

Reagan Administrations' History of Poor Treatment of the Mentally Retarded

A Published Letter to the *Los Angeles Times*

January 26, 1985

Invigorated from "turning plowshares into swords" and "turning no other cheek," the Reagan Administration continues its "moral crusade," by once again attacking some of the most vulnerable in our society—the mentally retarded.

The *Times* article stated: "[T]he Justice Department contended that, unlike blacks and other racial minorities, the retarded are not a class that deserves special attention to prevent them from suffering discrimination."

This completely heartless attitude is by no means something new for a Reagan Administration—I vividly remember that when Ronald Reagan was governor of California he steadfastly refused to approve funding for screen doors on state mental hospitals, even though they had no air conditioning and had to leave their doors open during the summer: The result, personally engineered by Reagan, was a bunch of poor, sweaty retarded kids whose faces were covered with filthy flies!

How would Reagan like it if he or one of his loved ones were retarded and forced to undergo such inhuman treatment?

Forgive my not turning the other cheek, but somebody's got to speak out in the name of justice—the "Justice" Department surely isn't. If Reagan really wants to see an "Evil Empire," he need look no further than his own administration!

Personal Notes: I had a profoundly mentally retarded cousin, who was fortunate enough to have lived out his days in a more humane institution, in another state. Perhaps "mellowing" with age, I eventually prayed for President Reagan, when he suffered with Alzheimer's and ultimately passed away; and I admired the courage and loyalty of Mrs. Reagan, through it all.