

WILLOWBROOK AND OTHER TRAGEDIES

A Photographic Essay



The horrors of Willowbrook and other institutions for the mentally retarded were first exposed 10 years ago. Through the efforts of television reporter Geraldo Rivera and others, the plight of thousands of mentally retarded people became a national scandal. *(Continued on P. 16)*

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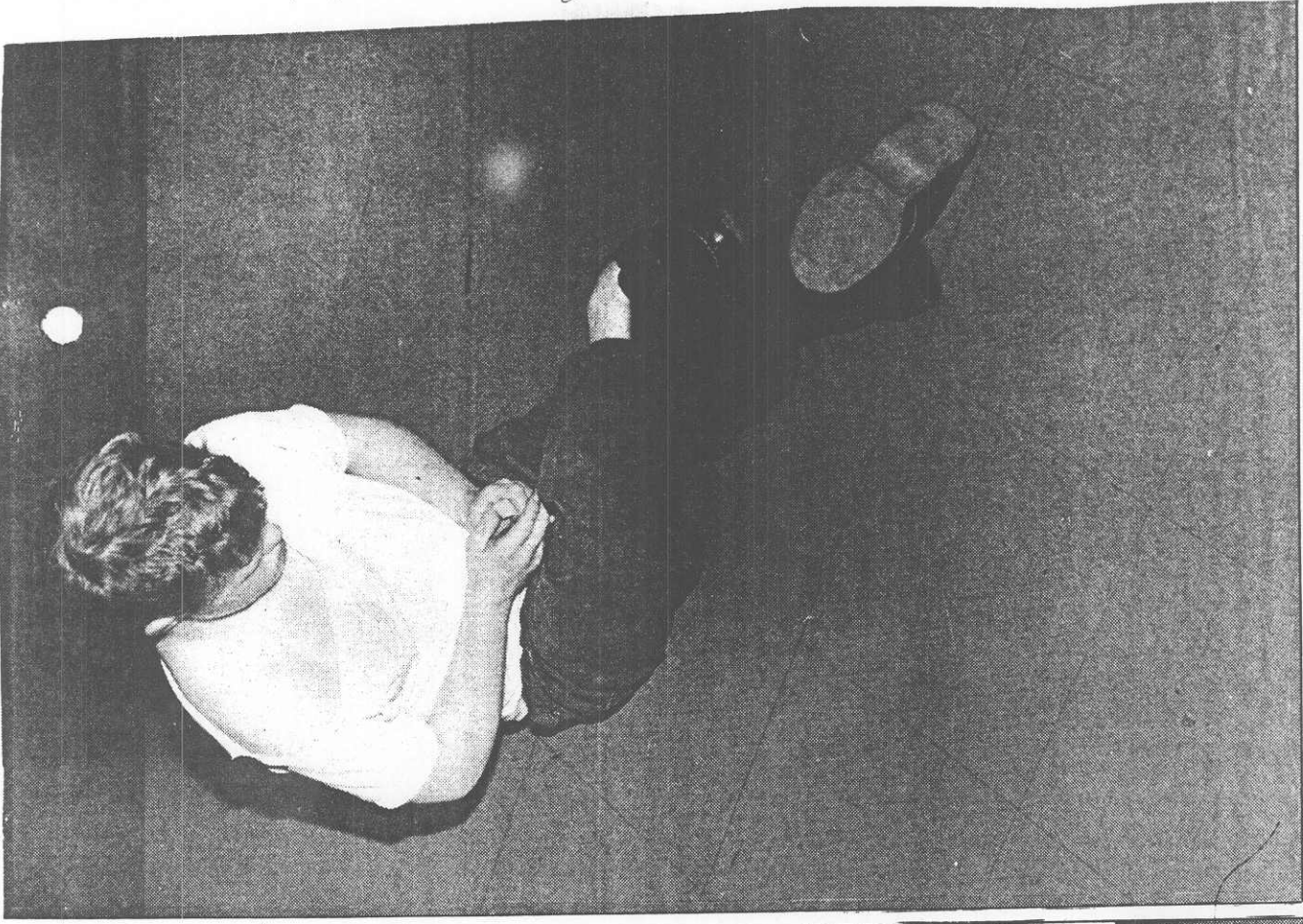
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(Continued from Page One) In New York, legal action forced state officials to detail steps which would improve conditions, reduce the population of these institutions, and eventually close them down and place the residents in small, community homes.

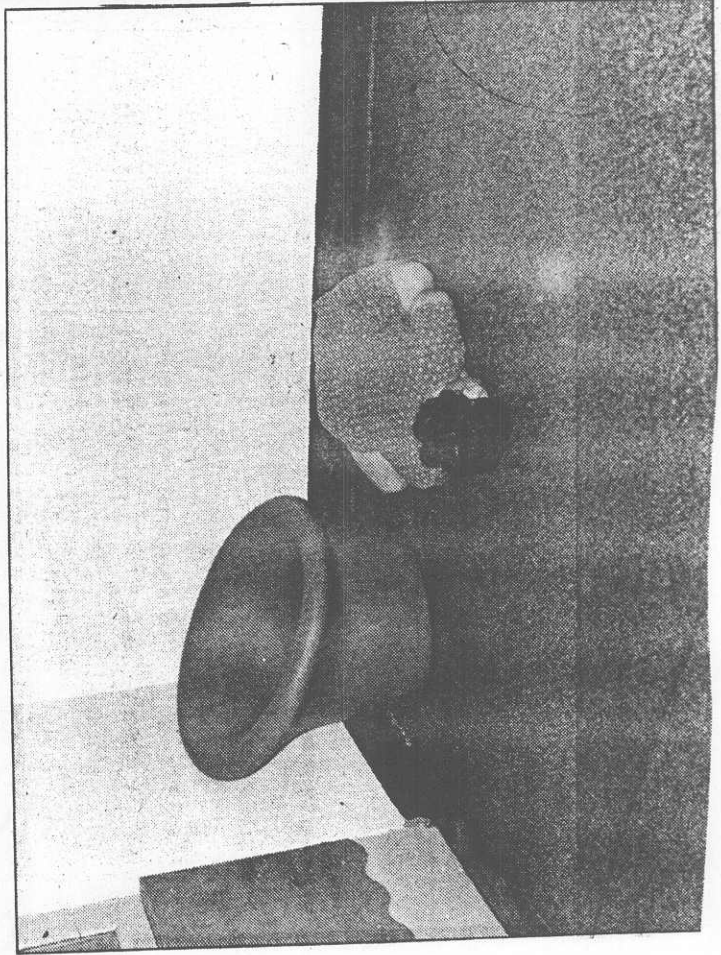
Conditions at Willowbrook have improved somewhat. There is less physical abuse of residents, and overcrowding has been reduced by sending residents to other institutions. Yet life is appalling for the mentally retarded whether they remain at Willowbrook or are now at the Glen Oaks, Brooklyn, or Bronx Developmental centers.

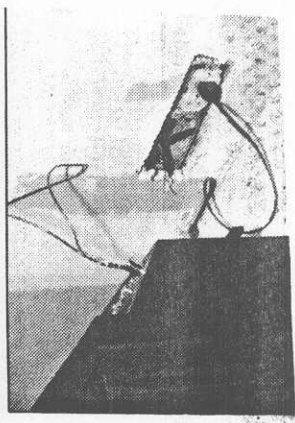
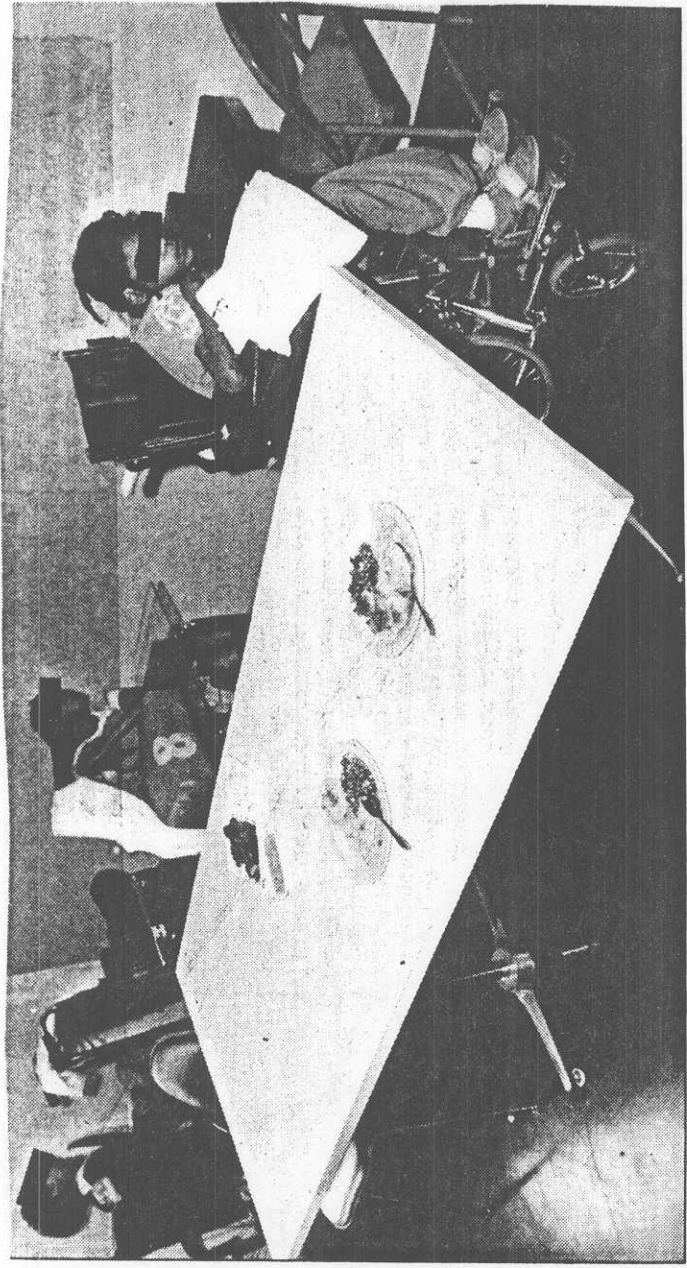
In the fall of 1981, the New York Civil Liberties Union and the Legal Aid Society went to court claiming that Willowbrook (now officially called the Staten Island Developmental Center) was still "unsanitary, unsafe, and unhealthy."

NYCLU lawyer Rob Levy took photos at Willowbrook and other local mental institutions to present as evidence in the case. Last week, Federal District Judge John R. Bartels released the photographs at the request of Village Voice attorneys. The trial continues.

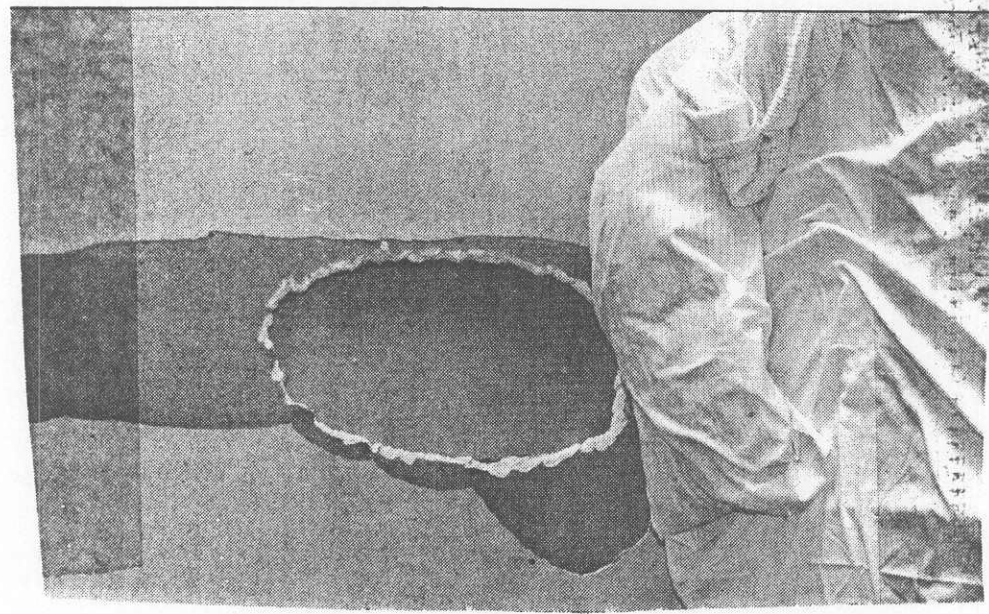


A young man (above) sits on the floor at the Brooklyn Developmental Center. Six years after a consent order was signed, many of the former Willowbrook residents have yet to be provided with adequate clothing. At the same center, a young woman (left) lies on the floor while one supervisor sleeps and another watches a soap opera.

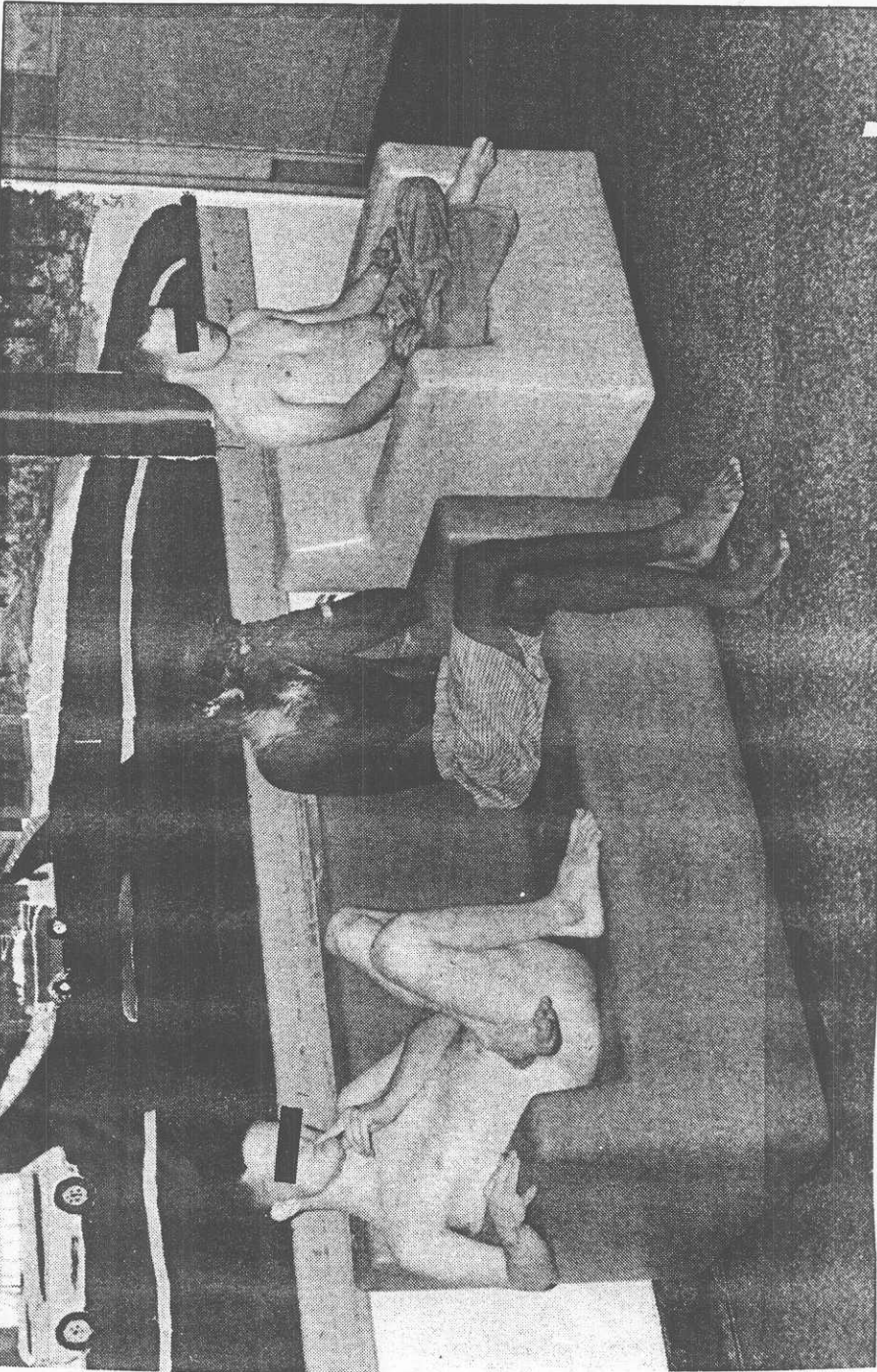




This large hole (left) in a sleeping area is typical of the environmental problems which plague the Bronx Developmental Center. Concern over safety at the institution intensified last year after an unsupervised resident fell to her death. Also in the Bronx, dinner is placed out of reach of four hungry residents (above). They will have to wait until a supervisor finds time to feed them. Meanwhile, their dinner gets cold. An exposed wire and socket (right) pose a safety hazard to Bronx residents.



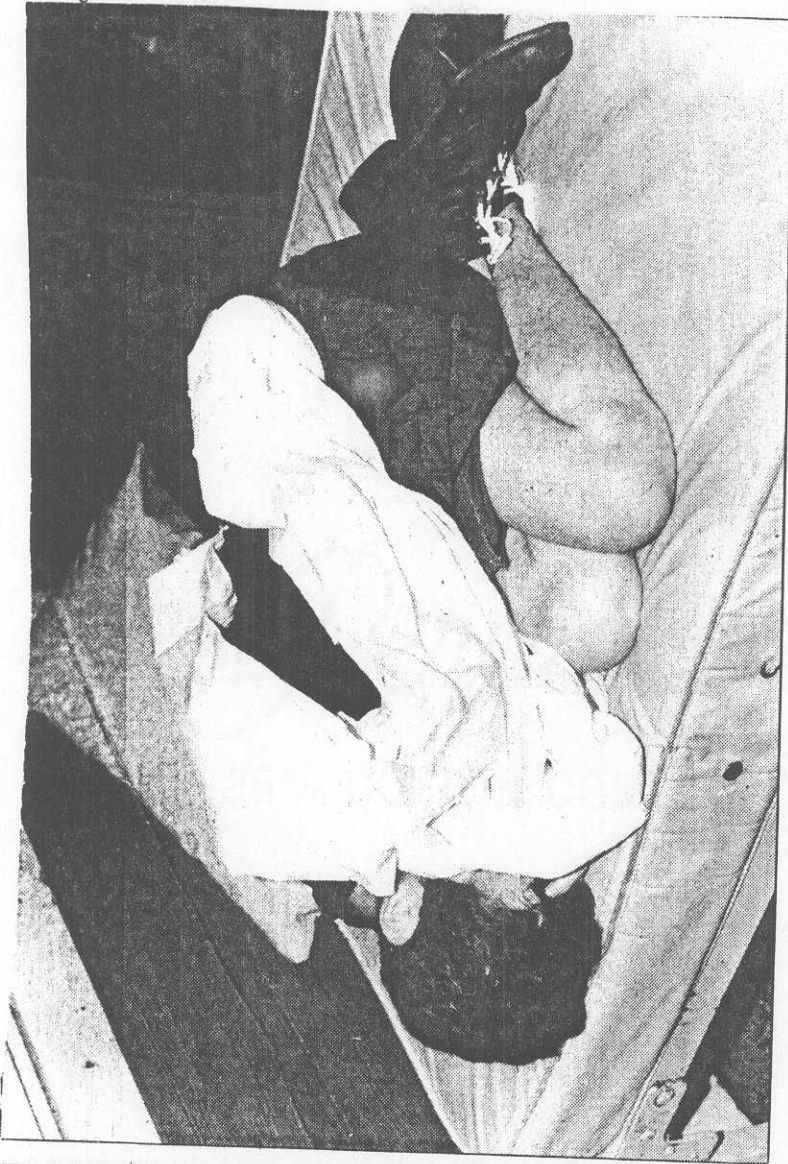
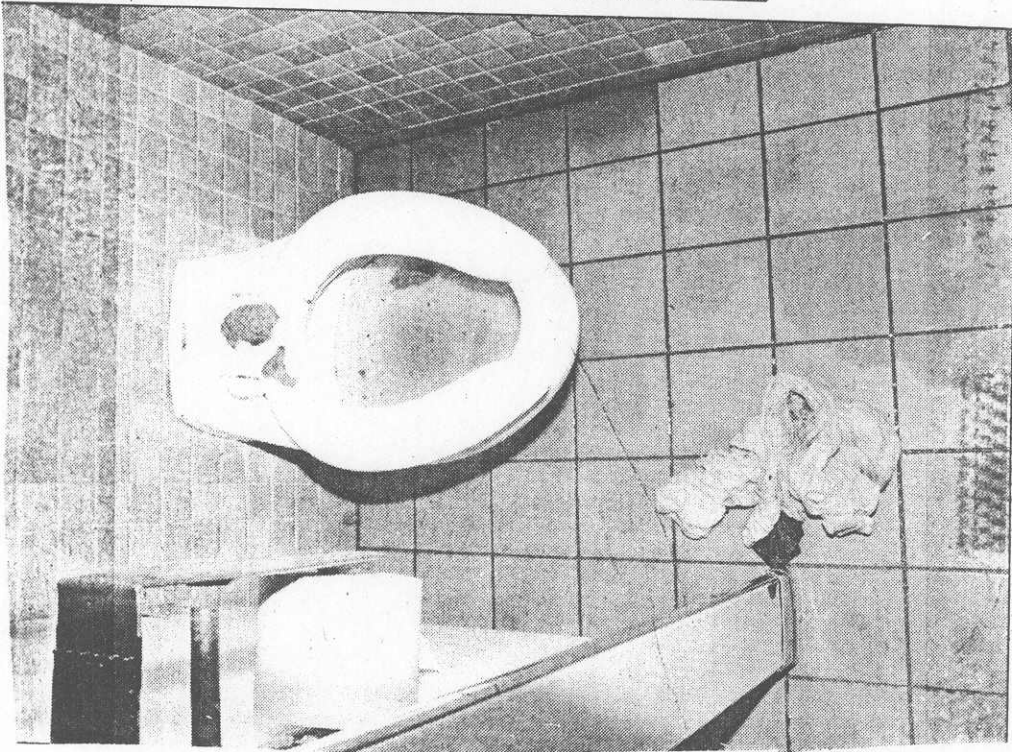
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All photos on this page are from Willowbrook: nude and partially clothed residents (left) sit in a barren room much as they would have 10 years ago. Like many others in this building, they were unable to attend their morning classes for lack of clothing. Dependent on staff to dress him, this multiply-handicapped young man (above) lies with his shorts pulled down to his thighs and a diaper wedged inside.



Footwear (above) at Willowbrook is particularly shabby. This resident (right) is sliding out of his wheelchair. Without proper adaptive equipment, many suffer physical deterioration.



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Although the state is required to provide sufficient staff to care for each resident, this unattended young man (above) lies huddled in urine-soaked pants on a bare mattress. Toilet areas (left) covered with feces and urine are common at Willowbrook and are symptomatic of the institution's unsanitary housekeeping. Failure to clean up accidents also undermines toilet training.