

ABANDONMENT

"Euthanasia through neglect."
– Albert Deutsch



As the U.S. entered World War II, many attendants at public institutions were drafted, leaving a shortage of workers. Enrollment continued to increase. The result was a much smaller work force with greater numbers of inmates under one roof.

To make up for the shortage in workers, many institutions used conscientious objectors: persons who refused to take part in warfare because their conscience prohibited participation in acts of killing. Many of these men kept records of the abuse they witnessed in the institutions and later reported their findings.



Some institutions put two residents to a bed and in hallways.



In 1948, Albert Deutsch wrote *Shame of the States*, a photographic expose of the Letchworth Village institution in New York. After decades of invisibility, persons living in institutions were again the objects of attention.

INVOLVEMENT BY PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES:

Beginning of organized advocacy by people with physical disabilities; little or no involvement by people with developmental disabilities.

In the mid-1990s John Daggy became involved in self-advocacy, working with the Remembering with Dignity project to honor those who lived and died in state institutions.



In the early 1930s, John Daggy, age four (seated in the center, hands together), along with his older sister, was sent to a large institution in Faribault, Minnesota. During his first day he witnessed his sister receiving a lobotomy. Like many other residents of institutions at this time, John was admitted because of economic difficulties in his family. He escaped at age 18, going on to marry and raise a family in St. Paul.



SERVICES SLOWLY BECOME AVAILABLE TO PERSONS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES; MANY WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES ARE LARGELY FORGOTTEN AND ABANDONED IN INSTITUTIONS.

Inmates of institutions had no rights, no dignity, and no privacy.

As the institutions grew in size they became increasingly medicalized.

The Depression Era put a financial strain on all Americans, particularly those with special needs. Millions of Americans just wanted the opportunity to work.



Though used primarily for labeling persons with physical disabilities, the term "handicapped" has been applied to all persons with disabilities, and became an increasingly popular term in the middle-20th century. The term does not originate with persons with disabilities begging for money with their caps in hand. It originally referred to a match between two horses, in which an umpire decided the extra weight to be carried by the superior horse; later, it applied to extra weight itself, and so to any disability or disadvantage in a contest. With time, "handicapped" assumed negative associations, in particular that of the helpless victim.

Out of 35,000 photographs of Franklin Delano Roosevelt at the Hyde Park Library, only two show him seated in his wheelchair; he went to great lengths to hide and "overcome" his disability. Reportedly, when the actor Orson Welles was dining at the White House, President Roosevelt said to him, "You and I are the two finest actors in America."



A group in New York City called the League for the Physically Handicapped formed in 1935 and protested militantly against job discrimination in the New Deal program, asserting that WPA (Works Progress Administration) policies which labeled them as "unemployable" because of their disabilities were highly prejudicial. They eventually generated a few thousand jobs nationwide.



The idea of overcoming one's disability is still used as a popular appeal in fundraising campaigns.



1911

New Jersey legislature authorizes statewide special education classes and mandates eugenic sterilization for certain categories of adult feeble-minded.

Henry H. Goddard publishes *The Kallikak Family*. Davenport and Florence H. Danielson publish *The Hill Folk*.

1915

Operating expenditures at the Rome State Custodial Asylum for Unteachable Idiots for fiscal year equals \$228,893 (\$12.81 per inmate per month).

1913

Wisconsin Legislature authorizes sterilization to stop the breeding of mental defectives.

1916

Termer revises the Binet test and introduces the term Intelligence Quotient (IQ)

1917

Charles Bernstein (at Rome State Custodial Asylum) opens first colony for females working in factories. Henry H. Goddard presents data that 40-50% of immigrants are feeble-minded.

U.S. Congress declares war with Germany and enters into World War I.

1918

New York's sterilization law is found to be unconstitutional.

1921

The American Foundation for the Blind (AFB), a non-profit organization recognized as Helen Keller's cause in the United States, is founded.