated very secretly, so that the relatives did not know where they were. and on a systematic let me say, more passive way people were murdered by starving, they were given no care, giving no help. and under T4 that was simply further systematized and carried out more intensively. including murders in gas chambers.

SR: Exactly and now we already have three big terms that I'll try to briefly outline. what you just said: systematize, I'll start with that. to systematize means that something that is already violent, such as taking someone's life, is systematized in a form. What that means is: you don't just do it out of a reaction or don't just let it happen out of an ethical or moral attitude, but you say no, that's right the goal of something, I'm going to create an apparatus, a system, a machine, a situation, or a social order

tier: a work sequence

SR: a work sequence that systematically leads to something happening. like the systematic murder in this case. and that goes together with the other two terms that are very important for this episode, "state" and "structural". you just mentioned the state, as it went back to an instruction from hitler himself, this euthanasia instruction and that is the state's component. So the state ensures that there is this structure, this system and says: "Yes, that's what the state wants." On the one hand, it is the direct action, as you just said, i.e. from 39 to 45, but also that the state is designed for this, for example. So the state can also say: "No, we think disabled people are super great, but we refuse everything they might need." that is still state violence.

tier: (coughs) cough, Jens Spahn!

SR: (laughs) exactly, and then the structural is the third word in the group. it means that the structures in something, and structure is something like .. how do I explain that? for example: you

are a member of a club and you are a brand new member. and in the club it is so that whenever someone new joins, the person first has to run a 4000 kilometer run. that is a structure that creates exclusion.

tier: oh yes.

SR: it's still relatively easy to see. Everyone has to do that, it's not unfair to you individually, everyone has to do that, but not everyone has the same body.

tier: no, that's unfair.

SR: Exactly, that's why it's unfair, although it's the same for everyone, it's more unfair for some than others. and so you can create structures that outwardly appear to be the same for everyone , but internally show who is actually wanted in the club, in the state, in the family, in the world and so on and so on.

tier: that makes sense.

SR: So those are the different words, now we had stately, structurally and systematically.

tier: thank you!

SR: ok!

tier: yes, that as a bit of a very brief historical overview of what happened back then. what I'm trying to emphasize is that it wasn't a single thing. as I said, it wasn't just those six years where things happened, before and after. there is also a lot, or not much, but some media about it, we will link some things, including a doku film from the wdr I think [from the BR], where it goes a little further and we have looked around a bit because, as we already said, we live in [Berlin] Reinickendorf and then we found out through, was it the local newspaper?

SR: no, it was the Reinickendorf newsletter!

tier: yes, exactly

SR: (laughs)

tier: our beloved Reinickendorf newsletter, which also allows us to get to know our neighborhood very well. we found out that there is a lesser-known cemetery around here?

SR: Exactly, there is a large S-Bahn station here, the Karl Bonhoeffer Nervenlinik [mental hospital/asylum]

tier: mm, quite an interesting name!

SR: an interesting name absolutely! we never really walked over there and now in the pandemic i took the time. i couldn't see that much on site, but there is a christian initiative. the pasotr Irmela Orland is active there, it's the circle of friends of the place of remembrance of the old asylum cemetery. I really want to name them in detail because they did a lot of the work on which our podcast is based today.

tier: what is this place?

SR: that is a place where T4 happened, where T4 was lived and died, I would say, and in a larger scale than both of us thought at first.

tier: ok?

SR: I think when you live on the outskirts of the city you think: "ah, a few hundred people must have died there," but in these main years of T4 alone , so it was really only six years, there were over 4000 people who died there. and about half of them were buried there and even more people were deported to what is now Poland and killed there. so we're really talking about death in a big way here! can you briefly say how many people actually died as a result of T4?

tier: the number 300,000 is always talked about. it's just not very clear, because so many documents have been lost, destroyed .. and that is also a thing, because these T4 actions happened in a semi-secret way, it was also difficult to find out everything and to find the people who all this has been done to.

SR: Exactly, the problem can also be found on this site. I found the answer to be particularly cynical, and perhaps it best describes how the story is dealt with to this day, in 1951 the inquiry was made to the wittenau sanatorium, which at that point was the owner of the Karl Bonhoeffer Nervenlinik, about how many people had died there and how the memorial site should be dealt with. and it was said, that the people who died and were buried there "died of natural causes in the

last days of the war." Of course that is absurd when we compare it with the number of the dead. It's totally cynical, especially when we think that there are church books, in these church books it is written down where people are buried. it doesn't matter whether it is on the clinic premises or in the cemeteries, here in Reinickendorf there are very, very many cemeteries, and in the year 1939, in which a part of these 4000 people died and some of these 2000 people were buried, there were only four confirmed funerals in the part of reinickendorf!

tier: huh? that's completely, that doesn't fit at all!

SR: Exactly, there is a huge, huge gap there! and it is also quite violent how the bodies were handled, they were probably stacked on top of each other in several holes. there are really mass graves that have been piled up as hills

tier: and these still exist? these people are still buried there like this?

SR: Exactly, I can show you if you want. (rushing paper) you can see, here you see these graves that we're talking about, and there you see the year numbers underneath and there are only stones on them where it is roughly indicated how many bodies are in there. there are only a few square meters and they really started to fill the graves with people from left to right. I can't put it any other way.

tier: wow!

SR: and that is called "row graves". these flat hills were supposed to be destroyed. and large part was unfortunately, actually in 1995, when this initiative was founded. that's why there are no photos of the time and so on and so forth. only former employees have confirmed this.

tier: ah, ok.

SR: So you might think: "the work before the year '45 is difficult" no! the work before '95 is difficult! because there is so little consciousness! and I was already alive in '95! and back then people thought it still doesn't matter which disabled people were buried there.

tier: yes, that says a lot about this... this commemoration, how that, who is remembered and how!

SR: yes, these people not at all! And graves were just reburied again and again, graves were emptied and simply disposed of, so it will probably no longer be possible to determine how many. so that would be, that would be the basic point: at least how many people! that will not be possible. it's absolutely unreachable because the books are not available and then to find out in which years is almost impossible. So it is extremely difficult and it is justified in the fact that in the years before, before '39, euthanasia and this so-called "mercy killing" and these very bad terms, had already been carried out. and as you said: hunger, neglect that is one thing. and in this exhibition, which was called "todgeschwiegen" [silenced to death], it was documented that the one type of death that is known is the so-called "mercy killing through drugs" where doctors really, so I always have to realize for myself: a doctor really killed someone and then wrote proudly: "I killed this person." and then wrote it down! and that's in there in files! from an archival question it is just so blatant. it is chocking if there is no archive, but somehow it is just as chocking if there is an archive! both somehow represent the same violence. it speaks volumes!

tier: it says a lot about it, does it still make sense to somehow commemorate these people or to concentrate on them?

SR: and also to ask: "which structure?" when we talk about antisemitism, let's say what structure was there before the ns time, on which the ns time could refer to and what is happening with it today? that is the discourse we're having about it.

tier: yes!

SR: the discourse that is attempted from a Black perspective is the same. what happened to Black people during the Nazi era? similar things! What was the basis of what was happening in society before and what does that mean for society today? and you can only ask this question if you can answer what happened to them during the Nazi era. and here we have a bit of the double victim problem: the people were not only structurally oppressed

tier: you mean the disabled?

SR: The disabled people, but they will continue to be oppressed afterwards, which means they could still often not speak, write, publish books... what we have, for instance Gert Schramm [a black german survivor of concentration camps] and these people who survived the nazis can talk

about it because they weren't disabled. we didn't have as much of a movement.

tier: Exactly, so this placement of disabled people was already systematized beforehand, then T4 and this violence could happen because it was already systematized and this placement of disabled people in institutions continued afterwards! there are also interesting parallels to what it was like in the east and the west [i.e. GDR and FRG] and that's why that is again a continuity. because people talk about it today, whether it would make sense today, that's why I mentioned Jens Spahn before, our health minister. because he would like disabled people to be back in institutions ...

SR: ...and for care at home to be made impossible.

tier: exactly!

SR: and that's basically the problem what's in there when we say: "it's just a nazi thing!" because it tries again to break it down to individual people. and that is the background for this difficult answer to: "What do you think about the perpetrator [of the murders in potsdam]? Was she a good nurse or a bad one, or was she just overworked?" or what I haven't told you until now, but have to tell you now because we are recording the podcast: her son is autistic.

tier: oh!

SR: yes! and that was the third reason: she was so exhausted, because her child is autistic and that's why it's kind of ok. there is so much sought after individual guilt! and she is to blame! but that is not relevant at all, because the question is in which system is it even possible to exercise this violence? And it is like that, I want to talk about the overworking of carers, but it has no place in the discourse!

tier: no, exactly! it just doesn't depend on it, that is not the "reason" and it is just irrelevant to how we feel about it or how the disability movement is feeling, because that happened, because it is a continuum!

SR: somehow, it's also like thinking in the smallest of ways: if we pay caregivers 50 euros more now, then they won't kill disabled people anymore?

tier: (laughs)

SR: I don't like this kind of discourse!

tier: exactly!

SR: should they get 50 euros more? no, please 300,000 euros more!

tier: yes, please!

SR: that's not the fucking question! but I do*nt want the price, I don't want that to be offset against my or your life! or any life!

tier: exactly, and it is, yes, so when we talk about the pain we feel when something like this happens, it's about the people to whom what happened, it is about... that's why, that's also a reason why I tried not to read a lot of media about it, because it doesn't interest me. I just don't want to know, I don't want to hear anything about the perpetrator! that's why i didn't know about the autistic son, because that is not the reason! and that's just not the important thing. but ...

SR: sorry for interrupting but: how can the first question be: "is the autistic child to blame?"

tier: (cynical laugh)

SR: no, no, because that's the same system! why isn't the first question: "what happens to the child now?" what does that do with a child what ... so now whether autism is part of "disability" or not, but it's somehow in the term "experiencing ableism", the autistic community is part of it. the ableist system also suppresses autistic people! to have this person as a mother! Why isn't the first empathic question: "What happens to the person in the family from their own perspective?" but: "How can we put the blame back on ..?" that makes me, you know? that makes me so angry!

tier: yes, that's really difficult to bear! and what i wanted to say is just: this classification! that is not the first care taker and will not be the last care taker either, but above all it is not that T4 happened and then this murder happened, but the murder through systematic state violence and by carers, keep on happening all the time! in the last few years this has happened again and again. it is just not talked about enough

SR: yes

tier: and when something like that happens like in potsdam, it is incredibly sensationalized and

that's why the reporting is so that the whole time is only talked about the perpetrator.

SR: yes, as "the individual case" or something like: "that happens when the barrel overflows!"

tier: mm, exactly!

SR: And I'm not saying that these discourses cannot exist, but I think these discourses have to happen somewhere else, at a different point in time and not as the first discourse, and not in connection with this case! So, from a psychotherapeutic point of view, someone is welcome to do a podcast about "what does work overload do with us"

tier: yes, please! and then the people who are interested can listen to it

SR: and then it can be one of ten other cases. and i have no idea what the result is, this is not my job, but that just not about the ... yes, so it's a shitty situation to have to get care through a system that is directed against you! and you have the decision: either I will not allow myself to be cared for and die because of it, or I will be worse off, or I will be cared for, which will make me feel worse, or I will die! (laughs cynically) that's a fucking shitty decision! and that makes me so angry that ... well i have a chronic illness where i can't get access to care, for example. I have to fight over and over again.

tier: exactly!

SR: but do I want that? do I want to fight for it or do I rather fight to have more money to finance it myself? that's what most people do with my diagnosis. and then, with you it is also different again! maybe you would like to briefly tell this difference between the so-called personal budget and..

tier: yes, i am applying for the personal budget and that is very, very difficult to get for some reason. i need help or assistance in everyday life and i want to organize it myself and not get it from a care facility or something. I have applied at the district office and that is something ... I do have a right to it, but they don't want to give it out because it is easier for them, not necessarily cheaper, but especially easier if something like this works via a care service. And there I am just so pushed into "am I fighting to be able to do this independently, or do I no longer have the strength and will let myself be looked after by a nursing service as a disabled trans person?"

SR: yes! and also dependent on it: with a very, which is the case with everyone, with a very individual need for care!

tier: mm, that's exactly what it is!

SR: What do you get out of it as a trained cook, if someone wipes your work surface not the way you like it?

tier: (laughs) that wouldn't be so nice! oh, maybe what we just said is a good description of what it does to us, because that .. it hits home!

SR: I wonder how people say that in German, but it's a song that is sung all the time and the chorus is just getting louder, but everyone says: "Oh, that's something really new, we've never heard that before!" but for us it's the same song!

tier: exactly! SR. it's just the chorus, and now you're all singing along for a moment! and then you get out again.

tier: but it's the same! it's all linked together!

SR: Exactly, it's just continuity in continuity! and I just have to think about it ... so Martina was the youngest of those who died in potsdam, she was 31. and Andreas was the oldest at 47.

tier: 57! But they are really in our, in our age range

SR: yes, and even only the 16 years, the 26 years that lie between them. So let's say somebody gets that at 31, that's not always the case now, but as an example. and until 57. So only during this time, there were tens of thousands of nursing visits where this fear was always present, or maybe it was not present because someone was great there, but was present again and then it happened ! actually all people should be afraid of it, because maybe all people will be cared for at some point and I find it so absurd that something that potentially affects everyone is precisely what we are not talking about!

tier: (sighs) that's just the same! that makes people fail to understand that somehow the bottom line is that almost everyone is affected by a disability sometime in their lives.

SR: yes

tier: not "affected," but will have to do with a disability in your life and thus, more or less inevitably, you will get in touch with care at some point, with systematic care! And with that we are not saying that everyone who works in nursing is a dangerous perpetrator.

SR: no, but who can function well in this profession? we have a friend who is currently doing an apprenticeship in this field, and he said that the average time people stay on the job is seven and a half years!

tier: that's nothing!

SR: there's a reason for that. There are great people who have been in the system for two years

tier: and then they can't do it anymore. and it is clear who can do it for a longer time.

SR: who will stay and who will not stay? that is a sorting out process!

tier: definitely!

SR: and i think it is almost never the people who want to do the job in an empowering way who continue to function in this system.

tier: I think so too!

SR: It's rather the people with a helper complex, the people who somehow think: "I will do something good for the poor and exploit myself in the process." people who don't value their own limits...

tier: and often non-marginalized people who don't have to deal with tons of discrimination in their everyday lives, but can instead muster the energy for it.

SR: yes, and that's why it just hurts differently. it hurts differently than when something happens that has nothing to do with anything. that's bad too, but it hurts differently.

tier: I get like flashbacks. I wasn't alive then, T4 didn't happen to me, but it doesn't make it any less bad, because it happened to us!

SR: It's still just a few meters away from the place where we live that people were buried without names for precisely such reasons.

tier: exactly! and yes, also in this case of potsdam it took a long time until the names were published and who was it about in this case?

SR: yes, it wasn't about us. I think that is the same as what we have not mentioned today, but the reason why disabled people are kept out of society before the nazi era, during the nazi era and after the nazi era can be murder, but keeping away is also something like beint put in a home, in this fake job market that these workshops for the disabled represent, everything is a way to keep us away! that comes from the same motive!

tier: yes!

SR: a workshop for the disabled has the same motive as murder. that sounds harsh, but it is. it should keep away from society and society is just a nicer word for the volkskörper [the national body, a german term], because it's about making the body of the nation as healthy and white and straight as possible. and that just shows that it is simply ... there are no disabled facilities that are exclusive from a empowering aspect and not influenced by fascism, but care facilities from the state. because: that's fascism! this is the song that was sung before the nazi era, then got loud and now gets louder and louder among people like Jens Spahn. under this whole idea of making these workshops for the disabled fancy. (both laugh) no, it's still not that society is changing. It is still the case that the disabled person is pushed back and forth somewhere on the edge. and that's the systematic keeping away. for mit it's the same thing. So it's the same to keep people away in an institution as killing them from a social perspective and that's why I don't care how nice the one person in the workshop for the disabled is who is also really great with the choir and so, the apparatus is that apparatus.

tier: yes that doesn't change anything.

SR: exactly! and that's why it's not surprising! that's why a ... as nasty as that sounds, but that's why a murder is nothing surprising, because it's just another way of keeping disabled people away!

(laughs)

tier: Exactly, that's why I think this, what was very clearly visible in social media when this happened at end of April: who was shocked, surprised and sad? and who was angry, hurt, just totally

out of spoons? the reactions were very different depending on who's disabled and who's not.

SR: who could talk about it immediately and who didn't say anything at first? it's like that, and that doesn't mean that one is worse than the other, but as a Black queer disabled person I am so often affected by people like me being killed. I can't completely lose myself every time because then I would just be lost (laughs). so if you ask us, like some of you have asked: "record a podcast: how do you feel about potsdam?" the question is somehow wrong for me. because i don't feel about potsdam. i feel because of the people who are still buried here, i feel for myself because i wonder what would Lucille, who was also killed in potsdam, have made and done in her life and anyway ... you know? I don't feel "the perpetrator did this and that," but I feel these four very individual lives that had nothing in common except their perpetrator and I don't want to define them by that!

tier: and also, i think i just have to say that: the absurd, (laughs) i am laughing now, but if we talk a little about commemoration: there was a memorial service for the four murdered people and they were then depicted by four painted wheelchairs, like hospital folding wheelchairs on the altar, which was only accessible via a few steps. so the irony is simply... this is really like a slap in the face.

SR: yes, that's really bitter!

tier: so that's just such a display for to show in the media: "we are commemorating!"

SR: You are just your social role, you are still only disabled. without differentiation. So not even differentiated in their disability, but also not differentiated in who they were as people. so who died there?

tier: well, the wheelchair (both laugh)

SR: it's just so absurd, it reminds me of it as it does with black people when they are murdered. afterwards it is always said: "yes, but he had stolen a snickers ten years ago" that is .. I did not mourn someone who has never stolen a snickers, that's not what I'm angry about! I'm not angry because the wheelchair has to stand alone on the stage, that's not what I'm angry about! (laughs) It's very far from that. I think this dissonance between what you feel and what you are told what you should feel is very far apart! am I sad? of course i'm sad, but above all i'm furious and annoyed and i'm like: "we told you the fuck!" it's like this ...

tier: .. so anger and, uh, the word does not occur to me now, just so exhausting, overwhelming anger, where one cannot act out of anger, because it just wears you down!

SR: maybe that's the point! we cannot act against it because we are already acting! we survive, we do this podcast,

tier: we scream ...

SR: you make the event more accessible, we do consulting... it is so absurd when people say: "and what are you going to do about potsdam?" yes, what we're already doing anyway, because it it's just the chorus that's louder!

tier: exactly, exactly!

SR: i can't change potsdam, i wish i could. ut that's why we're doing this, that's why we're talking about this topic.

tier: yes, and sometimes we laugh about bad representations in movies sometimes ...

SR: because it is still a way to be kept away!

tier: exactly! all these things, no matter how sad or funny or angry ... we just can't do anything else!

SR: I think I just found out what bothers me. people say: "be angry how these people were kept away from society." and i'm angry about it, murder is a horrible way to keep someone away from something, I totally go with that! but the point is that they were kept away in the first place!

tier: yes, why were Martina and Christian not my neighbors?

SR: exactly! why... there are so many questions: why have don't we all immediately have an association, because we know what Lucille's diagnosis is and there were already 17 shows about it! Keeping away was somehow present for her entire life, or since she was disabled! and that upsets me so much this "but that is now a step too far, right?" No, the direction is completely wrong!

tier: Exactly!

SR: can we go somewhere else as a society please, because when you say: "the way they have now

been kept away, that's too much!" one actually says subliminally: "but the other thing, that's alright! I'm against that disabled people are killed, but them working in workshops is alright!" no, that isn't alright!

tier: well i think, yes maybe so far that care itself has to be abolished. it has to ... this hierarchy has to go! there must be no hierarchy! when a person gets assistance, I use this word on purpose, not care, but assistance, because it is about the needs of the person who needs help and the person who needs help is the person who says: "I need this and that, do that and that for me. "So that the hierarchy is reversed, or is completely abolished, that there is no more hierarchy!

SR: and that's why the person who gets the assistance needs to pay!

tier: exactly!

SR: because otherwise you have no physical power, you have no psychological power, but also no monetary power. and the assisting person should help you. that just doesn't make sense! it's always an educational situation, simply because that's the way the setting is. and therefore: if you ask us "how are you doing with potsdam?"

tier: that's how we feel!

SR: that's how it is for us, the whole system doesn't work for us especially well. (laughs)

tier: yes, please get rid of it!

SR: (laughs) abolish it please! exactly, that's why we decided to record this a bit longer episode. we hope you could enjoy to come with us on these somewhat longer paths Exactly, so no matter how small or large the topics we are discussing, it doesn't matter whether it's about discrimination on flyers or structural murder, it's all kind of that same thought movement that is behind it and therefore all things are very important and therefore: thank you for taking part in these thematic leaps with us. between media criticism, Marie Kondo, and the topic today.

tier: the season is coming to an end. this was not yet the last episode, but in two weeks...

SR: it's the last episode!

tier: we would like to offer you something beautiful and exciting at the end.

SR: Exactly, because my biggest science crush is stopping by: Christiane Hutson! Christiane Hutson is a Black disabled, formerly disabled, ex-disabled activist who wrote the text "multidimensional vulnerabilities"

tier: which we have already mentioned it umpteen times!

SR: which we have to mention 15 times in each episode! I am SchwarzRund and currently I'm arriving in life as a solo self-employed person! so book me!

tier: and where can we do that?

SR: on SchwarzRund.de and there you just click on "book me" and there you will find everything I'm doing.

tier: excellent! you can find me at my web address simo-tier.de, I'll plug something as well: i have a pride special!

SR: yes!

tier: i have a series of zines called "Chronic Grumpy" and they are now available in color as a zine package.

SR: exactly! buy things for pride from people who are queer and not from adidas! (both laugh)

SR: yes, you can find us on rampereicht.de, you can support us via paypal at rampereicht@gmail.com or

tier: you can support us monthly via patreon, patreon.com/rampereicht

SR: and a new way: you can also go to rampereicht.de and click on support and there you will find our account details if you would like to set up a standing order!

tier: (laughs) there is that too!

SR: exactly and on instagram you can find us:

tier: @rampereicht

SR: and otherwise you'll hear from us in two weeks, with, oh my god! Christiane Hutson!

tier: yes! (laughs)

SR: aaaaargh!

