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Dr. William Bronston, a former Willowbrook physician, displays a set of keys from the old institution. He said he still carries them as he carries his rage over what went on there. With him is Diana McCourt, whose daughter, Nina was a plaintiff in the consent decree suit.



ADVANCE PHOTOS ■ IRVING SILVERSTEIN

Panelist Bernard Carabello of Manhattan, who spent 18 years in Willowbrook after his cerebral palsy was misdiagnosed at age 3 as mental retardation, agrees with calls for an apology.

# Willowbrook's past still able to inflict pain

■ An apology for 'crimes against humanity' is demanded during conference on the squalid school for the mentally retarded

By MICHAEL J. PAQUETTE  
ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

Inhumane. Criminal. Death camp. Hell. No matter who spoke at a conference yesterday marking the 25th anniversary of the signing of the landmark legislation that eventually closed the Willowbrook State School, they elicited the same brutal language.

"The name Willowbrook always evokes painful memories," Thomas Maul, commissioner of the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, told those gathered for the event at the College of Staten Island (CSI), the former site of the infamous institution that once warehoused in filth, isolation and negligence some 6,000 developmentally disabled New Yorkers.

"The meaning of Willowbrook transcends this room. Indeed, it transcends the boundaries of New York state," he said. "Whether you are from Maine or Washington state, if somebody says, 'Let us nev-



Former Gov. Mario Cuomo, left, gets together with former Gov. Hugh Carey at the conference. Carey negotiated and signed the decree, and Cuomo saw that its terms were carried out.

er return to the days of Willowbrook, everybody knows precisely what that person means. Willowbrook means deprivation, human suffering, neglect and shame."

More than 350 people from across the state and around the nation — including former Willowbrook

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