



HISTORICAL SOCIETY *of the* NEW YORK COURTS

20th ANNIVERSARY

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Historical Society of the New York Courts Presents Program Looking Back on the Notorious Willowbrook State School Case

White Plains NY (August 25, 2022) — The Historical Society of the New York Courts presents the upcoming program *Willowbrook State School: How a Lawsuit Closed the Gates to a Notorious Institution and Opened the Doors of Opportunity for Thousands*, taking place on **Thursday, September 22, 2022, at 6:00 PM**. This event is presented in collaboration with the **Willowbrook Legacy Project at the College of Staten Island/CUNY** and the **New York City Bar Association's Disability Law Committee**. Sponsored by **Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP**. This program, free and open to the public, will be presented in person at the New York City Bar Association (42 West 44th Street, Midtown Manhattan) and simultaneously streamed online.

Visit the Society's website to register for this free in-person and online event:

<https://history.nycourts.gov/events/willowbrook-state-school/>

Willowbrook State School was an institution on Staten Island built to care for those with developmental disabilities. Following a series of articles in the Staten Island Advance in the fall of 1971, in January 1972, television reporter Geraldo Rivera brought his camera to Willowbrook and reported on the horrible conditions at the "school," once described by Sen. Robert Kennedy as a "snake pit." Two months later, lawyers from the NYCLU and the NY Legal Aid Society, on behalf of residents, parents and organizations filed a class action lawsuit arguing that residents had a constitutional right to treatment and sought injunctive relief. A panel of attorneys who have been involved with this case will discuss the filing of the complaint, the entry of a Consent Judgment and the continuing nature of the litigation. The panel will also discuss the importance and relevance of Willowbrook today. Featured panelists include **Beth Haroules, Esq.**, Senior Staff Attorney, New York Civil Liberties Union; **Chris Hansen, Esq.**, Senior National Staff Counsel, American Civil Liberties Union; **Paul Kietzman, Esq.**, Of Counsel, Barclay Damon LLP; and **Hon. Robert M. Levy**, United States Magistrate Judge for the Eastern District of New York. The site of the former Willowbrook State School is now the campus of the College of Staten Island/CUNY; this program is presented as part of its 2022 "Year of Willowbrook."

About Historical Society of the New York Courts

The Historical Society of the New York Courts, celebrating its 20th anniversary, is a non-profit organization founded in 2002 by then NYS Chief Judge Judith S. Kaye. Its mission is to preserve, protect and promote the legal history of New York, including the proud heritage of its courts and the development of the Rule of Law. The Society promotes its mission through educational outreach to New York State students, programs open to the public, and publications on these themes which inform our knowledge and role as citizens today. The Society supports its programs through contributions from its members, gifts and grants from foundations, corporations, law firms and individuals. For more information about the Society, please visit history.nycourts.gov.

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