

"They Demolished Me," Brainwashing Victim Says Allan Memorial Patient in Court to Seek Class Action

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MONTREAL - Five decades after unwittingly participating in brainwashing experiments that were funded by the CIA and the federal government, 78-year-old Janine Huard went to Federal Court on Wednesday to try and persuade a judge she is entitled to compensation.

"They demolished me," Huard told reporters Wednesday before her court hearing. "They gave me terrible drugs, electroshocks and made me stay in a bed with a mask over my face listening to recordings for hours."

Huard had entered Montreal's Allan Memorial Institute in 1958 after suffering postpartum depression following the birth of her second child. Her newborn had become ill and Huard was having difficulty coping.

But instead of helping her, the institute's director, Dr. Ewen Cameron, used her as a "guinea pig" to carry out experimental brainwashing techniques that he mistakenly believed could treat depression. The experiments were carried out at the hospital between 1950 and 1965.

Huard said she knew the treatments were making her ill, but she said doctors were aggressive with her when she protested.

One day she had had enough. She asked her husband to call the Allan and say she wasn't coming in anymore for treatment.

"They told her that if she didn't come in they would send the police to get her," Huard's lawyer, Alan Stein told a Federal Court judge Wednesday.

"It is unbelievable that this took place."

Huard wants to launch a class-action suit on behalf of herself and about 200 other victims who were shut out of a 1994 federal compensation program that paid \$100,000 to 77 victims who suffered the most serious damage.

But before she can proceed, her lawyer must persuade a judge that she hasn't waited too long to seek redress.

A lawyer for the federal government argued it is too late to proceed with a lawsuit, more than 12 years after the claims were rejected.

But in 2004, a federal appeal court overturned one of the rejected claims and awarded a victim \$100,000 compensation. That decision persuaded Huard that it wasn't too late for her to seek justice.

Huard was awarded \$66,000 US in compensation from the CIA in 1989, but she hasn't received a cent in compensation from the Canadian government.

Huard said she will never forget the damage she suffered at the hands of Cameron and his co-workers.

"The only time I got better was when I left that place for good," she said.

Her daughter, Martine Huard, remembers how her mother, after undergoing the treatments, spent her days in bed, severely depressed, suffering memory loss and migraines and unable to cook or care for her and her three older siblings.

"I remember my grandmother taking care of us because my mother was always in bed," Martine Huard said Wednesday. "She couldn't play with us or take care of us."